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Allu Arjun struggles to recall Telangana CM'S NAME

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The BJP's top leaders like Narendra Modi and Amit Shah asked Naxals to join public life. However, Bandi Sanjay Kumar has branded me as an urban Naxal. Sanjay hurt me psychologically by trolling me on social media when I took over as Minister. His latest comments hurt me a lot. Sanjay should withdraw his comments against me

- Seethakka, Panchayati Raj Minister P4

DON'T MISS...

Mango insurance scheme in 15 dists

The State government has introduced a Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) for mango farmers, covering the 2024-25 and 2025-26 seasons. The initiative, aimed at mitigating crop losses due to weather calamities, was announced by Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaidu in the Legislative Assembly. Under the scheme, the State has been divided into four clusters for implementation. The Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited has been appointed as the implementation agency. Farmers in 15 identified...

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Farmers' foot march to Delhi thwarted

Agitating farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi on Sunday after some of them sustained injuries in teargas shelling by Haryana security personnel who thwarted yet another attempt by the protesters to cross the Punjab-Haryana border. Farmer leaders said they will decide the next course of action on Monday. As a group of 101 farmers resumed the foot march this afternoon, they were halted by a multilayered barricade set up by Haryana security personnel who surprised the protesters...

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FDI inflows in India cross \$1 trillion

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the USD one trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally. According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at USD 1,033.40 billion during the said period. About 25 per cent of the FDI came through...

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Bumrah can't bowl from both ends: Rohit

Jasprit Bumrah is only human and cannot always shoulder the responsibility of bowling opposition out all by himself, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Sunday, urging others to share the load with the premier fast bowler. India lost to Australia by 10 wickets in the second Test and during the home team's first innings, only Bumrah stood out with a four-wicket haul. "We are not just playing with one bowler. There are other bowlers also who will have to take responsibility and get the job done for..."

-SPORTS

Take steps to protect harvested paddy: CM

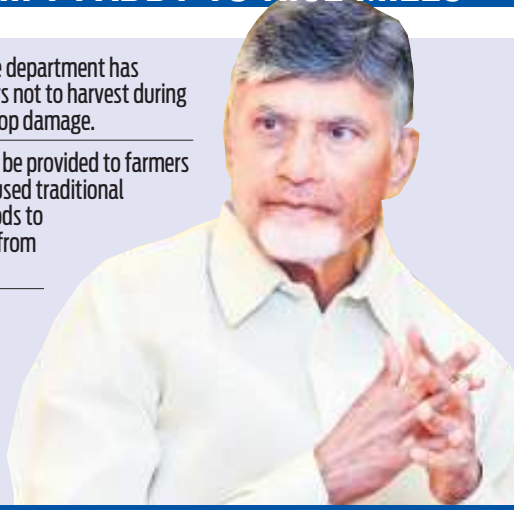
OFFICIALS DIRECTED TO SHIFT PADDY TO RICE MILLS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the heavy rain alert for Andhra Pradesh issued by the Met department, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has directed all district collectors and joint collectors (JCs) to take proactive steps to protect the harvested paddy crop from potential damage. The CM has issued instructions to follow specific measures to safeguard the crop and minimise losses. To prevent damage to harvested paddy due to rain, the CM has instructed officials to promptly transfer the harvested crop to rice mills, ensuring it is stored safely and not left exposed to the weather. The Agriculture Department has been directed to issue advisories to farmers, advising them not to harvest paddy during the rainfall. This precaution is aimed at avoiding exposure of the freshly harvested crop to moisture, which could affect both its quality and yield.

In cases where farmers have not used the traditional method of heaping the paddy, the government will provide tarpaulins to cover the harvested crop. *Continued on Page 2*

- The Agriculture department has advised farmers not to harvest during rain to avoid crop damage.
- Tarpaulins will be provided to farmers who have not used traditional heaping methods to protect paddy from rain.
- The govt is closely monitoring the situation to safeguard farmers' interests.



Low pressure area to intensify

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal is expected to intensify over the next 24 hours and is likely to move towards the Tamil Nadu coast, bringing heavy rains to south coastal AP

and Rayalaseema. The low pressure area over the southeast Bay of Bengal and the adjoining east equatorial Indian Ocean, with the associated cyclonic circulation extending up to middle tropospheric levels, persists. *Continued on Page 2*

DEROGATORY POSTS



Police serve notice to PA of Kadapa MP Avinash

PNS ■ KADAPA

The police served a notice to Bandi Raghava Reddy, the Personal Assistant to YSRCP MP YS Avinash Reddy, directing him to appear at the Central Crime Police Station at 9 am on Monday for questioning in connection with abusive social media posts.

Raghava Reddy is accused of uploading derogatory and objectionable content on social media targeting prominent leaders such as Chandrababu Naidu, Pawan Kalyan, Lokesh, V Anitha, YS Sharmila, and Manda Krishna Madiga. Following these posts, multiple cases were registered against him at various police stations.

Despite the police's efforts to locate him, Raghava Reddy has been absconding for the past week. The police, after failing to trace him, pasted the notice at his residence. *Continued on Page 2*



Rebels overthrow Assad govt in Syria

Stunning end to 50 years of family rule

PNS ■ DAMASCUS

The Syrian government collapsed early Sunday, falling to a lightning rebel offensive that seized control of the capital of Damascus and sent crowds into the streets to celebrate the end of the Assad family's 50 years of iron rule.

Syrian state television aired a video statement by a group of men saying that President Bashar Assad had been overthrown and all prisoners had been set free. The man who read the statement



said the opposition group, known as the Operations Room to Conquer Damascus, called on all rebel fighters and citizens to preserve the institutions of "the free Syrian state."

The statement emerged hours after the head of a Syrian opposition war monitor said Assad had left the country for an undisclosed location, fleeing ahead of insurgents who said they had entered Damascus following a remarkably swift advance across the country. *Continued on Page 2*

Four killed, as many hurt as car rams tree

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A pall of gloom descended on Siripuram village in Kavali mandal of Nellore district as four persons were killed on the spot and four others seriously injured in a tragic car accident on Sunday. The incident took place in the morning when the car they were travelling in crashed into a tree near Brahmanapalli in Piduguralla mandal, Palnadu district. The family, who had recently bought a new car, was returning from a pilgrimage to the Kondagattu Anjaneya Swamy temple in Telangana, where they had performed rituals and sought blessings for the new vehicle.

The accident occurred on the Addanki-Narketpally highway near Geethika School, when the car car-

rying eight people rammed into a roadside tree.

According to Palnadu SP Srinivas Rao, the accident happened when the driver reportedly fell asleep at the wheel. The car was travelling at high speed when it collided with the tree. The deceased were identified as Tulluri Suresh, Vanitha, Yogulu, and Venkateswarlu, all residents of Siripuram. The injured, identified as U Pranay, Adilakshmi, Srinivas Rao, and Kaushalya, were admitted to the government hospital in Piduguralla.

Local residents alerted the police, who swiftly arrived at the scene. Rescue operations were carried out, and the injured were rushed to Piduguralla Hospital for treatment. The bodies of the deceased were sent to Gurazala Government Hospital for postmortem.

3 of family die as lorry knocks down bike

PNS ■ BAPATLA

In a tragic incident, three members of a family, including a young couple, were killed when the bike they were riding on was knocked down by a soil-laden lorry at Annabhotlavariapalem village in Chirala mandal on Sunday.

According to the police, the deceased—Sheik Mastan Vali (30), his wife Sheik Ameerun (22), and his mother-in-law Sheik China Budemma (42)—had visited Vadarevu for a sea bath.

While returning to their village, a speeding lorry, laden with soil,



rammed into their bike from behind, killing all three instantly. The police have registered a case and have shifted the bodies to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Chilikaluripet for post-mortem.



AP govt halted key edu reforms: Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) chief and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has strongly criticised the TDP-led coalition government for halting crucial education reforms and misrepresenting routine actions as major achievements. He accused the government of betraying the trust of parents by failing to deliver on key promises such as the Amma Vodi scheme and undermining initiatives like Nadu-Nedu and Vidya Deevana. *Continued on Page 2*

1L houses for poor by month-end

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government is prioritising the construction of houses for the poor, particularly under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY-1) scheme. Since the NDA-led administration took office, efforts have been intensified to complete one lakh houses and distribute keys to beneficiaries through a large-scale event.

The sources said a significant portion of the infrastructure for the layouts has already been developed, including electrification, while road construction is underway. Housing Minister Kolu Parthasarathi has been personally overseeing the project's progress, visiting districts like NTR, Krishna, Guntur, Tirupati, and Bapatla. During these visits, he met beneficiaries, offering support and directing construction agencies to meet deadlines. *Continued on Page 2*

HM links YSRCP leaders to rice smuggling & illegal land deals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Home Minister Anita has accused YSRCP leaders V Vijayasai Reddy and YV Subbareddy of corruption while unveiling new measures to strengthen law enforcement infrastructure. Speaking at the inauguration of the newly built Arilova Police Station, she alleged their involvement in irregularities, citing tweets as evidence.

"These tweets reveal the illegal activities of leaders like Vijayasai Reddy and Subbareddy. The public has a right to know the truth," she stated. Anita referred to Vijayasai Reddy as "Sakuni," likening him to the manipulative Mahabharata character. She criticised his disparaging remarks about senior political leaders and his comments on the Chief Minister, calling them "painful and hurtful to the people's trust."

CID investigations into rice smuggling and illegal land deals, which she linked to YSRCP leaders. "We have uncovered significant evidence of their involvement in land irregularities, and further inquiries are underway," she said.

The Minister criticised the previous government for neglecting police infrastructure. "Not a single police station was constructed in the last five years," she remarked, emphasising her government's focus on public safety.

Anita announced several modernisation initiatives, including installing CCTV, body cameras for officers, and advanced facial recognition systems. Drone technology will be deployed to curb marijuana cultivation, while the "Eagle" system will enhance real-time crime monitoring. "These measures will enable our police force to respond swiftly and effectively to criminal activities," she concluded.



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Turtles in peril: Strandings along Vizag coast raise alarm

JAVVADI LAKSHMANA RAO lakshmana123@gmail.com ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The serene shores of Sagarnagar Beach witnessed a sombre sight on Sunday when a large turtle was found dead in the sea, sparking fresh concerns among environmentalists, fishermen, and forest officials. This marks yet another grim episode in the growing number of turtle strandings reported along the region's coastline in recent weeks, particularly around Rushikonda.

Environmentalists are alarmed at the distressing trend. "It's heart-breaking to see these turtles, vital components of the marine ecosystem, struggling to survive," said Rina Rao, a local conservationist. She emphasised that turtles play a crucial role in maintaining the health of the oceans, and their

plight is a warning sign of deeper ecological imbalances. Fishermen in the area attribute the deaths to increasing human activities. "Fishing nets and boat propellers often harm turtles, leaving them unable to navigate or survive," explained Ravi Kumar, a fisherman. His concerns echo those of many who depend on the sea but worry about its sustainability.

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"Human activity seems to be exacerbating their challenges. We're investigating and working with conservationists to identify the causes and protect these creatures."

Marine biologist Dr. Sanjay Kumar highlighted the urgent need for intervention. "Research is critical to understanding these strandings. At the same time, reducing threats like unregulated fishing and pollution is imperative," he asserted.

(FRO) M Karunakar revealed that many stranded turtles show signs of injury or poor health. "Human activity seems to be exacerbating their challenges. We're investigating and working with conservationists to identify the causes and protect these creatures," he said.

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Calls for action are growing louder. Conservationists are urging sustainable practices in fishing and boating while advocating greater community awareness. "Protecting turtles is not just about saving a species—it's about safeguarding the delicate balance of marine life," Rao said. As local stakeholders rally together, the fight to save these marine sentinels underscores the need for collective responsibility in preserving Visakhapatnam's coastal biodiversity.

Monday Mirchi

GURUKULAM STYLE OF SHOOTING THE MESSENGER!

Multiple incidents of food poisoning incidents in Telangana's Gurukulams of late, apart from raising valid questions about the quality and safety of food served to students, have queered the pitch for Alugu Varshini, Secretary of Telangana Social Welfare Gurukul Institutions Society. Instead of putting the record straight as the society's *sutradhari*, she hit the headlines recently for her rude, self-righteous, and defiant attitude. It is a different matter that she came up with no solutions at all as if it is not her business. Varshini's presser was marked by fiery darts and theatrics in place of decorum as she raved and ranted against the media. While singling out a particular outlet associated with the Bharat Rashtra Samithi party, she unabashedly declared, leaving jaws on the floor: "Don't even bother showing up". That was just a drizzle. Varshini, in the course of her *varsham* of recriminations that followed, laid out new rules for journalists wanting to reach her. "First, message in the WhatsApp group that you're trying to contact me, and then I'll call you back," she declared peremptorily, leaving reporters wondering who is the boss when it comes to media coverage in terms of so many seconds on air or column centimeters in print. Opening a window into family flex, she let reporters know that she had in fact advised her father-in-law-a heavyweight politician in Tamil Nadu- to replicate TG's Gurukulams model. She is furious now because of what she dubs as the media's 'negative propaganda' about what she had held out as a 'model'. It looked like Varshini came fully armed for a showdown with the media, caring two hoots for going off the record even when prompted by scribes aghast at her diatribe. Finally, her every word went on record, leaving no scope mischief or misinterpretation. Media persons were like "It is arrogance cloaked in authority".

BUZZ AROUND TOP COP'S KIDS AT DILJIT'S CONCERT

The much-talked-about Dil-Luminati tour by Diljit Dosanjh had its share of backroom drama-and not just those related to permissions or mandated tweaks for on-stage performance. The spotlight briefly shifted to the top cop's children, who were reportedly keen on meeting the Punjabi superstar. However, things didn't go as planned, with the event organizers putting their foot down on the request. What followed has set tongues wagging in high circles. The grapevine has it that two individuals from the singer's team were pulled up and questioned over the incident, though they were quickly let off. The buzz, however, isn't about the questioning-it is about how the kids of top gups always seem to find ways to get what they want. While the concert ended on a high note for most of the audience, the backstage drama has raised questions about what all law-enforcers at high levels can deem or treat as an 'offence'!

WEDDING BELLS RING LOUD IN BUREAUCRATIC CIRCLES

Diwali came and passed without any of

those promised 'political bombs' going off, though that explosives-laden talk had left even some of the babus and memsahibs without sleep for many days in Telangana. Wedding bells are ringing loud in bureaucratic circles now, with a string of ceremonies beginning to light up the social calendar. Gautami, Joint Managing Director of the Musi Riverfront Development Corporation Limited, is preparing to embark on a new chapter in her life as she is readying to tie the knot soon. Likewise, IAS officer Uma Harathi, who had made headlines by securing the 3rd rank in the UPSC 2022 examination, recently exchanged vows in a joyous ceremony. Her score in the civil services examination and her marriage have both become the talking points of admiration in bureaucratic circles. Promising an extended season of marriage-related festivities, news has surfaced that the kid of a senior IPS officer is also getting ready for wedding this month. The saved dates of these celebrations have infused a festive spirit in the otherwise staid corridors of governance. Warm wishes pour in for the happy couples as colleagues and friends celebrate their love and new beginnings. Here's to a season of joy and togetherness in the world of bureaucracy!

NOTE-TAKING SECRETARY SPARKS CURIOSITY

A steno taking notes is a rarity these days. Taking notes is part of a scribe's trappings. However, when Health Minister Damodar Rajanarsimha addressed the media recently, Health Secretary Christina Z Chongthu was spotted busily jotting down notes -- a rather intriguing sight for journalists. Typically, bureaucrats are known to prepare backgrounders into which netas dip often for inputs that could be used to elaborate points during their interactions with the media. But Christina's attention to detail at her own note-taking during the Minister's speech raised eyebrows. It is not that Christina has been seen with a pen in hand, diligently capturing points during the Minister's interactions, for the first time. Noticeably, it has become her habit, whetting curiosity among her colleagues and observers alike about what exactly she is up to? Notably, her note-taking habit is something that not many among those similarly placed would like to inculcate in their daily routine. For, few netas always speak words of wisdom necessitating the services of a secretary to hang on to his every word.

NTR DISTRICT COLLECTOR BEGINS ON A SUNNY NOTE

NTR District collector Dr G Lakshminisha, who assumed charge just two weeks ago, has literally begun on a sunny note, setting an ambitious goal. He is determined to raise awareness about the benefits of using solar power and push for its widespread adoption. Although the initial target for NTR District under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana was 20,000 installations; he has upped the ante by aiming at a tenfold increase, targeting 2 lakh solar installations across the district! *Muft bijli, masth Collector!*

--Yours truly



Minister condemns attack on student, orders swift action

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for BC and EWS Welfare, S Savitha, expressed outrage over the brutal stabbing of a girl in Kothapalli village, Vemula mandal, Kadapa district, on Saturday night.

In a statement on Sunday, the Minister revealed that she had spoken to Kadapa district's in-charge Superintendent of Police, Vidya Sagar Naidu, urging immediate efforts to apprehend the accused, identified as Kulayappa. She also contacted doctors at Tirupati's Ruia Hospital to ensure the victim received top-notch medical care and assured all necessary support for the girl and her family.

The shocking incident occurred when the accused, reportedly a stalker, attacked the victim, Sharmila, a degree student, stabbing her 13 times at her residence after she rejected his advances. Authorities are intensifying their search for the absconding culprit. Meanwhile, the victim's condition remains critical, and the Minister has vowed justice for the grievous crime.

'No Occupancy Certificates in case of violations of norms'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Guntur Municipal Corporation (GMC) has declared that Occupancy Certificates (OCs) will not be granted to newly proposed multi-storey buildings that violate construction norms. GMC Commissioner Puli Srinivasulu stated that constructions encroaching upon roads, ramps, or drainage systems would face stringent penalties and denial of occupancy permits.

On Sunday, Commissioner Srinivasulu personally reviewed applications for OCs in the Gorantla and Reddypalem areas of Guntur city. During inspections, he assessed compliance with key regulations, including setback measurements, road access, and potential encroachments on drainage systems. He directed officials to enforce these norms during approval and construction phases strictly. The Commissioner emphasised the need to adhere to government-mandated building regulations for safe and sustainable urban development.



He instructed urban planning officials to take stringent action against violations and urged Ward Secretariat planning secretaries to conduct regular inspections of ongoing construction projects. In cases of non-compliance, immediate notices must be issued, and higher authorities informed. "No constructions should encroach upon road ramps or drainage systems. Violations

must be rectified immediately," said Commissioner Srinivasulu. He reiterated that setback areas must remain clear, prohibiting unauthorised structures like generator sheds or watchman rooms unless approved by GMC. He also highlighted the importance of maintaining greenery as per sanctioned plans and directed apartment administrators to connect drainage systems to

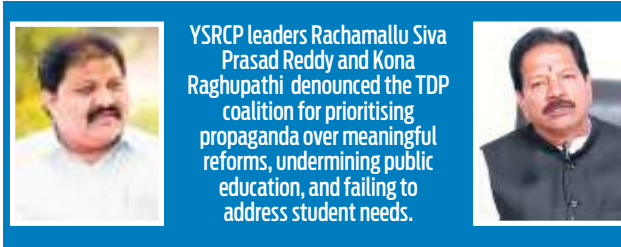
the city's main lines to prevent disruptions. Assistant City Planners Rehman and Mallikarjuna, along with TPS officers Lakshman Swamy and Satyanarayana, were present during the inspections. Commissioner Srinivasulu assured residents that the GMC would continue to prioritise compliance to ensure orderly urban development.

Mega Parents Day a publicity stunt: YSRCP

PNS ■ PRODDATUR/BAPATLA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has criticised the TDP-led coalition government for its alleged failure in the education sector. It accuses it of neglecting reforms, lacking a clear vision, and reducing the "Mega Parents' Day" event to a political spectacle.

Addressing the media in Proddatur, YSRCP spokesperson Rachamalla Sivaprasad Reddy termed the recent "Mega Parents' Day" a mere publicity stunt, offering no tangible benefits to students. He condemned the discontinuation of key initiatives launched under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's



YSRCP leaders Rachamalla Siva Prasad Reddy and Kona Raghupathi denounced the TDP coalition for prioritising propaganda over meaningful reforms, undermining public education, and failing to address student needs.

leadership, such as the Nadu-Nedu programme, English-medium education, and the CBSE curriculum. Sivaprasad highlighted that Rs 100 crore had been invested in schools in his constituency during the YSRCP regime, contrasting this with the current government's failure to allocate adequate

funds for education. In Bapatla, YSRCP leader and former Deputy Speaker Kona Raghupathi criticised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's "Mega Meet," describing it as a political event devoid of substance. He accused the government of neglecting crucial issues like fee

reimbursement, delays in the "Thalli Ki Vandanam" scheme, and the stalled development of Bapatla Medical College. Raghupathi further alleged that the event deliberately excluded key stakeholders to avoid scrutiny of the government's shortcomings.

Both leaders denounced the TDP coalition for prioritising propaganda over meaningful reforms, undermining public education, and failing to address student needs. The YSRCP reaffirmed its commitment to educational development and urged the government to focus on substantive measures instead of political gimmicks.

Take steps...

Continued from Page 1

This will protect the paddy from rain-water and prevent spoilage. These measures are part of the state government's ongoing efforts to protect the interests of farmers and ensure that the paddy harvest remains intact during adverse weather conditions. The government is closely monitoring the situation and working in coordination with local authorities to ensure prompt action.

Low pressure...

Continued from Page 1

The Meteorological Department on Sunday reported that the low pressure area, which formed yesterday over the southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining East Equatorial Indian Ocean, continues to persist over the same region as of 0830 hours today. It is expected to move west-northwestwards and become more marked during the next 24 hours.

The system is likely to continue its west-northwestward movement and is expected to reach the southwest Bay of Bengal, off the Sri Lanka-Tamil Nadu coasts, around December 11, according to the Meteorological Centre.

Heavy rains are likely to occur in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on December 11 and 12. Thunderstorms, accompanied by lightning, are also expected at isolated places in these regions during the same period.

Union Min Rammohan calls for fast-tracking rly projects in S'kulam

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Sunday stressed the urgent need to fast-track pending railway projects in Srikulam district, highlighting their role in enhancing the region's economic growth and cultural heritage.

At the Divisional Railway Review Meeting, Minister Naidu emphasised that these infrastructure developments are crucial for improving transportation connectivity and showcasing Srikulam's cultural legacy. He said, "Expediting these projects will not only enhance transportation but also promote the district's vibrant history."

The meeting focused on ongoing works under the Amrit Bharat scheme at key stations including Srikulam Road, Palasa, Ichchapuram, and Naupada. Wairair Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Manoj Sahu provided updates on the progress.

Minister Naidu advocated for the rapid construction of the Arasavalli Sun Temple structure at Srikulam Road station, and the expansion of the station from four to six platforms to handle growing passenger traffic. Other initiatives discussed included restoring MEMU services, constructing passenger halts at Kameshwaripeta, and completing station buildings at Kotabommali and Poondi.

To improve connectivity on the single-line stretch between Naupada and Gunupur, he proposed crossing facilities at Tembur and Kashinagar and urged for the swift development of Tekkali and Pathapatnam stations.

Ahead of the Sankranti festival, the Minister also recommended special trains for migrant workers, operating between Secunderabad and Srikulam from January 10-12 and January 17-19, respectively. Additionally, he called for the completion of the Gandhi Memorial Building at Dusi Railway Station.



TTD Chairman meets Kanchi pontiff

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

TTD Chairman BR Naidu met the Chief Pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, His Holiness Sri Vijayendra Saraswati Swamiji, on Sunday evening at the Kanchi Mutt in Tirumala.

During their interaction, the Swamiji lauded the recent initiatives of the new TTD Board of Trustees, commending their efforts to uphold the sanctity of Tirumala and benefit devotees.

He encouraged the Chairman to focus on

enhancing Tirumala's spiritual ambience and prioritising the promotion of Vedic education.

The meeting is seen as a gesture of goodwill and cooperation between TTD and the esteemed Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

Police serve notice...

Continued from Page 1

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has granted protection from arrest till December 12, but the Kadapa 4th Additional Sessions Court has dismissed his anticipatory bail petition.

The notice was served based on a statement from Varra Ravindra Reddy, following a complaint filed by TDP activist Hari at the Pulivendula police station. Ravindra Reddy, the YSRCP social media district coordinator, along with Sajjala Bhargav Reddy and Raghava Reddy, was named in the complaint.

Earlier, the police arrested Varra Ravindra Reddy in connection with the case, and he is currently lodged in the Kadapa Central Prison. Additionally, a 41-A notice has been issued to Vivekananda Reddy, the YSRCP social media district convener, regarding the same abusive social media postings.

1L houses for poor by...

Continued from Page 1

Special Chief Secretary for Housing, Ajay Jain, has been regularly reviewing the scheme's status with district officials to ensure timely completion. District Collectors have been instructed to avoid delays, and AP State Housing Corporation MD Rajababu is coordinating with local officers to ensure both speed and quality in construction. In a recent meeting in Vijayawada, Minister Parthasarathi urged Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal Khattar, to allocate funds for essential infrastructure in the housing layouts. The Union Minister assured that these funds would be included in the 2025-26 Union Budget.

The government's efforts reflect its commitment to improving the living conditions of economically weaker sections, with beneficiaries eagerly awaiting the handover of their new homes.

Rebels overthrow Assad...

Continued from Page 1

Many of the capital's residents were in disbelief at the speed at which Assad lost his hold on the country after nearly 14 years of civil war that killed hundreds of thousands of people, displaced half the country's prewar population of 23 million and drew in several foreign powers. Celebrations erupt across the capital: As daylight broke over Damascus, crowds gathered to pray in the city's mosques and to celebrate in the squares, chanting "God is great." People also chanted anti-Assad slogans and honked car horns.

Union Minister Varma unveils Alluri statue at Vuyyuru

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Union Minister of State for Heavy Industries, Bhupathiraju Srinivasa Varma, urged the public to draw inspiration from the fighting spirit of Alluri Sitarama Raju, a prominent freedom fighter who played a key role in India's struggle for independence. He called on people to contribute towards the nation's progress.

On Sunday, Minister Varma, alongside Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations, Kolu Partha Sarathy, Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, and Penamaluru MLA Body Prasad, unveiled a statue of Alluri Sitarama Raju in Rajupeta, Vuyyuru Mandal, Krishna district. The statue was installed by Venkateswara Raju, founder of Ratna Group. Varma paid a heartfelt tribute to Sitarama Raju during the ceremony.



In his speech, Srinivasa Varma emphasised that Alluri Sitarama Raju inspired numerous tribal communities to acquire knowledge, embrace civilisation, and join the freedom movement. He praised Raju's courage while also acknowledging that the previous government had failed to properly recognise many brave individuals in history.

Varma further revealed that the central government is working on naming a road in New Delhi after Alluri Sitarama Raju. Plans are also underway to install statues of Raju in Amaravati, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, and other major cities to honour his bravery.

AP govt halted key edu...

Continued from Page 1

In a series of posts on X, Jagan outlined his concerns, questioning the TDP government's actions. He criticised the government for rebranding regular parent-teacher meetings as ground-breaking initiatives, accusing the TDP of turning routine meetings into campaign platforms, thus undermining the reformative efforts made by the YSRCP government in the education sector.

He also highlighted the government's failure to implement "Talliki Vandanam," a key initiative of the previous government. Jagan pointed out that parent-teacher meetings were an essential part of the YSRCP government's education reforms, including the Nadu-Nedu programme, which improved infrastructure in over 38,000 schools in two phases. He claimed that these initiatives were now being undermined, with the coalition government replacing them with superficial changes like renaming meetings and introducing fund-raising circulars.

Jagan expressed his disappointment over the halting of the Amma Vodi scheme, which provided financial support to mothers for sending their children to school. He revealed that the YSRCP government had disbursed Rs 26,067 crores to 44.49 lakh mothers.

Paddy moisture levels recorded at RKS are final: Collector

● District administration committed to providing MSP for paddy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector DK Balaji has clarified that the moisture levels recorded in paddy grains at the Rythu Seva Kendras (RSK) are final, assuring farmers that they need not worry about this issue. He stated that the district administration is working hard to provide a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy farmers.

On Sunday, Collector Balaji visited villages including Majeru, Lankapalli, and Pupadam Devarakota in Ghantasala mandal. He interacted with paddy farmers and enquired about the MSP and the transportation of paddy bags. Also, he inspected the paddy procurement in these villages.

Many farmers expressed concerns that due to recent floods, their paddy moisture levels exceed 27-30 per cent, leading them to receive only Rs.1,500 for a 75-kg bag. Fearing further heavy rainfall, they had to sell their paddy even with higher moisture content.

During these interactions, Collector Balaji reassured farmers that the district administration is committed to providing MSP for their paddy. He emphasised that they should not worry about selling their produce at the Paddy Procurement Centres (PPC) established at the RSKs. He noted that the moisture levels recorded at the RSKs are final and must be accepted by rice millers. Farmers were encouraged to bring any queries regarding this matter to his attention for resolution.



Krishna District Collector DK Balaji interacting with paddy farmers on Sunday

The Collector also visited the RSK at Devarakota to discuss procurement issues with farmers. One farmer, Vemuri Ratnagiri, informed him that they received Rs.1,500 as MSP for a 75 kg

bag, irrespective of the moisture, from private traders. Due to fears of heavy rains, they sold their produce to these private buyers. He mentioned that they encountered significant challenges in spreading the harvested paddy grains.

Besides, the farmers brought to the Collector's attention that the 1061 and 1262 paddy varieties are in high demand in the market; however, rice millers have shown little interest in purchasing these varieties. They requested dryers for future use to help with processing their paddy grains.

Gajula Naga Srinivasa Rao, the Sarpanch of Achampalem, complained that the Agriculture Department has not conducted e-crop surveys in his village for the past four years. In response, Collector Balaji directed the department officials to submit a report along with the e-crop data. He assured the farmers that a probe will be conducted regarding their concerns.

The Collector was accompanied by Krishna District Agriculture Officer N Padmavathi, Assistant Director Manidhar, Tahsilidar B Vijaya Prasad, Deputy Tahsilidar B Kanaka Durga, and others.

NTR Collector Lakshmisha vows to turn V'wada into a model city

C PRADEEP KUMAR
cpk007@gmail.com
■ VIJAYAWADA

At the heart of Andhra Pradesh's vision for urban transformation lies Vijayawada, one of the State's most prominent cities. For G Lakshmisha, the NTR District Collector, this vision is not just about turning the city into a modern metropolis, but shaping it into a model for the entire State. As he embarks on this journey, he acknowledges the challenges that lie ahead in driving the district's development.

One of the foremost issues Lakshmisha is tackling is the threat of recurring floods from the Budameru River. A priority is to address the encroachment along the flood course, which has long posed a risk to both the environment and the lives of local residents. Relocation of the affected families is a sensitive issue, as it is crucial to ensure that people's livelihoods are not disrupted in the process.

The Collector, at a recent interaction with journalists, pointed to the persistent health challenges in parts of the West NTR district, particularly concerning kidney diseases. While access to safe drinking water is essential, Lakshmisha highlights that the root causes of ill health in these areas extend beyond just water, demanding a more comprehensive approach to public health.

In line with the central government's initiatives, Lakshmisha is spearheading efforts to promote solar energy across the district. Under the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana, residents are being encouraged to install rooftop solar systems. Initially, the target for the NTR district was 20,000 installations. However, the collector has set his sights higher, aiming for a tenfold increase with a target of 2 lakh solar installations. He believes this will not only help the district reduce its energy consumption but also boost awareness about sustainable energy.

Recreation facilities have long been in short supply, and Lakshmisha is keen to address this gap. He envisions the development of riverfronts such as Durga Ghat, Bhavani Ghat, Punnami Ghat, and the Ferry as spaces that could transform the local atmosphere, providing much-needed parks and gardens for the public. These developments are part of his broader strategy to enhance the quality of life for the district's residents.

Another priority is the creation of a sustainable revenue model to support the upkeep of the Statue of Social Justice, a monumental project dedicated to Dr BR Ambedkar. Lakshmisha is focused on creating a comprehensive plan that will ensure the statue not only stands as a symbol of justice but also contributes to the district's economy.

Economic disparity between urban and rural areas remains a critical concern for the collector. Lakshmisha stresses that tailored solutions are needed to bridge the gap, with a focus on improving infrastructure, creating employment opportunities, and supporting local industries, especially in agriculture and small-scale enterprises. Ensuring access to clean water and sanitation across both urban and rural communities will also be a

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priority, as these basic services are fundamental to both health and socio-economic development.

Skill development, another cornerstone of Lakshmisha's vision, is vital to the district's long-term economic prosperity. He is committed to enhancing the skill sets of both urban and rural populations, believing that a well-trained workforce is essential to driving sustainable growth.

With Vijayawada facing significant challenges related to traffic management, Lakshmisha is focused on addressing congestion, accidents, and air pollution. A multi-pronged approach is required, he says, which includes expanding road networks, improving public transport systems, and developing pedestrian-friendly spaces to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

As Lakshmisha sets his sights on these ambitious goals, he remains resolute in his commitment to addressing the district's challenges, believing that with careful planning and community involvement, the NTR district can achieve a brighter, more prosperous future for all its residents.

Chakra Theertha Mukkoti in Tirumala on Dec 12

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

One of the important festivals that is being observed in the auspicious month of Karthika at Tirumala, the Chakra Theertha Mukkoti, will be observed on December 12. The sacred Chakra Theertham is located a few miles away in the southern direction of Srivari Temple, in the deep green woods of Seshachala ranges.

As per the Tamil Karthika month, on the Suddha Dwadasi day, the Chakra Theertha Mukkoti event is celebrated every year. Special Pujas and Abhishekam will be performed by TTD to Sri Sudarshana Chakrattalwar engraved on the rocky hill along with Sri Narasimha Swamy and Anjaneya Swamy idols located in this sacred place on this day and later, Prasadam will be distributed. According to the legend, a sage who was meditating for 12 years at Chakra Theertham when attacked by a demon was protected by none other than the lord himself, who sent his Chakrayudham and killed the demon.

Infrastructure for Tribal Welfare School and College in Vissannapet by Dr Reddy's

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, Dr Reddy's in collaboration with Kakinada Engineering Alumni Trust Services (KEATS) has extended infrastructure support to the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential College of Excellence (Girls) and Gurukul School (Girls) in Vissannapet, NTR District Andhra Pradesh. This effort is further complemented by additional support from a Rotary Club Grant. These institutions, run by the state government provide education to 480 school students and 160 college students primarily girls from tribal areas across the state.

Kumar Randhir Singh, Head Company Secretary & CSR, Dr Reddy's, Hemalatha, CEO, APNRTS, Rtn D Subbarao Ravuri, Rtn Pardha Saradhi Yadhi from Rotary Midtown, Vijayawada, Vijaya, Dy Director APNRTS, K Subhashini Rani, Dy Secretary Academic TW, A Ramu, Dy Tribal Welfare Officer, Kondaparva Village Sarpanch, Ramesh, Rotary Burlingame,



USA joined the inauguration along with representatives KEATS.

Through this initiative, Dr Reddy's has provided infrastructure support, including that for STEM Lab, alongside contributions from other donors, including digital education tools supported by a Rotary Club Grant, enabling students' access to digital tools, engaging teaching methods, and sufficient infrastructure. This project aims to create a world-class educational environment, empowering girls

to take up competitive exams like IIT-JEE, EAMCET, and NEET and preparing them for admissions to prestigious higher education institutions.

In 2023, Dr Reddy's, in association with Dr Reddy's Foundation, partnered with the district and education mandal in Nalgonda to construct a new Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) facility in Kampasagar village. This fully residential facility is designed for girls from classes VI to X, featuring five classrooms, five dormitories, a

kitchen, 24/7 RO water supply, and sanitation facilities. Dr Reddy's, in association with Dr Reddy's Foundation and District Administration and District Medical & Health Office, has upgraded over 11 primary healthcare centres in the villages in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh and implemented key environment-conservation projects in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh. In FY 2023-24, around 4.97 lakhs individuals were impacted through various CSR interventions of Dr Reddy's.

Corruption, neglect destroying KGH

● Patients and staff expose alarming failures at North Andhra's premier healthcare institution

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

King George Hospital (KGH), a vital healthcare institution for North Andhra, is grappling with corruption, neglect, and systemic failures that threaten its ability to serve the region. Many patients travel from neighbouring States like Odisha and Chhattisgarh for treatment at KGH. However, reports of delayed care, preventable deaths, and exploitation have raised serious concerns about its credibility.

For countless individuals, KGH represents the last hope when other options have failed. Yet, tragic stories of lives lost due to delayed treatment are becoming increasingly common. A senior hospital staff member spoke to The Pioneer anonymously. "Emergency cases are routinely ignored unless they come with strong recommendations or bribes," the insider shared.

Corruption also seems to be deeply embedded in the hospital's operations. A recent viral social media post exposed a ward boy demanding Rs 1,500 from an elderly woman for basic help, a practice not isolated to just one incident. Ravi Kumar, a patient's relative, condemned it as "pure exploitation" of vulnerable individuals. A heart patient was abandoned until friends had to rush him to the cardiac ward. The lack of empathy from staff is not just unethical but profoundly inhumane.

The hospital's deteriorating infrastructure further complicates the situation. Many patients are forced to bribe staff for essential services, such as wheelchairs. One attendant shared, "I had to pay Rs 200 just to get a wheelchair for my father." Even more concerning is the shortage of critical medicines and working medical equipment, forcing patients to buy medicines from outside sources. Shanti Devi, whose husband is a patient, expressed frustra-



tion: "Doctors prescribe medicines that aren't available here. We're left to fend for ourselves."

Reports have also surfaced of staff working under the influence of alcohol, particularly during night shifts. One senior staff member hinted that random alcohol tests would expose shocking results. Meanwhile, the death toll continues to climb due to gross negligence. A recent report revealed six deaths in a single day, underlining the lethal consequences of the hospital's failures. Despite clear evidence of misconduct, authorities have taken no substantial action. "This is a tragic reminder of KGH's institutional rot," an insider lamented.

Nearby private diagnostic labs are exploiting the hospital's failings, charging patients exorbitant fees for urgent test results. Ramesh, a relative of a patient, criticised the practice: "They exploit our desperation, knowing we have no other choice."

"It's heartbreaking to see such utter disregard for human life in a critical institution," said a senior doctor.

Plea to control skyrocketing rice prices in open market

● Insecurity over move to implement Cash for Grains scheme for ration-card holders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Muslim United Front and the Muslim Welfare JAC have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar to initiate measures to control skyrocketing rice prices in the open market. MUF and MWJAC president Md. Kaleem said that they wrote letters to PM Modi, CM Naidu and Minister Manohar over the rice prices.

Kaleem said that in the backdrop of the social media posts on the possible implementation of Cash for Grains (rice) scheme through DBT for the ration-card holders, there has been a high degree of insecurity prevailing among the poor and lower middle classes. He opined that giving money instead of rice will definitely not serve the purpose of PDS, especially in South Indian States. He further said that as far as AP is concerned, 63.79 per cent of the population are BPL card holders who receive rice through PDS. Due to the inferior quality of the PDS rice, many of these card holders prefer to sell the rice to millers, hotels etc. through mediators for monetary benefits.

Kaleem recalled that the price of rice (per Kg) in the open market was ranging around Rs 16 during early



2000's. However, the prices are currently Rs.50-60 per kg. He demanded that in this backdrop, the Union Government should adopt a mechanism to distribute the varieties of reasonable quality of rice at subsidised prices to reach an equilibrium point in this regard, where the people could get food grains at an affordable range of prices.

He lamented that the initiative of selling Bharat Rice (Rs. 29 per Kg) via NAFED, NCCF, E-Commerce has not been yielding desired results due to limited number of outlets and inferior quality of the commodity. He felt that if at all the scheme of reimbursing the amount to the card holders (instead of distributing the commodity) is being considered for implementation, it will cost more burden on the exchequer.

Kaleem stated that instead, it is submitted that the Union Government may use the same amount to reach an amicable deal with the rice-millers so that they could provide a nice quality of rice to the PDS beneficiaries. He further stated that similar price-stabilisation mechanisms could also be devised for other essential commodities such as wheat, pulses etc. He opined that such measures will not only help the Union Government in controlling the Inflation, but also positive results in curbing the unauthorised hoarding of essential commodities smuggling, black marketing. He added that their organisations requested to frame a policy to regulate the prices of essential commodities as well as ensuring subsidised distribution of the same to every citizen.

Nandigama KV expected to start from 2025-26

● Union Cabinet gives approval; 200 students from Classes 1-5 in first year

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The third Kendriya Vidyalaya (KV) in NTR district is all set to be established at Nandigama, approximately 55 kilometres from Vijayawada, the district headquarters. Although the school was sanctioned three years ago, its operations were delayed due to various challenges. However, with the consistent efforts of Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath (Nani), the Union Cabinet recently approved the commencement of the school.

The district administration is making the necessary arrangements to start operations at the Government Community Women's Polytechnic College premises located on Madhira Road, Nandigama. Classes are expected to start at the long-cherished Kendriya Vidyalaya at Nandigama from the 2025-26 academic year.

Currently, there are two KVs in the district -- the main one at Satyanarayanapuram and the second one at Guntupalli. Parents are eagerly waiting for the new KV at Nandigama, as they believe that Kendriya Vidyalaya education is the best.

According to the sources, 200 students will be admitted in Classes I-V for the first academic year. As per the New

Education Policy (NEC), each class should have around 40 students. Later on, the strength of the students will be increased every year, the sources added.

Meanwhile, the sources said that the CBSE recognition will be sanctioned from in the 2026-27 academic year as Class VI will be started in that year. As per the rules, Post Graduate Teachers (PGT) recruitment will also be initiated in 2026-27, the sources said.

5 acres allotted at Hanumanthapalem

The previous government allotted the Government Community Women's Polytechnic College building for the school temporarily. The Nandigama municipality spent Rs.73 lakh to renovate the Women's Polytechnic College. Additionally, the government has allotted five acres of land for the construction of the permanent buildings at Hanumanthapalem, beside AP TIDCO houses.

Also, Mamdoga municipality incurred an expenditure of Rs.50 lakh for the levelling of the land. However, the KV works have not been started yet. The NTR district administration is ready to start the building works soon after obtaining funds from the Union government.

Mango crop insurance scheme to cover 15 districts in AP

● State divided into four clusters for implementation of the scheme



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has introduced a Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS) for mango farmers, covering the 2024-25 and 2025-26 seasons. The initiative, aimed at mitigating crop losses due to weather calamities, was announced by Agriculture Minister K. Atchannaaidu in the Legislative Assembly.

Under the scheme, the State has been divided into four clusters for implementation. The Agriculture Insurance Company of India Limited has been appointed as the implementation agency. Farmers in

15 identified districts will benefit, with the scheme offering compensation for crop losses. However, the districts of Krishna, West Godavari, Prakasam, and Visakhapatnam have been excluded.

According to G.O.Rt.No. 752 issued by Special Chief Secretary B. Rajasekhara, the scheme includes both Kharif and Rabi seasons, with mangoes added as an additional crop during Rabi. Farmers in Cluster 1, comprising Anantapuram, will pay a 15% premium. Those in Cluster 3, which includes NTR, Kakinada, YSR Kadapa, Annamayya, Vizianagaram, SPSR Nellore, and Chittoor dis-

tricts, will pay 16.77%. In Cluster 4, covering Srikakulam, Sri Satyasai, Tirupati, and East Godavari districts, farmers will pay a 17.74% premium. Farmers in Cluster 5, which includes Nandyal, Anakapalli, and Eluru, will pay 16.08%.

Participation in the scheme is voluntary for both loanee and non-loanee farmers. Marginal farmers, who will contribute between 15% and 17.74% of the premium, are expected to benefit significantly from this initiative. The scheme aims to provide financial security to mango farmers by addressing crop losses caused by adverse weather conditions.



Drone cameras enhance efficiency of policing: SP

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Superintendent of Police (SP), AR Damodhar, has said that the Police department is leveraging advanced technology to improve criminal investigations and ensure efficient policing. He emphasised the significant role drone cameras play in achieving these objectives.

An advanced drone, DJI Air 3S, was donated to the Prakasam police by NRI Tanikonda Venkata Rao. The SP handed over the drone to Darsi Circle Inspector (CI) Y. Rama Rao at a programme held on Sunday.

Speaking on the occasion, SP Damodhar highlighted the multiple uses of drone cameras in policing. He expressed gratitude to the donor and his family for their generous contribution.

The SP explained that drone cameras are instrumental in regulating traffic during events like 'jatara' and processions, as well as during emergencies such as floods and heavy rains. They aid in assessing the situation promptly, facilitating effective relief and rescue operations.

Additionally, drones assist in identifying activities like the brewing of illicit liquor in

Prakasam district SP AR Damodhar said that drone cameras are instrumental in regulating traffic during events like 'jatara' and processions, as well as during emergencies such as floods and heavy rains. They aid in assessing the situation promptly, facilitating effective relief and rescue operations

remote areas, illegal gambling dens, and the consumption of liquor in public places.

CI Y. Rama Rao, IT Core Inspector Suryanarayana, Darshi Sub-Inspector (SI) Murali, and PCR SI Prabhakar Reddy were present on the occasion.

Comments against CM: TDP leader lodges complaint

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Buddha Venkanna has filed a complaint against YSRCP leader and MP (RS) V Vijayasai Reddy. He asked the Vijayawada Commissioner of Police Rajasekhara Babu to register a case and take action against Reddy for inappropriate comments against Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. MP Vijayasai Reddy, taking to social media platform X, had opined that Chandrababu was incapable of fulfilling his responsibilities due to old age and further opined Pawan Kalyan was suitable to handle governance.

Ex-Pithapuram MLA Varma dares YSRCP for debate on Kakinada SEZ land row

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Pithapuram MLA and TDP leader, SVSN Varma, on Sunday demanded clarity regarding the ongoing controversy over the alleged land grab in the Kakinada Special Economic Zone (SEZ). He expressed strong dissatisfaction with the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), which has been calling for investigations by the CBI and ED into the matter. Varma accused the YSRCP of hypocrisy, suggesting that the party was acting defensively, as though it had something to

hide, and referred to their actions as those of "thieves."

In a scathing criticism, Varma stated that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is always open to any form of investigation and expressed confidence in the party's stance. He challenged YSRCP leaders to openly discuss the SEZ land issue in the heart of Pithapuram town, where the controversy is believed to have originated. Varma invited YSRCP leaders to a public debate at the Uppada bus stand in Pithapuram, where they could present their claims and coun-

terclaims along with supporting documents.

The former MLA also accused YSRCP leadership, particularly former chief minister and party chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, of aggravating the plight of farmers involved in the SEZ land issue. Varma specifically highlighted the YSRCP's alleged actions in registering farmers' lands, which he claimed had added to the farmers' burden and worsened their situation. He stated that the party's handling of the issue had pushed the farmers into further hardship.

Varma also criticised the YSRCP for staging "dramas" with what he termed "paid artists" to divert attention from the real issues. He expressed frustration that, instead of addressing the legitimate concerns of farmers and residents, the party was indulging in political theatrics.

The war of words between the TDP and YSRCP clearly reflects the growing tensions over the controversial land allocation in the Kakinada SEZ, with both parties accusing each other of misconduct and political manipulation.



Police rescue youth swept away at Suryalanka Beach

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The timely intervention of police saved the life of a youth who was drowning at Suryalanka beach, with SP Tushar Dudi praising the personnel for their quick action.

According to the police, a five-member group from Khammam in Telangana State visited Suryalanka beach on Sunday. They went into the sea for a bath, but 18-year-old Palakurthi Yashwant was swept away by the waves. His friends

began shouting for help, and their cries were heard by the outpost police personnel.

Head Constable M. Pothuraju, Home Guard N. Srinivasa Rao, and expert swimmers on duty at the beach immediately rushed into action and rescued Yashwant. They brought him to the shore, provided first aid, and he soon recovered. He was later handed over to his friends. District SP Tushar Dudi urged tourists visiting beaches in Bapatla district to strictly follow the

police department's instructions. He highlighted that the sea can be unpredictable, and tourists must be especially cautious during high tides or strong waves. The SP also stressed that ignoring police warnings could put lives at risk. He advised that no one should enter the sea after consuming alcohol and reminded visitors that the instructions and warnings issued by the police are for their safety, ensuring a pleasant visit and safe return.

MP takes initiative to promote entrepreneurship

● Collaboration with NIRD Hyderabad to conduct training programmes on self-employment schemes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party State leader Madigani Gurunatham has highlighted the efforts made by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and MP Kesineni Sivanath towards the vision of a progressive Andhra Pradesh, and the steps to transform at least one member in every family into an entrepreneur.

During a press conference held at the Vijayawada Parliament Office and NTR Bhavan in Gurunath Colony on Sunday, Gurunatham said the initiative aims to provide self-employment opportunities to unemployed youth, aspiring industrialists and small-scale business owners in NTR district. As part of this, MP Kesineni Chinni has collaborated with the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) in Hyderabad to conduct awareness and training programmes on self-employment schemes offered by the Central government.

Gurunatham announced that in the first phase, 50 candidates will be sent to NIRD in Hyderabad by bus on Monday morning for training on various self-employment schemes. He added that MP Kesineni Nani has taken proactive steps to facilitate bank loans for interested individuals after



completing their training. This programme will be conducted weekly, with plans to train and transform 40,000 unemployed people in NTR district into entrepreneurs over the next four years, at a rate of 10,000 per year.

Former Vijayawada Urban SC Cell President GV Narasimha Rao praised MP Sivanath for consistently promoting awareness and training programmes for

the unemployed youth under schemes such as the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and MSME initiatives. He stressed that the MP is working to unlock the potential of youth by facilitating loans based on their interests and capabilities. The MP has also engaged with NIRD officials to ensure these programmes reach unemployed youth in both rural

and urban areas of the district. Local corporator Jasti Sambasiva Rao, NTR District SC Cell President Songa Sanjay Varma, TDP SC Cell State representative Paripatapu Rajesh, senior TDP leaders Narasimha Chowdary, former Mayor Tadi Shakuntala and TDP leaders Pamarthi Kishore Babu, Dr Chaitanya, Abid Hussain and others were present.

comment on the entire cabinet.

She said that she was elected as an MLA earlier on a TDP ticket and Sanjay should know that Warangal and Karimnagar were centres of the Naxal movement, she said. "The BJP's top leaders like Narendra Modi and Amit Shah asked Naxals to join public life. However, Bandi Sanjay Kumar has branded me as an urban Naxal. Sanjay hurt me psychologically by trolling me on social media when I took over as Minister. His latest comments pained me a lot. Sanjay should withdraw his comments against me," she said.

Seethakka said that the Congress Government's mission is a peaceful Telangana without police encounters. She said that houses and lands were distributed to the poor by the Congress Government and the farm loans of all eligible farmers have been waived.

She said that the KCR government had cheated farmers after promising to waive their loans. The Congress Government aims to develop all sections of society, she added. Seethakka said that some farmers became ineligible for loan waivers due to the non-rescheduling of loans by the BRS Government.

Tribals build makeshift school for their children

● Residents of remote hamlets in ASR district show determination for a better future

PNS ■ BAPATLA

The tribals of the agency region in Alluri Seetharamaraju (ASR) district have shown that determination and self-reliance can overcome even the most daunting challenges. Residents of Buruga and Chinna Konela, two remote tribal hamlets in Rompalle panchayat under Anantagiri mandal, have constructed a makeshift school shed using their own resources, emphasising their commitment to education despite systemic neglect. "We cannot wait for someone to come and help us," said Buriga Pentayya, a local villager. "If we don't do this for our children, who will? We want them to study, succeed, and have a better life than we did."

The MPP Elementary School in Buruga village, established 60 years ago, has faced decades of neglect. Although 35 students are enrolled, the lack of a functional building has turned education into a daily struggle. Villagers, many of whom are



uneducated, dream of their children breaking free from poverty and securing better futures. Despite repeated pleas to the authorities, the school remained without appointed teachers or proper facilities for years. "There is no road to the village, and the forest area makes it difficult for teachers to commute," explained a villager. In 2022, ITDA Project Officer Gopalakrishna Ronanki trekked 15 kilometres to witness the villagers' plight firsthand. His efforts resulted in the appointment of teachers, but the lack of infrastructure persisted. Classes were often held under trees during dry spells and suspended entirely during monsoons. "In 2012-13,

Rs 13 lakh was sanctioned under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan for the school, but it only covered the foundation," said Kona Patti Simhachalam, a resident. "Since then, no progress has been made." Faced with continued apathy, the villagers sought help from the Freedom Society, which provided benches, chairs, and play equipment. Former Union Energy Secretary EAS Sharma also offered financial support. Inspired, the community rallied together, gathering sticks, stones, and other materials to build a temporary school shed. "Support from organisations gave us the courage to start this initiative," said Somila Appalaraju, the 10th ward

member.

However, the villagers' struggle reflects broader issues. They allege exploitation of their ancestral lands by realtors and officials, made easier by their lack of education. "This is why we fight for our children's education," said S. Shankar Rao. "We want to equip them with the knowledge to protect their rights."

The villagers have now turned their focus back to the government, urging authorities to construct a permanent school building. "We have done our part," said Buriga Pentayya. "Now it's time for the authorities to do theirs. Our children deserve a proper education."

Sanjay must know Eatala's ideology, says Seethakka

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, should know the ideology of the BJP's Malkajigiri MP, Eatala Rajender, before levelling allegations against the Congress Government, Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka said. It may be recalled that Sanjay had said on Saturday that the Revanthy Reddy Government is a captive in the hands of urban Naxals and that former Naxals are in the cabinet. Reacting to Sanjay's comments on Sunday, Seethakka said that the BJP and the BRS are trying to topple the Congress Government.

Speaking to the media in Mahabubabad district on Sunday, Seethakka said that people have extended their support to the Congress Government during the last one year.

Taking exception to Sanjay's statement that former Naxals are there in the cabinet, Seethakka said that she condemns Sanjay's comments as she had taken part in the Naxal movement. She recalled that she was a lawyer in Warangal and was elected as a public representative three times. She said that Sanjay should make comments directly against her and that it is not proper to



comment on the entire cabinet. She said that she was elected as an MLA earlier on a TDP ticket and Sanjay should know that Warangal and Karimnagar were centres of the Naxal movement, she said. "The BJP's top leaders like Narendra Modi and Amit Shah asked Naxals to join public life. However, Bandi Sanjay Kumar has branded me as an urban Naxal. Sanjay hurt me psychologically by trolling me on social media when I took over as Minister. His latest comments pained me a lot. Sanjay should withdraw his comments against me," she said.

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ACROSS THE STATES



Three students killed as bus overturns in Rajasthan

Three school students were killed and 25 others were injured when a bus overturned in Rajasthan's Rajasmand district on Sunday, police said. The accident occurred when the students of Mahatma Gandhi School, Amet were en route to Parshuram Mahadev temple in Desuri, Pali for a picnic by bus, District Superintendent of Police Manish Tripathi said. There were 62 children and six teachers in the bus, he said. The bus went out of control and overturned near Desuri Naal, killing three students and 25 other children injured in the accident, while 37 students were sent home after first aid, the DSP said. Charbhujia Station House Officer Govardhan Singh said that three students who died on the spot in the accident have been identified as Preeti, Aarti, and Anita. The injured have been admitted to the hospital and the bodies have been handed over to the family members after post-mortem, Tripathi said. A case has been registered against the bus driver and investigation is underway, the officer said. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Bhajanalal Sharma and Governor Haribhau Bagade expressed condolences. The chief minister in a post on X in Hindi said, "As soon as information about the accident was received, necessary instructions were given to the district administration officials to ensure proper and immediate medical treatment of the injured children."



Monkeys fight over banana disrupts train services

A fight between two monkeys over a banana at the Samastipur station in Bihar disrupted train services, officials said on Sunday. The incident happened on Saturday afternoon when the two monkeys were fighting on platform number four, they said. "Amid the fight, suddenly one of them threw an object at the other. The object hit the overhead wire, and the electrical line tripped. The incident caused disruption in train services for some time," East Central Railway's Chief Public Relations Officer Sharswati Chandra said. "It was immediately rectified by railway personnel, and train services resumed," he said.



Six-month-old foetus stuck in toilet pipe recovered

A six-month-old foetus, stuck in a toilet pipe of a house, was recovered on Sunday in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, police said. The foetus was taken out after breaking the pipe by the owner of the house Devendra alias Deva, they said. Upon receiving information Indrapuram police reached the spot and interrogated the landlord, who told them that in the morning the pipe was cut due to water stagnation, following which they found the foetus stuck in the pipe. He also told the police that nine tenants are living in his house. All of them have been interrogated and after completing the legal action the foetus has been preserved, the police added. The DNA of the tenants will be matched with DNA of the embryo to ascertain who committed the crime, Indrapuram Assistant Commissioner of Police Swatantra Kumar Singh said.

India to set up anti-drone unit for border security: Shah

PNS ■ JODHPUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said India will soon create a comprehensive anti-drone unit to secure its borders as the "menace" of unmanned aerial vehicles is going to get serious in the coming days.

Addressing BSF troops at the 60th Raising Day event of the force here at its training camp, about 300 km from the India-Pakistan border, Shah said the initial results of a "laser equipped anti-drone gun-mounted" mechanism have been encouraging.

This has led to an increase in drone neutralisation and detection cases, up from 3 per cent to 55 per cent, along the India-Pakistan border in Punjab, he said. "The drone menace is going to get more serious in the coming days... We are tackling this issue in a 'whole of government' approach with the border guarding forces, defence and research organisations and the DRDO joining hands."

"We are going to create a comprehensive anti-drone unit for the country in the coming time," Shah said.



According to official data, more than 260 drones have been downed or recovered from India's border with Pakistan this year as compared to about 110 in 2023. The maximum number of such interdictions of drones carrying arms and drugs have taken place in Punjab and very few in Rajasthan and Jammu. The minister reviewed the ceremonial parade, took salute and awarded medals to gallantry award winners and gave

away some other decorations. The Border Security Force (BSF), which has a strength of about 2.65 lakh personnel, was raised on December 1, 1965. It is primarily tasked with guarding more than 6,300 kms of Indian fronts with Pakistan and Bangladesh apart from rendering a variety of duties in the internal security domain of the country. Shah said the ongoing Comprehensive

Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS) for securing India's borders with Pakistan (2,289 km) and Bangladesh (4,096 km) is a work in progress. "We have had an encouraging response from the CIBMS deployed along the riverine border in Assam's Dhubri (India-Bangladesh international border) but some improvements are required," he said.

'Elaborate security arrangement for Kumbh Mela'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Security checks at entry points, announcements in Indian languages, and a healthcare facility are among several measures being put in place for the Kumbh Mela beginning in Prayagraj next month. Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak met with Maharashtra Governor C P Radhakrishnan and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday, inviting them to the Maha Kumbh congregation.

Pathak said the Maha Kumbh - a Hindu religious congregation held once in 12 years - will be organised from January 13 to Feb 26. "I came here to extend the Maha Kumbh invitation to the people of Maharashtra through the governor and the chief minister. Come and experience spirituality," he told reporters in Mumbai.

Cong alone can give stable govt, says Karnataka CM

PNS ■ BALLARI (KARNATAKA)

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said the Congress alone can give a stable government unlike the BJP, which, gave multiple chief ministers during its rule in the state.

He alleged that the BJP never came to power on its own and needed horse trading, spending crores of rupees to rule the state.

"The BJP never gave a stable government. From 2008 to 2013, there were three chief ministers. Again from 2019 to 2023, there were two chief ministers," Siddaramaiah said at the 'Jana Kalyana Samavesh' (public welfare meeting) at Sandur in Ballari district.

The public meeting was a thanksgiving event for the



voters of Sandur for electing the Congress candidate Annapoorna Tukaram in the assembly bypoll recently. The chief minister said, "When I became CM in 2013, we had 221 MLAs. Again in 2023, we won 136 seats. We will give a stable government." Siddaramaiah ruled for the full five-year term from 2013 to 2018.

Law and order worrisome in Delhi: Arvind Kejriwal

Says Centre will be held accountable

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday lashed at the BJP-led Centre over "worrisome" law and order in the national capital and asserted the situation would have been different if his party government exercised control over Delhi Police.

Addressing a 'padyatra' ahead of the upcoming Assembly polls in Karol Bagh, Kejriwal said he start an agitation with the public to force the Centre to ensure their safety in the city.

"Delhi Police is not in our control, otherwise, the situation in Delhi would not have been this bad. Just as I fixed



schools, hospitals, and electricity, I would have fixed law and order too," he asserted.

"Now we need to raise our voices. All of us together must raise our voices. I will unite all of Delhi, and we will demand from these BJP leaders to pro-

vide security to Delhi," he said. The AAP has stepped up its attack on the BJP ahead of the elections for 70 Assembly seats in Delhi due February next year.

"Delhi chose me to fix electricity, water, education and healthcare — I did all of it. The BJP was supposed to handle law and order — they ruined it," Kejriwal charged.

The former Delhi chief minister said the AAP government will soon roll out a scheme for providing an honorarium of Rs 1,000 to each woman in the city. "It is coming very soon. So don't worry about that."

Kejriwal was accompanied by local MLA Vishesh Ravi.

Delhi's air quality deteriorates, AQI crosses 300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality took a downturn on Sunday, plunging again into the 'very poor' category with an AQI reading of 302 after having improved to the 'moderate' level at the start of December.

The air quality had last been recorded in the 'very poor' category on November 30, with a reading of 346.

The 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) of the city was recorded at 302 at 4 pm on Sunday, marking a deterioration compared to Saturday's reading of 233 ('poor' category).

Of the 38 air quality monitoring stations in the city, 23 reported air quality in the 'very poor' category on Sunday, compared to only two on Saturday.

Meanwhile, 13 stations recorded air quality in the 'poor' category, and the rest were in the 'moderate' category, according to the Sameer app. At the start of December,



the air quality improved, shifting first to the 'poor' category and then further to the 'moderate' category.

But Sunday saw the air quality deteriorating sharply to the 'very poor' category from 'moderate.' The Central Pollution Control Board (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 above 400 as "severe". The primary pollutants on Sunday were PM 10 and PM2.5 with PM 10 levels recorded at 249

µg/m³ and PM 2.5 levels at 134.4 µg/m³ at 4 p.m.

These fine particles pose significant health risks as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

Meanwhile, the Decision Support System (DSS), the primary tool used to assess and estimate the sources of pollution in Delhi, has not been updated since November 29.

The latest data available on the website is from November 26 to November 29, and data for the past four days is now missing.



Developed India no longer dream, it is goal: Dhankhar

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that "Viksit Bharat" is no longer a dream, but a target that has to be achieved with the collective efforts of the citizens, keeping the message of the Bhagavad Gita in mind.

He also warned people about forces that want to hurt India.

"We have chosen the path of Viksit Bharat in 2047. Viksit Bharat is no longer a dream, but a target before us. To achieve it, we will have to keep the message of the Gita in mind... Like Arjuna was focused on his target, we will have to have the same vision, the same determination, the same concentration," Dhankhar said.

'Attack-dog' behaviour embarrassment to India

Tharoor slams BJP after US rejects allegations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Sunday slammed the BJP after the US rejected the ruling party's allegations that elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India and said this "attack-dog" behaviour is an embarrassment to India.

The US on Saturday rejected the BJP's allegations that organisations funded by the US State Department and elements in the American "deep state" were behind attempts to destabilise India through targeted attacks on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and business tycoon Gautam Adani.

A spokesperson at the US embassy described the allegations as "disappointing" and asserted that the US government has been a champion of media freedom around the world.

The BJP alleged on Thursday that the US deep



state colluded with the media portal OCCRP (Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project) and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to "damage" India's image.

In a post in X, Tharoor said, "It's clear the BJP neither understands democracy nor diplomacy. They are so blinded by petty politics that they forget the value of a free press and vibrant independent civil society organisations in a democracy, and they are oblivious to a ruling party's responsibilities in maintaining good relations with key foreign countries."

'Consider 'public demand' for ballot paper voting'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Sunday urged the Supreme Court and the Election Commission to take note of the "growing public demand" for ballot paper voting in view of "doubts" about the mandate in assembly elections.



The opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi has upped the ante against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) after the BJP-led Mahayuti won 230 out of 288 seats in the Maharashtra assembly elections. Patole claimed the Mahayuti victory didn't reflect the man-

date of the people. "There is a widespread confusion among people about the new state government. A strong sentiment suggests that the government doesn't reflect the people's mandate," Patole told reporters.

Several leaders from opposition parties, including NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, visited Markadwadi village in Solapur district to express solidarity with villagers who had tried to hold a mock "repoll" using ballot papers while questioning the EVM credibility.

"This public sentiment is not confined to Markadwadi but it resonates across villages in Maharashtra. A demand for conducting voting through ballot papers is growing with village sabhas passing resolutions to this effect," Patole claimed.

Cong demands discussion in Parliament on India-China relations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Criticising the government over its statement in Parliament on India-China ties, the Congress on Sunday claimed that the Modi government has agreed to a "new normal" over the "old normal" prevailing before April 2020 which was unilaterally disturbed by China.

It also demanded that Parliament be allowed to debate the full gamut of the relationship between the two countries.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said a discus-

sion in Parliament on the India-China relationship should focus on both strategic and economic policy, especially since our dependence on China has increased economically, even as it unilaterally changed the status quo on our borders over four years back.

In a statement, Ramesh said the Congress has studied the recent suo motu statement made by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in both Houses of Parliament titled "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China".

It is unfortunate, but typical of the Modi government, that MPs were not permitted to



"The House is well aware of the circumstances leading up to the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020."

seek any clarifications, he said. While "fully appreciating" the sensitive nature of many aspects of India-China border relations, he said the Congress

has four pointed questions on the statement issued by the Modi government.

Ramesh noted that the statement claims that "the House is

well aware of the circumstances leading up to the violent clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020", and pointed out that it is an unfortunate reminder that the very first official communication to the nation on this crisis came on June 19, 2020, when the PM provided a clean chit publicly to China and falsely stated "Na koi hamari seema mein ghusa aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai".

"Not only was this an insult to our fallen soldiers but it also weakened India's position in subsequent negotiations. Whatever prompted the PM to make this assertion?" Ramesh said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

End of an era

The fall of Damascus to rebel forces and Bashar al-Assad's flight marks a watershed moment in Syrian history

The Assad family's grip on Syria, a legacy spanning more than five decades, has come to an end. The dramatic overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, following the rebel forces' breach of Damascus, marks the end of an era that began with his father, Hafez al-Assad. This monumental shift reshapes Syria's trajectory and poses critical questions for West Asia. The Assad dynasty began in 1970 when Hafez al-Assad seized power in a coup, transforming a politically unstable Syria into a tightly controlled state. Hafez's rule was characterised by ruthless centralisation, sectarian manipulation, and an iron grip on the military. His divide-and-rule tactics entrenched the Alawite minority—a historically marginalised community—to positions of power, ensuring the regime's survival at the expense of institutional robustness. Hafez's successor, his son Bashar, inherited a state rife with contradictions. Initially hailed as a potential reformer, Bashar's presidency quickly descended into authoritarianism, economic cronyism, and brutal suppression of dissent. His consolidation of power alienated Syria's rural majority and exacerbated sectarian tensions, sowing the seeds of unrest that erupted in 2011 during the Arab Spring.



Widespread poverty, corruption, and inequality under Bashar al-Assad's rule alienated vast swathes of the population. Economic mismanagement, compounded by a severe drought in the late 2000s, devastated rural livelihoods and drove migration to overcrowded urban centres, fueling discontent. The 2011 uprising ignited a protracted civil war that fractured Syria. While Bashar managed to cling to power for over a decade, the regime's reliance on military force to suppress dissent alienated many. The state's inability to provide security or basic services during the war eroded its legitimacy. A coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) capitalised on waning regime strength. Despite its controversial history as a former al-Qaida affiliate, HTS's military success and rebranding under Abu Mohammed al-Jolani enabled it to unify disparate opposition factions, culminating in the capture of Damascus. It fell after weeks of fierce fighting, prompting Bashar and his family to flee. The fall of the Assad regime has far-reaching consequences for Syria and the broader West Asia. Syria faces a precarious future, with no clear political alternative to the Assads. The rise of HTS raises concerns about governance and inclusivity in a post-Assad Syria. Without a unifying national vision, the risk of further fragmentation looms large. The power shift in Syria will likely unsettle neighbouring countries. Turkey, which has supported opposition factions, may seek to expand its influence. Iran, a long-time ally of Assad, faces the prospect of diminished leverage, while Israel watches the developments with caution. Indeed, decades of conflict have left Syria with a shattered economy, displaced millions, and decimated infrastructure. The international community will need to step up with aid and reconstruction efforts to prevent further suffering of Syrian people.

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PICTALK



Tourists gear up to take a hot air balloon ride in Manali

Domestic compulsions get the better of Trudeau



SONAL SHUKLA

While the Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's focus on India may serve short-term political goals, it risks long-term damage to bilateral relations

Recently, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) made sensational claims accusing Indian diplomats of engaging in acts of violence, intimidation, and murder targeting Khalistani extremists, allegedly with the help of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. This accusation came just two days before Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was scheduled to testify before the Foreign Interference Commission, which was investigating allegations of Chinese interference in elections. These allegations suggested that such interference had benefited Trudeau's Liberal Party, contributing to its electoral success and the loss of seats for Conservative candidates. Notably, a day before the RCMP's claims, members of Trudeau's government leaked sensitive information to *The Washington Post* (WP) to amplify Ottawa's narrative internationally. On October 16, Trudeau appeared before the commission but devoted significant attention to India instead of addressing the allegations of Chinese interference. He admitted to having no "hard evidence" but only "intelligence inputs" regarding the claims against India, raising questions about his motives.

Political Diversion Prime Minister Trudeau faces mounting dissatisfaction among Canadians over various domestic crises, including high living costs, an unaffordable real estate market, immigration issues, and rising unemployment. Economic challenges such as slow growth, a widening fiscal deficit, and stagnating per capita GDP have further eroded Trudeau's support. Additionally, accusations of personal extravagance and the unpopular carbon tax have compounded public frustration. Speculation abounds that Trudeau may also be contending with internal dissent within his party.

Khalistani Separatism For decades, India has criticised Canada for allegedly providing a safe haven to Khalistani separatists, driven largely by domestic vote bank politics. The most egregious example of Canada's



leniency toward Khalistani extremists was the 1985 Air India Flight 182 bombing. Despite prior intelligence, Ottawa has been accused of failing to prevent the attack or bring its perpetrators to justice. Sikhs represent approximately 2.1% of Canada's population but hold disproportionate influence with 4.4% of parliamentary representation. While the majority of Sikh Canadians do not support Khalistan, a vocal minority of Khalistani extremists wields significant political influence through intimidation and mobilization. Their support ensures votes, financial contributions, and political protection, making Canadian politicians reluctant to alienate them. Maxime Bernier, leader of the People's Party of Canada, has openly criticized this dynamic. He condemned Trudeau and Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre for not naming "Khalistani Sikhs" while condemning attacks on Hindu temples, accusing them of pandering to extremist elements. Bernier argued that Canada must collaborate with India to address Khalistani extremism instead of jeopardising bilateral relations. Toronto MP Kevin Vuong also raised concerns over the growing threat to Hindu Canadians following recent attacks on temples.



PRIME MINISTER TRUDEAU FACES MOUNTING DISSATISFACTION AMONG CANADIANS OVER VARIOUS DOMESTIC CRISES, INCLUDING HIGH LIVING COSTS, AN UNAFFORDABLE REAL ESTATE MARKET, IMMIGRATION ISSUES, AND RISING UNEMPLOYMENT.

Ottawa has accused India of being uncooperative in the investigation into the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistani figure. However, some analysts suggest the issue lies in Canada's limited geopolitical leverage compared to the United States. For instance, WP reports allege that the CIA assisted in gathering evidence implicating Indian operatives in potential plots against Khalistani leaders. In contrast, Canada has only intelligence inputs from its Five Eyes partners and intercepted conversations of Indian diplomats. Ironically, while Canada prioritises the safety of Khalistani extremists, acts of violence, hate speech, and threats targeting Indian diplomats, temples, and community leaders have received little attention from Trudeau's government.

Trudeau's Dilemma Recent revelations have further complicated Trudeau's position. Last month, RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme claimed to have "irrefutable evidence" implicating senior Indian officials in Nijjar's murder. However, Trudeau later denied possessing any such evidence, calling leaks to *The Globe and Mail* baseless and criminal. This inconsistency has fueled speculation about Trudeau's motives and whether external pressures—such as U.S. intelligence directives or

political considerations—might be influencing his stance.

Future of India-Canada Relations Despite robust people-to-people ties and ongoing trade, India's relationship with Canada has been fraught with tensions over Khalistani extremism. The issue transcends Trudeau or the Liberal Party and reflects deeper systemic problems in Canadian politics. Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre, while maintaining a neutral stance, has also avoided directly addressing Khalistani extremism, raising doubts about whether a change in government would significantly alter Canada's approach. India has historically responded to incidents involving Khalistani extremism in Canada with diplomatic protests and calls for accountability. However, experts argue that India should adopt a more proactive and sustained approach, raising the issue at international forums like the United Nations and during bilateral dialogues with Western nations. Emphasising the principles of hate speech and incitement laws, which exist in Canadian legislation, could strengthen India's case against Khalistani violence.

(The writer is a Public Policy Analyst and Lawyer National Law University, Jodhpur; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVT IGNORES PROTESTING FARMERS

Madam — The news, the government is not in a mood to talk to protesting farmers (December 8), is received with a lot of concern by many. The country witnessing the largest and the most prolonged protest in this decade is by the farmers. The woes of the farmers are genuine and can be better understood by the fact that millions of farmers had committed suicide due to the hostile policies of the government that plunges them in unbearable debt. Withdrawing subsidies, lack of control over the growing cost of the inputs and above all, lack of certainty over the returns in terms of the produce or the profit are the main reasons.

The price of every product produced is fixed by the manufacturer. But agricultural products are the only exception. The farmer faces all the odds and bears all the pains with lofty hopes but miserably fails in the market due to the lack of a mechanism to get him reasonable returns. The field is left to the domination of the middlemen. Neither the producer nor the consumer gets the benefit. The government should take control of the entire mechanism and regulate it with norms that will not deprive anyone. It is unfortunate that the same person who was the Chief Minister of MP, where 6 protesting farmers were shot dead, is the Union Minister handling this ministry that again shoots at the farmers with teargas shells.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

INS TUSHIL JOINS FLEET

Madam — The Indian Navy will induct its latest multimedia stealth guided missile frigate, INS Tushil during a ceremony in Russia on December 9. It is really another milestone in the history of the Indian Navy. A frigate is a type of warship designed for various naval operations, including escorting large vessels and engaging in combat with enemy ships, submarines, and aircraft. It is the seventh ship in this series and

Air pollution menace



Air pollution is a significant national issue in India, affecting millions of people across the country. Several key points need to be considered to address this grave issue worsening over time. The loss of life expectancy and the impact of air pollution on quality of life are also affecting the economic growth of the country. It degrades the environ-

ment severely and exacerbates climate change by increasing greenhouse gas emissions. The government is quite aware of the major sources of air pollution, and there are laws to control them, but they are not being implemented strictly, for example, vehicular and industrial emissions, construction dust, and stubble burning due to various reasons, including political.

Delhi often receives the most attention for its severe air pollution in terms of the local and central governments blaming each other and passing the buck. Political consensus is required to control sources of air pollution and implement and frame new laws to mitigate its impacts. So, it is appropriate and necessary to discuss air pollution in the Parliament.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

World Climate Day: A call for inclusive and urgent action

Addressing climate change requires shared responsibility. Wealthy nations must fulfill financial and technical support commitments

Climate change disproportionately affects the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. For them, it's not just an environmental issue but a daily struggle for survival. Living in precarious conditions, these populations bear the brunt of climate-induced disasters such as floods, droughts, and extreme weather, which devastate their homes, livelihoods, and food security. As global warming intensifies, it deepens social divides, further endangering marginalised groups and underscoring the urgent need for inclusive and compassionate action.



people-remains unprotected. These gaps leave millions exposed to the worsening impacts of climate change. In India, climate change has become an immediate reality. The Yale Programme on Climate Change Communication found that 85 per cent of respondents had experienced global warming effects firsthand, an 11 per cent increase since 2021-22.

Unequal Toll

Vulnerable regions face higher mortality rates during climate-related disasters. Between 2010 and 2020, deaths from floods, droughts, and storms in high-vulnerability areas were 15 times higher than in low-vulnerability ones. In South Asia, climate-induced migration poses a growing threat. Research estimates that up to 45 million people in India could be displaced by 2050 due to rising sea levels and

shifting rainfall patterns. These patterns highlight the unequal risks faced by marginalised communities.

Socio-Economic Trade-Offs Transitioning to renewable energy presents both opportunities and challenges. In India, while 85 per cent of people believe renewable energy will reduce air pollution, concerns about job losses and rising electricity costs persist. Balancing environmental goals with socio-economic realities is essential for equitable progress.

Addressing Inequities

Effective climate solutions must consider inequality. For example, carbon pricing can disproportionately burden low-income households if not implemented thoughtfully. Similarly, conservation efforts restricting access to forests can harm Indigenous livelihoods. Community engagement is crucial to creating inclusive policies. In India's Bundelkhand region, local water management projects have reduced migration by improving resource access, demonstrating the potential of community-led solutions.

Equitable Climate Action India's commitment to carbon

neutrality by 2070 and interim goals for 2030 signal progress. Achieving these targets will require collaboration across governments, businesses, and communities, alongside investments in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green infrastructure. Educational initiatives promoting climate literacy are vital. Empowering communities with knowledge enables them to advocate for their needs and engage in decision-making.

The Cost of Inaction

Failing to act will have catastrophic consequences. Global temperatures could rise by over 3°C, intensifying extreme weather and threatening ecosystems. In South Asia, climate disasters already displace millions, while extreme heatwaves in India with temperatures surpassing 50°C—disrupt lives and livelihoods. Human-induced warming now accelerates at 0.26°C per decade, emphasising the urgency for immediate and sustained action. (The writer is a leader in disaster management, specializing in governance, climate change adaptation, and gender inclusion. Views are personal)



EILIA JAFAR

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

DUMBPHONE IS A SMART CHOICE

Their growing popularity reflects a cultural shift, one that values mindful technology use over constant connectivity



SHAINY SHARMA

In a world where smartphones dominate our lives, many adults are turning to dumbphones to reclaim their time and mental well-being. Today, the young generation is realising that giving a child a smartphone means not just giving them access to the world but vice-versa too. Smartphones are more than just a tool for connection. It is a portal that opens them up to endless possibilities, distractions, and influences beyond one's control. Dumbphones which are also known as feature phones, are basic mobile phones that are designed primarily for calling and texting, with limited or no access to advanced internet features, applications or modern smartphone capabilities.

Unlike smartphones, which run on complex operating systems like iOS or Android, such phones usually have a simple operating system that is focused on basic functions like voice calls, text messaging, and sometimes simple games. Such phones often lack features such as social media apps, internet browsing, and advanced gaming.

They have a small monochrome or basic colour screen with no touch interface and a physical keypad. Moreover, due to their simple hardware and minimal functionality, such phones last for several days on a single charge, which is a significant advantage over smartphones. Today, the popularity of dumbphones stems from the increasing realisation of how smartphones have transformed daily life.

For many, smartphones are indispensable tools for communication, navigation, and productivity. However, their omnipresence also



comes with downsides such as excessive screen time, reduced attention spans, social media addiction, and mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

There is no denying that technology is a powerful tool, but one mustn't forget that it is also one that can easily overshadow real-life experiences. In giving a child a phone, one must be prepared to teach them how to balance its use and ensure that the digital world doesn't replace the beauty of curiosity, creativity, and genuine human connection. The rise of dumbphones reflects a broader cultural shift toward digital mindfulness and the re-evaluation of technology's role in our lives.

As more individuals and families prioritise mental health and meaningful interactions, technological companies may feel pressured to design devices and platforms that promote healthier usage patterns. Moreover, this trend serves as a reminder of the need for balance in a hyper-connected world. While technology has undoubtedly enhanced productivity and convenience, its overuse can detract from the quality of life. Dumbphones symbolise a conscious effort to reclaim control and foster a deeper connection with the world around us.

The growing adoption of dumbphones highlights a societal push-back against the distractions and pressures of modern technology. By choosing dumbphones, individuals are making a bold statement that life's richness is found not in the screens we stare at, but in the people and experiences that surround us.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Advancing the Centre's liberalisation agenda



UTTAM GUPTA

Agri-marketing reforms can be achieved by enabling bulk buyers to purchase directly at farm gates and creating multiple private-sector e-trading platforms

In June 2024, the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' welfare set up a 12-member committee, under the chairmanship of additional secretary, Faiz Ahmed Kidwai with the mandate to formulate a national policy framework for marketing of farm items and suggest measures to ensure the remunerative prices to farmers. The committee has recommended (i) allowing direct farm-gate purchases of agriculture commodities by bulk buyers, including organised retailers, without having to go through the state-notified mandis or pay the various levies that the operators of these market yards charge; (ii) declaring warehouses, silos and cold storages, including those run by private agencies, as "deemed market yards" (DMYs); (iii) establish and operate multiple e-trading platforms, including e-NAMs (electronic-national agriculture market) in the private sector.

Will the suggested measures help in achieving the stated objective? At present, agriculture marketing is carried out under the respective state laws viz. APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) Act which has widely varying provisions. This hampers the free movement of the agri-produce between different states. Even within a state, there isn't a free flow of the agri-produce as for the administration of marketing it is divided into several market areas and farmers in a given area can sell their agri-produce only at the designated APMC Mandi.

Between APMC Mandis, also market regulations vary widely. At the mandi, a cartel of licensed traders and commission agents (known as artisans in local parlance, their job is facilitating transactions between the farmer and the buyer) rules the roost.

The duo exploit the farmer to the hilt by giving a low price, rejections, weighing less, delaying payment, etc. Levies such as market fees, anthias commission, rural development cess (RDC) etc further erode her netback. The APMC mandis can handle only a fraction of the quantity farmers bring to sell. So, most of them are forced to come to private local markets, where sales are legally barred.

At these markets, they end up selling their produce to traders at throwaway prices. The latter have the blessings of corrupt bureaucrats and politicians and hence, won't face any action for violating the law. True, state agencies such as The Food Corporation of India (FCI), purchase in mandis specified crops for running welfare Schemes. They make purchases at the minimum support price (MSP) notified by the Centre. But, their purchases are limited. Even so only 6 per cent of farmers - mostly rich with larger land holdings - get access to government procurement.

Although many states have made enabling provisions for setting up private wholesale markets, private markets have come up only in a few states. This is because some states have not framed rules and in others, the rules are far from conducive to attract private entrepreneurs. A few states like Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka have made provisions for farm-gate purchases but these transactions are restricted to select commodities for defined periods, and that too, after paying the taxes to the respective APMCs. Even the e-NAM (an online trading platform for agri-produce launched by the Centre in April 2016, was



ALTHOUGH MANY STATES HAVE MADE ENABLING PROVISIONS FOR SETTING UP PRIVATE WHOLESALE MARKETS, PRIVATE MARKETS HAVE COME UP ONLY IN A FEW STATES. THIS IS BECAUSE SOME STATES HAVE NOT FRAMED RULES AND IN OTHERS, THE RULES ARE FAR FROM CONDUCTIVE TO ATTRACT PRIVATE ENTREPRENEURS

intended to provide a unified market - at the national and state level - to give multiple options to farmers for selling their produce and fetch a better price helped much.

This is because the states haven't made necessary amendments in their laws to provide for electronic trading in agri-produce. Moreover, many APMCs have not set up an e-auction platform. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Out of a little over 7000 regulated wholesale APMC mandis, just about 20 per cent of 1400 have been integrated into the e-NAM platform. Besides, the farmers registered on the e-NAM portal are 17.5 million which is around 12.5 per cent of the total 140 million.

As for business transacted on the portal, that is a little over 12 per cent of the total value of annual trade in agri-commodities (excluding dairy and meat products). At a fundamental level, the problem has to do with the continued stranglehold of the states on APMCs. In fact, for almost everything that stakeholders need to do for doing business on e-NAM be it pan-state/India license for traders, letting farmers sell on the portal (instead of only at designated Mandi) and so on, they need to get permission from the state authorities.

To cap it all, extant laws don't permit private entities to engage in agri-marketing. Now, the committee's recommendations to allow direct farm-gate purchases of agri-commodities by bulk buyers, including organised retailers without having to go through the state-notified mandis or pay the various levies that the opera-

tors of these market yards charge; giving warehouses, silos and cold storages, including those run by private agencies, DMYs status and setting up multiple e-trading platforms including e-NAMs in the private sector essentially seek to give more options to farmers for selling their produce. But, the million-dollar question is How do you make these ideas work? For bulk buyers to directly purchase from farmers - bypassing APMCs - the concerned State will have to make provision in its APMC Act. Likewise, to enable farmers to sell straight from warehouses, silos and cold storages etc, the State has to amend the law. Similarly, for buying and selling to happen on the e-platform, the State will have to make necessary amendments to the Act.

This is acknowledged by none other than the Committee itself when it says "To align with the proposed national policy, the states and union territories would have to notify state policy on agri-marketing as the subject falls in the domain of states". But, the states are unlikely to give the desired relaxations in their laws. In the past, they have done little to liberalise agri-marketing despite much prodding by the Centre; Remember a Model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion and Facilitation) Law passed by the latter in 2017 which gave more options to farmers for selling besides a 'single pan-State license' for traders buying from anywhere in the State. But, this was ignored by the states.

Faced with the unwillingness of States to unshackle the farmers

from the clutches of APMCs and the dire need to open up agri-marketing, the Union government used its powers under the Constitution to offer them a parallel front. In September 2020, it enacted the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020 to regulate inter-state trade and intra-state trade, providing freedom of choice to the farmer or trader to conduct trade and commerce while allowing traders to purchase specified farm commodities directly from farmers anywhere in the country, even outside the State APMCs.

To realise the full potential of this law and give legal protection to farmers while engaging with buyers, it enacted two other laws viz. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020 and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. Unfortunately, bowing to year-long protests by a handful of farmers and the Supreme Court order in January 2021 staying their implementation, Modi announced their repeal on November 19, 2021. The SC never said these laws were unconstitutional.

A revolutionary move by the Centre to give a remunerative price to the majority of poor farmers and increase their income was sabotaged by middlemen/traders who had much to gain from the continuation of the status quo.

The situation can be retrieved only if the SC pronounces its verdict on merit.

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

Embedded insurance: Bridging India's coverage gap and transforming insurtech

By enhancing accessibility, streamlining processes and catering to underserved markets, embedded insurance is poised to revolutionise insurtech sector

As one of the largest and fastest-growing economies in the world, India has a lot of potential in both general and commercial insurance sectors. Even though the coverage of life and health insurance in India has been consistently increasing, there is a significant gap in terms of commercial insurance, as around 95 per cent of SMEs in the country are uninsured. However, this gap can be bridged by the emergence of embedded insurance, which has disrupted the Insurtech sector.

Unlike traditional models, where customers actively seek out policies, embedded insurance offers coverage at the point of sale—whether purchasing a smartphone, booking a flight, or subscribing to



ADITYA DADIA

a service. Embedded insurance is quite popular among retail and individual customers. At the same time, its role will be extremely critical in the commercial insurance segment. **What is Embedded Insurance:** Embedded insurance refers to integrating insurance products with the journey of non-insurance products and services. It is different

from conventional insurance processes where customers look for policies. Here, insurance is offered as an integral part of a transaction and is often tailored to the buyer's needs.

The model is based on leveraging the latest technologies, such as APIs, that help in providing instant coverage at the point of sale. One such example is travel insurance offered by airline companies, railways, and bus operators offered to travellers when booking tickets. The concept is a bit different in the context of commercial insurance. Here, embedded solutions are gaining traction through partnerships with supply chain platforms and B2B marketplaces.

Some examples include cargo insurance, business liability

coverage and other protections that help companies protect their assets.

Driving the Growth of Insurtech: The convenience and accessibility offered by embedded insurance are quite significant. Since it is integrated with different services, various aspects, including customer KYC, are often not required. Policies are generated and applicable at the point of sale.

This enhances the scope of insurance and ensures that overall customer experience is improved drastically. The overall level of customer experience and trust in the core service and the insurance offered improves due to this integration. It also enables insurers to reach underpenetrated markets like Tier-2 and Tier-3



cities in India, where digital platforms accelerate adoption. With digitalisation and an increase in the number of internet users (and smartphones), this trend will continue in the future as well. Impact on the Indian Insurtech Sector Embedded insurance can provide a much-needed boost to the Insurtech sector by devising the development of personalized, on-demand

products tailored to customer needs.

Since the demand for different types of digital services such as e-commerce, fintech apps, and ride-sharing platforms, is increasing, insurance companies have an excellent chance to enhance user convenience and relevance by integrating their services. This trend has led to increased partnerships between legacy insurance players and start-ups.

Even the existing service providers (besides insurance companies) have tried embedded insurance to ensure scalability and operational efficiency. As there is significant scope for bridging the underinsured in India, this can be an excellent tool through which insurance companies can reach untapped markets and deliver

high returns. Embedded insurance can be critical in bridging the insurance gap and fostering financial inclusion.

Challenges and Opportunities: However, despite the increase in overall popularity and usage, embedded insurance faces numerous challenges in India.

First, there are regulatory issues, as integrating insurance with non-insurance products demands compliance with stringent industry norms and approvals. There can be challenges relating to filing insurance claims.

There are also privacy-related issues, as embedded insurance depends on leveraging customer data for personalised offers. However, despite these limitations, there are numerous opportunities to

cover a large proportion of the uninsured population. As different sectors and industries are digitised at a good pace, the future of embedded insurance has immense potential for customised and micro-insurance products catering to diverse consumer needs.

Summing Up Embedded insurance has redefined the delivery of insurance services through integration in daily transactions. In the Indian context, the overall increase in the number of digital users and rapid transformation of industries gives an excellent opportunity for insurance companies to bridge the existing insurance gap; the opportunities in this field will be immense.

(The writer is the founder of Alwrit; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



'Himachal Pradesh leads in natural farming'

Himachal Pradesh has become a pioneer in offering the highest minimum support price for wheat and maize produced through natural farming methods, state agriculture minister Chander Kumar said on Sunday. While addressing reporters here, Kumar said as part of the government's guarantee, natural farming wheat is being purchased at Rs 40 per kg and maize at Rs 30 per kg, benefiting 1,506 farmer families, with over 4,000 quintals of maize already procured. Highlighting the progress, Kumar stated that natural farming is practised on 35,000 hectares, involving 1.98 lakh farmers. "To support them, over 1.5 lakh farmers have received free certification, and 36,000 more are being linked to natural farming initiatives this year. Infrastructure upgrades in 10 agricultural mandis are underway to streamline the sale of natural farming produce," said the minister.



ITC scales up cultivation of medicinal, aromatic plants

ITC Agri Business Division is encouraging the cultivation of medicinal and aromatic plants to expand the conglomerate's presence in the fast-growing health and wellness products market in the food, personal care and other categories. The agri-division of ITC is working with farmers and helping them to diversify their crops by encouraging them to cultivate high-demand crops like Ashwagandha, Tulsi, and Kalonji in Madhya Pradesh and turmeric in southern states. Through this initiative, ITC looks to meet its requirements by chasing its FMCG ambitions and also leverages the B2B nutraceuticals space, bridging the demand-supply gap in the market, which has evolved rapidly after the pandemic.



Markets to track inflation data, global trends, FII trading

Investors' sentiments will be guided by a host of domestic and global macroeconomic data announcements this week, along with the trading activity of foreign investors and trends in world stocks, analysts said. Besides, the rupee-dollar trend and movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude will also be crucial in dictating terms in the market, experts added. "The domestic stock market is likely to be shaped by a mix of global cues, domestic economic indicators, and the flow of investments from foreign and domestic institutional investors. Key factors like the rupee's exchange rate and crude oil prices will play a critical role in determining market trends. "Globally, geopolitical tensions, particularly the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, continue to pose challenges. However, recent declines in the dollar index and US bond yields have created a more favourable environment for emerging markets like India," Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

'Adani's solar contract has tariff lower than competition'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Group's solar power contract, which is at the centre of bribery allegations, has tariffs that are lower than competition and can find new buyers in case the pact is cancelled, according to analysts. US authorities have charged Adani Group Founder-Chairman Gautam Adani and others for being part of a scheme to offer USD 265 million bribe to Indian officials to gain a contract to supply 8 gigawatt of electricity generated from solar energy by Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL). The group has denied all charges.

"If Adani promoters are found guilty, we believe the size of potential penalty is manageable given it is up to three times the value of the bribe," Nomura said in a report.

The brokerage said there are about 1.8 GW solar projects commissioned in Gujarat from February-March 2024, with tariff of Rs 2.42 per unit under the 25-year power purchase agreements (PPAs).

These operational projects are running under 5 special purpose vehicles, namely Adani Green Energy Twenty Four A Ltd (AGE24AL), AGE24BL, AGE25AL, AGE25BL, and AGE26BL.

These may have project debt of about USD 685 million, if assuming capex cost of USD 500,00 per megawatt and 75 per cent capex as debt.

CII urges govt to stick to fiscal deficit target

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body CII has suggested the government to stick to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of GDP for 2024-25 and 4.5 per cent for 2025-26, cautioning that "overly aggressive targets" beyond these could adversely affect India's economic growth.

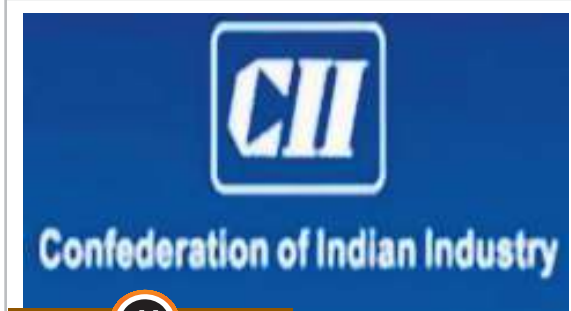
"India has been growing rapidly amidst a slowing global economy. Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to this growth," said Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General, CII, elaborating on suggestions for the forthcoming Union Budget.

CII also highlighted the announcement in the Union Budget 2024-25 to keep the fiscal deficit at levels that help reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio.

In preparation for this, the forthcoming budget could lay out a glide path to bring the central government's debt to below 50 per cent of GDP in the medium term (by 2030-31), and below 40 per cent of GDP in the long term, CII has suggested.

Such an explicit target will have a positive impact on India's sovereign credit rating and further on the interest rates in the economy, the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) stated.

"To aid longer-term fiscal planning, the government should consider instituting



"India has been growing rapidly amidst a slowing global economy. Prudent fiscal management for macroeconomic stability has been pivotal to this growth," said Chandrajit



Fiscal Stability Reporting. This could include issuing annual reports on fiscal risks under different stress scenarios and the outlook for fiscal stability. The exercise will help forecast potential economic headwinds or tail-

winds and assess their impact on the fiscal path," it said.

The reporting can also include long-term (10-25 years) forecasting of fiscal positions, accounting for the impact of factors like economic growth, technological change, climate change, demographic changes, etc.

Several countries have adopted this proactive ranging from 10 years in Brazil to 50 years in the UK.

"Looking at the next year's budget, CII has suggested sticking to the fiscal deficit target of 4.9 per cent of GDP for FY25 and a target of 4.5 per cent for FY26. However, CII has also pointed out that overly aggressive targets beyond the ones mentioned could adversely affect growth," the industry body said.

CII has suggested three interventions to nudge states towards fiscal prudence. Firstly, the states could be encouraged to institute state-level Fiscal Stability Reporting.

Insurance Amendment Bill proposing 100 per cent FDI unlikely in winter session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance Amendment Bill, which proposes 100 per cent FDI in the insurance sector, may not be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing session, sources said.

Some finetuning may be required in the draft Bill after receiving comments from stakeholders, sources said.

Given the paucity of time, it is difficult to present the Bill in the ongoing session, sources said, adding it may, however, come in the Budget session.

The finance ministry has proposed to amend various provisions of the Insurance Act, of 1938, including raising foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector to 100 per cent, reduction in paid-up capital, and provision for composite licence.

The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has sought public comments on the proposed amendments by December 10.

As per the proposal, the FDI limit in Indian insurance companies will be raised from 74 per cent to 100 per cent.

This is the second public consultation that the DFS has sought on the proposed amendments to the Insurance Act 1938, the Life Insurance

Corporation Act 1956, and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.

The finance ministry in December 2022 invited comments on the proposed amendments to the Insurance Act, 1938, and the Insurance Regulatory Development Act, 1999.

According to a recent office memorandum, it is proposed to amend certain provisions of insurance laws to ensure access-

ibility and affordability of insurance to citizens, foster expansion and development of the insurance industry, and streamline business processes.

In this regard, a comprehensive review of the legislation governing the sector has been done in consultation with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) and the industry, it said. The proposed amendments primarily focus on promoting policyholders' interests, enhancing their financial security, and facilitating the entry of more players into the insurance market leading to economic growth and employment generation, the memorandum stated.



The Department of Financial Services (DFS) has sought public comments on the proposed amendments by December 10

Cars set to get expensive as OEMs announce price hikes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prices of various car models -- ranging from entry-level hatchbacks to high-end luxury offerings -- are set to rise as automakers have announced price hikes with effect from January. Carmakers cite an increase in input costs and operational expenses as the main reason to implement price increases from the next month.

Industry experts, however, note that the exercise is also undertaken by automakers every year in December to shore up sales volume in the last month of the year, as customers postpone buyouts to later months to get the new year manufactured units.

"We have seen a few cycles of price increase in India. It happens at the beginning of the calendar

year and financial year, but few OEMs pick the timing based on their planned launches as well," Deloitte India Partner Rajat Mahajan said.

While there could be multiple factors for the price increase, the key one is due to a decline in profitability of a few large auto OEMs in the second quarter, he added.

"Due to the festive season, the price revisions were not done. Hence, this is expected at the beginning of Q4. "Rising input costs of few materials, shifting consumer preferences on advanced features but a low willingness to pay, clubbed with the pressure of supporting dealers to offset high inventory carrying costs despite high festive discounts are putting a burden on profitability," Mahajan stated.

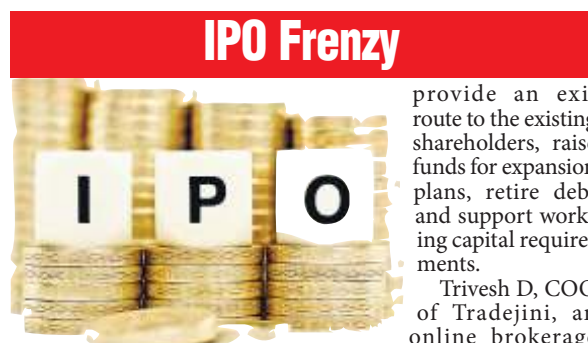
Five main-board, 6 SMEs to raise Rs 18,500 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The IPO market is set to be bustling next week, with 11 companies like Vishal Mega Mart, TPG Capital-backed Sai Life Sciences and fintech firm One Mobikwik Systems gearing up to launch their initial share sales, collectively aiming to raise nearly Rs 18,500 crore.

Other mainboard IPOs to be launched during this period are Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd and Blackstone-owned diamond grading firm International Gemmological Institute (India) Ltd.

Alongside the five mainboard IPOs, six SMEs are preparing to float their maiden public issues next week to garner over Rs 150 crore collectively.



IPO Frenzy

Together, these 11 companies aim to raise approximately Rs 18,500 crore through public offerings.

These IPOs will span various sectors and deal sizes and include fresh issues and offers for sale. The companies are tapping the primary market to

provide an exit route to the existing shareholders, raise funds for expansion plans, retire debt and support working capital requirements. Trivish D, COO of Tradejini, an online brokerage house, had said the Maharashtra election verdict and the UP Lok Sabha by-election results created a positive market sentiment that could boost IPO activity and fundraising efforts.

While 2024 has been a strong year for IPOs overall, some recent issues have strug-

gled in the secondary market, highlighting the recurring challenge of pricing during a bull run when issuers often aim for higher valuations, he stated.

So far in 2024, 78 mainboard companies, including Hyundai Motor India, Swiggy, NTPC Green Energy, Bajaj Housing Finance and Ola Electric Mobility, have mobilised around Rs 1.4 lakh crore collectively via mainboard.

This was way higher than Rs 49,436 crore garnered by 57 firms through the route in 2023. The IPOs of Vishal Mega Mart, Sai Life Sciences and Mobikwik will be open for public subscription on December 11 and conclude on December 13.

FDI inflows in India cross \$1 trillion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into India have crossed the USD one trillion milestone in the April 2000-September 2024 period, firmly establishing the country's reputation as a safe and key investment destination globally.

According to data from the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the cumulative amount of FDI, including equity, reinvested earnings and other capital, stood at USD 1,033.40 billion during the said period.

About 25 per cent of the FDI came through the Mauritius route. It was followed by Singapore (24 per cent), the US (10 per cent), the Netherlands (7 per cent), Japan (6 per cent), the UK (5 per cent), UAE (3 per cent) and Cayman Islands, Germany and Cyprus accounted for 2 per cent each. India received USD 177.18



billion from Mauritius, USD 167.47 billion from Singapore and USD 67.8 billion from the US during the period under review, as per the data.

The key sectors attracting the maximum of these inflows include the services segment, computer software and hardware, telecommunications, trading, construction development, automobile, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

According to the Commerce and Industry Ministry, since 2014, India has attracted a cumulative FDI inflow of USD 667.4 billion (2014-24), regis-

tering an increase of 119 per cent over the preceding decade (2004-14).

"This investment inflow spans 31 states and 57 sectors, driving growth across diverse industries. Most sectors, except strategically important sectors, are open for 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route.

FDI equity inflows into the manufacturing sector over the past decade (2014-24) reached USD 165.1 billion, marking a 69 per cent increase over the previous decade (2004-14), which saw inflows of USD 97.7 billion, an official has said.

Aadhar Housing Finance aims AUM of over Rs 25,000 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Aadhar Housing Finance, which caters to the affordable segment, expects its asset under management (AUM) to cross Rs 25,000 crore by the end of the current financial year.

"We closed the first half with the AUM of Rs 22,817 crore (from Rs 18,885 crore as of September 30, 2023). Going by the growth rate of 23-24 per cent, AUM should increase to Rs 25,000-26,000 crore by the end of March 2025," Aadhar Housing Finance, MD and CEO Rishi Anand said. Focused on the low-income housing segment, he said, "Our average ticket size stands at Rs 10 lakh with an average loan-to-value ratio at 59%."

Electronics component makers seek Rs 72,500 cr financial package

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electronics component makers body Elcina has sought a Rs 72,500 crore (USD 8.57 billion) support package to boost local production of raw materials and cut reliance on imports, an industry official said.

Electronic Industries Association of India (Elcina), the country's oldest industry body of the Indian electronics sector, estimates that the demand-supply deficit for inputs in the electronics segment will increase to USD 248 billion (about Rs 21 lakh crore) by 2030 to cater to projected USD 500 billion electronics production and it would be met largely by imports.

The industry body expects that the government's support for non-semiconductor components can help reduce the deficit in the country by USD 146 billion (Rs 12.36 lakh crore) to USD 102 billion (Rs 8.63 lakh crore).

Elcina Secretary General Rajoo Goel told PTI that unlike finished products where the factory output can go up to 16 times the investment, an electronic components factory can

at the most generate an output of three times the invested capital.

"People hesitate to expand their investment in electronic components due to low return, high operational cost and long gestation period. Therefore we have requested the government for USD 8.57 billion comprising USD 2.14 billion for capex to encourage expansion of the industry and USD 6.43 billion as PLI," Goel said.

The government is actively considering a comprehensive package to support the production of non-semiconductor electronic components.

Elcina has included miniature electronic components, printed circuit boards, some discrete semiconductors and active components, metallic components etc in the estimates.

According to the industry body, the components for which support is required account for 60 per cent of the total cost of a finished product.

Goel said that out of 60 per cent, non-semiconductor components account for 40 per cent of the total product value and 20 per cent are semiconductors.

66 pc businesses surveyed paid a bribe: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A report by online platform LocalCircles said on Sunday that around 66 per cent of business firms surveyed across 159 districts admitted that they paid bribes in the last 12 months.

The survey, which received 18,000 responses, found that 54 per cent were forced to pay bribes while 46 per cent paid voluntarily to expedite the process.

"As many businesses would vouch anonymously, bribes remain a way of life when wanting to get government

departments to speed up the permit or compliance process, even getting duplicate copy of the authority license or anything to do with property matters. 66 per cent of businesses surveyed paid a bribe in the last 12 months," the report said.

Only 16 per cent of businesses surveyed claimed that they always managed to get work done without paying a bribe and 19 per cent said they "did not have a need" to do so.

"Of businesses that paid bribes in the last 12 months, 54 per cent were forced to do so, while 46 per cent paid it for



timely processing. This kind of bribery amounts to extortion where permits, supplier qualification, files, orders, and payments are routinely held up when dealing with Government agencies," the report said.

According to the report, bribery paid by businesses continues to take place despite computerisation in several places, and behind closed doors away from CCTVs.

Businesses admitted to paying a bribe in the last 12 months to different types of entities for qualifying as a supplier, secure quotations

and orders and collect payments.

"Though initiatives like the Government eProcurement marketplace are good steps to reduce corruption, there are still openings to engage in corruption for supplier qualification, bid manipulation, completion certificate and payments," the report said.

Business firms that participated in the survey conducted between May 22 and November 30, 2024, said that 75 per cent of the bribes were paid to officials of departments such as legal, metrology, food, drug, health, etc.



TRIPTII DIMRI'S BLOCKBUSTER 2024 ENDS WITH ARJUN USTARA



Triptii Dimri is all set to share screen space with Shahid Kapoor for the first time in Vishal Bhardwaj's *Arjun Ustara*. Cinephiles can expect a visual treat, as the much-anticipated film is scheduled to go on floors on January 6, 2025. This action-packed thriller boasts an ensemble cast of acclaimed actors. Reports suggest that pre-production is already underway, with a massive studio set up in Mumbai to bring the film's ambitious vision to life.

The collaboration between Triptii Dimri and Shahid Kapoor promises a cinematic spectacle, set against the underworld backdrop in the post-Independence era. With an intensive shooting schedule planned, the makers aim to wrap up production soon, targeting a grand release in 2025. Triptii closed 2023 on a triumphant note, setting the stage for an extraordinary 2024. She remained a trending name throughout the year, captivating both audiences and critics alike. As the year draws to a close, Triptii is gearing up to start 2025 with a bang, courtesy of this promising venture. Her impressive performances have also earned her a spot among IMDb's top-rated actresses.

Pooja & Varun star in upcoming rom-com

Pan-India star Pooja Hegde and Bollywood heartthrob Varun Dhawan are officially set to star together in David Dhawan's next film, tentatively titled *Hai Jawani Toh Ishq Hona Hai*. This announcement puts an end to all speculations and has already sparked excitement among fans, as it marks the duo's first on-screen collaboration.

Taking to her Instagram story, Pooja shared a candid moment with Varun, captioning the picture, "Chalo post our next schedule maybe?" with a mix of teary-eyed, thinking cloud, and pizza emojis, hinting at their camaraderie during the film's shoot. The film, helmed by David Dhawan, promises to be a treat for audiences eager to see this dynamic pairing light up the screen. On the work front, Pooja Hegde's schedule remains jam-packed. She will soon be seen in the high-octane action thriller *Deva*, alongside an impressive lineup of South Indian big-ticket projects such as *Suriya 44* and *Thalapathy 69*.

Yami Gautam reveals her respect for unsung heroes filmmaking

Yami Gautam has established herself as one of the most prominent female stars in the industry by selecting roles that highlight strong, layered characters. Her film choices are driven by stories that are intense, thought-provoking and address real societal issues. Her recent film, *Article 370*, was both a critical and commercial success, with audiences and critics praising her brave performance, hailing it as the film of the year and Yami, yet again reminding us that she is the finest female performer of the year.

In a recent interview, Yami reflected on her journey and her evolving approach to selecting films. She emphasised the importance of personal and professional growth, expressing that her choices must reflect progress. The actress said, "After *Article 370*, my expectations from myself have to go up. It cannot be what it was three years back. It's all about growth. Am I doing that? Is that film allowing me to do that? So, that's my first and foremost thought. And then, of course, the director of the film. I like to have a candid conversation with the director about how he/she came up with the idea and his/her intent. And I'm honest with my feedback."

She also shared how the writer and director play a major role in the film and how she has a lot of respect for them, adding, "I have a lot of respect for writers. I am married to one, so I know what it takes to write a film. I

love reading scripts. I also inquire about the technical team because I am always intrigued by who's doing the cinematography, editing, background music and sound design. These are the people who make a film. You see the actors because we perform and give interviews."



Big win for Vasu Bhagnani!

In what is being perceived as a big win for Vasu Bhagnani, the Hon'ble Judicial Magistrate Bandra, Mumbai, has directed Bandra Police Station to file an FIR against director Ali Abbas Zafar, co-producer Himanshu Mehra and others under Sections 120-B Criminal Conspiracy, 406, 420 Cheating, 465 Forgery, 468 Forgery for the Purpose of Cheating, 471, 500 Criminal Defamation and 506 Criminal Intimidation, r/w.34 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita/IPC, who had helmed the 2024 multi-starrer *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*. September 3, 2024, Vasu Bhagnani had filed a complaint against Ali Abbas Zafar, Himanshu Mehra and others with Bandra Police Station for fraud, forgery, criminal breach of trust, cheating and misappropriation of crores of rupees by falsifying and forging signatures of Vasu Bhagnani during the shooting of *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, but no action was taken by the police.

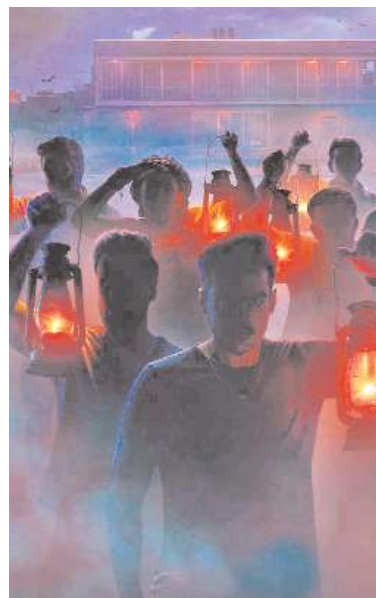
Thereafter, Vasu Bhagnani sought the Bandra Metropolitan Magistrate Court's direction to register the FIR against Ali Abbas Zafar, Himanshu Mehra and others. The Hon'ble Court, in its order dated 02.12.2024, held that the total amount of alleged fraud and cheating and the number of transactions in the several transactions is very high and they are spread across several places. The Court further held that the evidence that needs to be collected involves several agencies and might be several numbers of documents, and the offenses are cognizable and non-bailable and the allegations are serious, and accordingly the Hon'ble Court ordered the Bandra Police Station to file an FIR under sections 120-B, 406, 420, 465, 468, 471, 500 and 506, r/w. 34 of the IPC.

The Bhagnani's can now hope for a quick redressal because Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 seeks to ensure speedy justice, bring transparency and accountability to investigation and make the criminal justice system more victim-centric. It also specifies timelines for investigation and trial in order to ensure speedy justice. The development has brought the focus back once again on the controversies that followed the release of *Bade Miyan Chote Miyan* and now all eyes are on how the legal proceedings will unfold.



Ashish Chanchlani teases fans with 1st glimpse of his debut directorial

Ashish Chanchlani, India's biggest digital star, continues to captivate millions of fans with his stand-out content. His journey to stardom has been nothing short of inspiring. On Sunday, as he celebrated his birthday, the digital star turned producer-director shared an exciting announcement with fans of his new project which he will be directing, producing, acting in, and writing, donning multiple hats as we know him to strongly wear. The development has created a massive buzz and this definitely will get the audience excited! Ashish gave a treat to his fans by unveiling the poster of his upcoming project on his social media account, revealing the title of the project. The thrilling first-look poster features dark silhouettes of figures holding lanterns.



The project is set to be a horror-comedy that will bring an amalgamation of suspense with supernatural elements, promising an exciting and spine-chilling experience for audiences. This project represents a significant milestone in Ashish's career as he takes on multiple roles—director, producer, writer and actor. Renowned for his comedic talent and engaging content, Ashish is expanding his creative horizons by embracing various roles in this new venture. The project is expected to highlight Ashish's unique comedic style while incorporating an adventurous and ghostly theme that will keep viewers engaged. With the sneak peek and poster already generating excitement, fans are eager to see Ashish venture into a new genre, bringing his creative flair to the world of horror-comedy.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



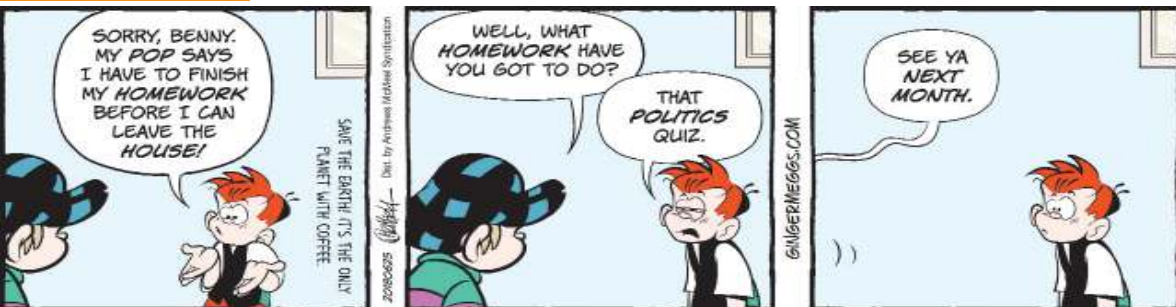
GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



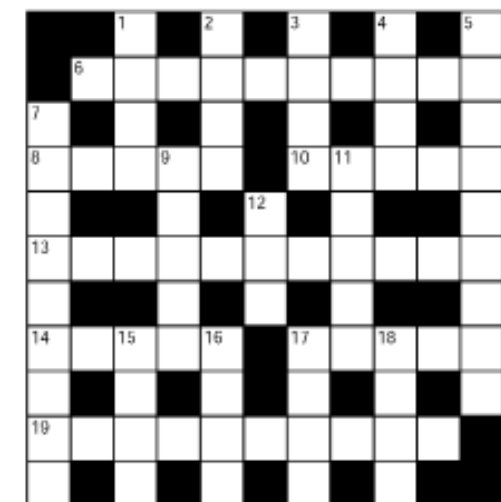
REALITY CHECK



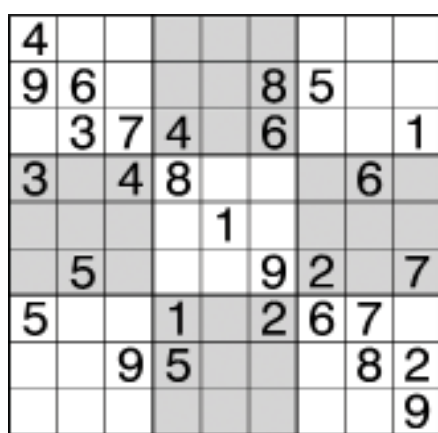
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution
 6 5 7 2 8 1 9 4 3
 9 2 1 6 3 4 8 5 7
 8 4 3 5 7 9 1 6 2
 2 6 8 9 4 3 7 1 5
 7 3 9 1 6 5 2 8 4
 5 1 4 7 2 8 3 9 6
 3 9 6 8 5 2 4 7 1
 1 7 2 4 9 6 5 3 8
 4 8 5 3 1 7 6 2 9

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

- 6 Someone who writes for a newspaper or magazine
- 8 Rome is the capital of this country
- 10 Listen to music on this
- 13 Thinking over
- 14 A hairdresser works here
- 17 Window pane material
- 19 Giving reasons for
- 7 Talked over
- 9 A looped rope used by a cowboy
- 11 A month
- 12 Unusual
- 15 These surround the mouth
- 16 Tidy
- 17 Firearms
- 18 A female relation

DOWN

- 1 A long soft seat
- 2 A large group of soldiers
- 3 Not favouring one person or another
- 4 Discover
- 5 The most powerful



Vijayawada

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Monday
December 9, 2024

Sajid Khan ventures into Chinese and Arabic music

PNS|HYDERABAD

IN A CAREER SPANNING DECADES, SAJID KHAN HAS BEEN THE MELODIC HEARTBEAT OF BOLLYWOOD, CRAFTING ICONIC TUNES WITH HIS LATE BROTHER WAJID KHAN. NOW AS HE EMBARKS ON A SOLO JOURNEY, SAJID OPENS UP TO THE PIONEER ABOUT HIS LATEST 'JASHN-E-GHAZAL', GIVING A POIGNANT TRIBUTE TO HIS BROTHER AND MORE

With *Jashn-E-Ghazal*, Sajid Khan rekindles the soul of ghazals, weaving a poignant tribute to his brother Wajid while bridging the echoes of tradition with the rhythms of modernity. In the vibrant corridors of Bollywood, the music of Sajid-Wajid has resonated as more than mere melody; it has been a heartbeat. But when Wajid Khan, one half of the legendary duo, passed away in 2020, the rhythm faltered. Left to navigate the music world without his partner, brother and anchor, Sajid Khan crafted *Jashn-E-Ghazal*—a tribute to their shared legacy and the timeless music they created together.

In this exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, Sajid reflects on his journey of transformation, the making of *Jashn-E-Ghazal* and the evolving landscape of the music industry.

"It's a mix of emotions—unexpected and bittersweet," Sajid begins, reflecting on stepping into a solo career after Wajid's passing. "I never imagined working without him, let alone not seeing him by my side. But I feel his presence in everything I do. Life is unpredictable and while I miss him deeply, I'm embracing this new journey. Wajid would have wanted that."

For Sajid, the void left by Wajid was both personal and professional and it extended beyond their family to the industry and fans who cherished their collaboration. "It's natural for people to wonder how one half of a duo will move forward. But I've realised my strength lies within me—music has always been my power. I'm collaborating with new artists, programmers and technicians. Even my daughter, Muskaan, has become a guiding force, suggesting collab-



I NEVER IMAGINED WORKING WITHOUT HIM, LET ALONE NOT SEEING HIM BY MY SIDE. BUT I FEEL HIS PRESENCE IN EVERYTHING I DO

orations and offering fresh perspectives."

Reflecting on his creative process, the *Suruli Akhion Wale* composer emphasises his commitment to preserving the essence of Indian musical traditions. "Melody is the soul of our music and I am determined not to let it fade," he says. His passion for ghazals, a genre he believes has lost some of its allure in pursuit of profit over artistry, drives his latest project.

Khan's connection to ghazals is deeply personal. "Our first earnings came from performing at ghazal events," he recalls. As children, Wajid accompanied him on the tabla. "Our father would give us twenty rupees

as pocket money. Later, we began earning more by playing at qawwali and ghazal sessions." Now, collaborating with the very maestros he once admired feels, as he puts it, "like life has come full circle."

With *Jashn-E-Ghazal*, Sajid seeks to honour both his brother's memory and the music they loved. The album's first ghazal, *Jab Bhi Kisi Nigah Se*, performed by Padma Shri Ustad Ahmed Hussain and Padma Shri Ustad Mohammed Hussain, is a soulful reminder of the genre's enduring beauty. Featuring ten ghazals sung by a stellar lineup, including Padma Shri Kavita Krishnamurthy, Hariharan, Anup Jalota and younger voices like Sayli Kamble

and *Muskan*, the album bridges generations with its blend of classical richness and contemporary appeal.

The *Tenu Leke* composer also reflects on the importance of appreciating legends during their lifetimes. "It's heartbreaking how we remember icons like R.D. Burman only after they're gone. I feel blessed to collaborate with maestros like Shivamani, whom I still call my boss. These partnerships remind me of the cyclical nature of life and music."

While Bollywood has defined much of his career, he is now eager to explore global music markets. "Wajid and I always believed we could make an impact inter-

nationally. We even worked on projects with global artists, though they remain unreleased. For now, my focus is on creating a catalog rooted in Sufism and collaborating with incredible voices."

Known for always staying ahead of his time, he attributes this instinct to his father's teachings. "The songs we recorded often released two years later, so planning ahead became second nature. As a solo artist, I'm embracing the freedom to multitask and experiment with genres. Bollywood has taken a backseat for now, but I'm excited to explore Chinese or Arabic music and surprise my fans."

The *Jalwa* composer also hints at a wealth of unreleased work. "I've composed songs for major films, but if they don't make it to the screen, I'll release them on my channel. For me, it's about reaching a genuine audience, not chasing numbers."

The transition to a solo career has allowed Sajid to reconnect with his family in meaningful ways. "Our careers often take precedence and before you know it, your kids are grown and your parents are aging. Spending quality time with my wife has been especially fulfilling—I'm falling in love with her all over again."

Despite his decades-long career, he approaches his solo journey with the enthusiasm of a newcomer. "I feel like a fresh struggler, discovering new paths and possibilities. Music has always been my sanctuary and I'm excited to see where this journey takes me."

'Reviews are no longer instinctive; they're influenced by personal beliefs'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Kshitij Patwardhan, a multifaceted writer and screenwriter, has made a significant impact in the Marathi film industry. His diverse background in computer science, journalism and advertising has shaped his unique writing style. His writing journey commenced around 2010, following stints as an advertising copywriter and reporter. His educational foundation in computer science and a master's degree in communication and journalism laid the groundwork.

"I have been fascinated by writing since my teenage years. I explored various forms—advertising, political communication, journalism, radio writing and jingle writing. This exposure helped me grasp different facets of writing."

Patwardhan's first commercial full-length play marked his entrance into the Marathi entertainment arena, leading to his debut film. "Starting as a reporter, then copywriter, playwright and screenwriter was quite a journey," he reflected.

His maiden success came with the 2010 Marathi play, directed by Sameer, now a renowned director. "The play was a sensation in Maharashtra, drawing young audiences back to theaters," Kshitij proudly shared, adding how the film was translated into 5 languages, adapted into a motion picture, how he completed 480 Marathi shows and over 300 Gujarati shows, oh and also received major Maharashtra awards.

"This success validated our writing's relevance to youngsters and today's audience," the *Taali* screenwriter emphasised adding, "Understanding the audience, staying updated with trends and experimenting with genres keeps my writing fresh." His inspiration stems from real-life experiences, literature and cinema.

Following his success in Marathi cinema, he ventured into Hindi cinema, driven by curiosity. "The transition stemmed from curiosity. Regional industries often harbour biases about Hindi cinema being inaccessible, money-centric and style-driven, relegating creativity." Determined to form his own opinions, Kshitij explored Hindi cinema.

Maddock Films offered Kshitij his first break! Director Michel Musale approached him as a consultant for *Sajini Shinde Ka Viral Video* (Netflix). Impressed by his work, they collaborated, making Kshitij the dialogue writer and additional screenwriter.

This partnership led to two more projects: a recently filmed project slated for release next year and another written specifically for Maddock Films. Mikhil Musale introduced Kshitij to Ajay Devgn's assistant, securing him a spot on the writing team for *Singham Again*.

"Previously, I collaborated solely with Sameer. This time, I worked with two female writers, Anushin Chaudhary (Aria, Gahan) and Parinda Joshi (acclaimed book writer and film writer). They taught him invaluable lessons: inclusivity, female perspectives and challenging biases. These writers enriched my writing, making it more inclusive and fresh. I learned to shed assumptions and adopt new lenses," Kshitij reflected. On the response to his work, Kshitij humbly acknowl-



edged, "Audience love has been pouring in since 2010, growing daily." His focus remains on crafting relatable, relevant and responsive stories.

With projects in Hindi cinema, he aims to explore socially relevant themes. *Sajini Shinde Ka Viral Video* addressed the pressing issue of suicide abatement. "We wanted to start a conversation," he explained. "Sometimes, living is an act of courage. We aim to give hope to those struggling, reminding them to hold onto hope and goodness." This message resonated globally, trending in several countries.

However, with *Singham Again*, during a brainstorming session with Rohit Shetty, Kshitij proposed retelling the Ramayana through

Singham's character. "I felt Singham embodied Prabhu Ram's philosophy—justice, righteousness and respect for women." Rohit Shetty was impressed and the idea evolved collaboratively with fellow writers.

Working with nine writers was "interesting and democratic." Going further, he described the process: "We had story and screenplay writers for six months, followed by dialogue writers. After gaining objectivity, we returned with fresh perspectives, providing feedback." This approach gave the film an edge. "It was like a classroom of writers," he reminisced. "We shared food, thoughts and books with childlike enthusiasm. We've become friends for life." Rohit Shetty's inclusive approach fostered a supportive environment.

He recalls visiting the sets of *Singham Again* twice, specifically for the Ramayana-inspired portions. "Rohit Shetty values writers' input," he noted. Dialogue writer Shantanu Srivastava was also present on set.

But what about Shakti Shetty's character, portrayed by Deepika Padukone? Reports claim an exclusive film on it; we ask him and he says, "The idea emerged from a brainstorming session, but development was Rohit Shetty's vision." He wasn't directly involved in writing Shakti Shetty's character.

Going ahead, he acknowledges the prevalence of biased reviews driven by ideology. "Reviews are no longer instinctive; they're influenced by agendas or personal beliefs." He distinguishes between constructive criticism and unjustified bashing, emphasising the value of fair reviews. Patwardhan stresses the importance of being open, gathering life experiences and understanding human nature. "Craftsmanship is secondary; emotional impact comes from compassionate observation and imagination."

Talking of his upcoming projects, there's a Maddock film, India's first AI-based Marathi play, nearing 100 shows, an untitled Hindi film and songwriting credits in multiple Hindi and Marathi films.

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Kshitij Patwardhan opens up about the shifting landscape of art and criticism, his experience working in *Singham Again* and more



Preventing and treating pediatric obesity

Obesity in children is one of the fastest-growing challenges that parents and pediatricians are facing alike. A staggering 390 million children and adolescents aged 5–19 years were overweight in 2022, including 160 million who were living with obesity. It is not just limited to children over the age of 5; 37 million children under the age of 5 were overweight. Overweight and obesity in childhood increase the risk of many lifestyle diseases like Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in adulthood.

Obesity and overweight are estimated on the basis of Body Mass Index (BMI). A BMI of more than 23 kg/m² is said to be overweight and more than 27 kg/m² is said to be obese. Almost 98% of children with obesity do not have any underlying illness. It arises from a sedentary lifestyle and poor dietary choices.

Managing and treating obesity is a challenging task for both parents and children. As the old adage says, 'prevention is better than cure'; there are small modifications that can be done in our lifestyle that can prevent this chronic condition from hampering a child's happiness.

Exclusive breastfeeding till 6 months of age has been seen to reduce the chances of obesity. Children should have regular meal timings, including breakfast. They should have at least 8 hours of sleep daily at night. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends fighting childhood obesity with the '5-2-1-0' rule. It implies children can consume above 5 servings of fruits and vegetables, screen time below 2 hours, participate in one hour of physical activity, and consume 0 sugar-sweetened beverages daily. Healthy eating behaviours

should be developed in children from the start. The satiety centre, or the centre that signals the brain that hunger is over, doesn't work when a child consumes food in front of the TV or mobile. Hence, eating meals with a screen 'on' should be stopped. Junk food in the home should be replaced with fruits, and sugary drinks should be replaced with drinking water. Children copy parents in every act, including this one. So parents should start with these habits themselves, which will leave a long-lasting impact on children.

Once diagnosed with obesity, management should start with lifestyle and dietary modifications. Children should consume regular meals. Breakfast should not be skipped. He/she should have 45 minutes of regular moderate to vigorous physical activity and screen time should be below 1 hour daily. Teenagers are more prone to being body conscious and might face body shaming in the current online world. They should never go for crash dieting or starvation. It could do a lot more harm than being beneficial. Parents should be on the lookout for red flag signs like sudden weight gain, delayed growth and puberty, school absenteeism or teasing by peers regarding weight/appearance, persistent anxiety, depression, or self-harm, anger outbursts, substance abuse and eating disorders. Specialist referral must be sought after in the presence of these signs.

Remember, obesity runs in families who do not run. Getting obesity under control not only improves health; it also gives a feeling of achievement and happiness.

(The author, Dr. Anand Narayanan, is an associate consultant - pediatrics, in Sarvodaya Hospital.)

Bumrah can't bowl from both ends, others need to take responsibility: Rohit

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Jasprit Bumrah is only human and cannot always shoulder the responsibility of bowling opposition out all by himself, skipper Rohit Sharma said on Sunday, urging others to share the load with the premier fast bowler. India lost to Australia by 10 wickets in the second Test and during the home team's first innings, only Bumrah stood out with a four-wicket haul.

"We are not just playing with one bowler. There are other bowlers also who will have to take responsibility and get the job done for the team, be it (Mohammed) Siraj, Harshit Rana, Nitish Reddy, Akash Deep or Prasadh (Krishna)," skipper Rohit had a loud and clear message for his bowling unit.

The captain understands that there is a bit of inexperience in the line-up and they will grow in confidence with time.

"These bowlers have just arrived in Test cricket, it's important to give them confidence. Whenever they play a match, it's important to give them confidence. We keep planning and discussing. But you

can't expect Bumrah to bowl from both the ends and from morning to evening," Rohit said.

"It's very important to manage (all) bowlers. We discuss all this with each other. We talk to the bowler and then we make the decisions."

Rohit said that he takes workload management of bowlers very seriously.

"I speak with him (Bumrah) whenever he finishes a spell. I enquire about how his body is feeling, is he (feeling) fresh or not? It's a five-match series, we want Bumrah to play all the matches and remain fresh," Rohit knows what his lethal weapon means in the larger context of the series.

Backing for young Harshit Rana Young Harshit Rana was clobbered for 86 in just 16 overs but the skipper was against making a two-Test youngster the fall guy for a comprehensive defeat in Adelaide.

"Rana didn't do anything wrong in the first Test. He did very well. He gave the team crucial breakthroughs when they were needed. I believe that if someone hasn't done anything wrong, he cannot be left out without a reason



because then what confidence does the team get? "It happens, sometimes the team doesn't get what it wants. He came up against a good batsman who put pressure on him. But he has a heart and a passion so we should back such (qualities in a player)," Rohit said.

"The player might think that you give me one match but leave me out in the next. This is not good

for any player or any team, that's what I think. We should assess what the situation is and how helpful the conditions are," he elaborated.

While he doesn't want to judge Rana on the basis of one game but if change is warranted it would be done for benefit of the team.

"But judging someone after one match is not the right thing. We always keep (all) options open for any player to play since we have to win a Test match. If we must make such changes to win a Test, we will do that."

Rohit doesn't want to read too much into Siraj-Head incident

The Indian skipper feels that one doesn't need to read too much into the verbal altercation between Travis Head and pacer Siraj after the latter gave the left-hander angry send-off after a brilliant century.

While Head insisted that he acknowledged Siraj, saying "well bowled" after his dismissal, the Indian pacer countered by alleging that the Aussie batter was lying.

"There is a thin line between getting aggressive and over-aggressive. It is my job as captain

to see that no one crosses the line. But a few words can be exchanged. Siraj knows what he needs to do for the team and he will do everything required," Rohit defended his teammate.

Probed further by the Australian media, Rohit said: "When India and Australia play, these things happen. My job is not to look at one incident but at bigger picture." "We didn't bat well enough, skipper admits

Not even being able to score 200 across both innings is certainly disappointing, and the skipper made no bones about it.

"When you come to Australia, I feel the best chance of winning a Test match is by putting runs on the board. We knew that there would be challenges with that ball. "But in the past, we've done that many times where the conditions have been a little challenging, and we've batted really well to put runs on the board, and then try and put pressure on the opposition," Rohit said.

"Like I said, that is the disappointing part, that we didn't bat well enough. We probably were 30-40 runs short with the bat in the first innings."



We left Perth in Perth and shut outside noise: Starc after Adelaide success

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Mitchell Starc, one of the architects of Australia's comeback win in Adelaide, said the hosts had left the Perth debacle behind by shutting the "outside noise" following their heavy defeat in the series-opener.

A 295-run embarrassing defeat despite bowling India out for just 150 in the first innings invited criticism from the hosts from all quarters.

Living up to his reputation with the pink ball, left-arm quick Starc handed Australia a dream start by dismissing Perth centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal in the very first ball of the second Test en route to finishing with an impressive match haul of 8/108.

"There was a lot of outside noise after the game but we left Perth in Perth. Cannot really put my finger on it," Starc said after the end of the match.

About his approach with the pink ball, he said: "Nothing changes in my approach. Probably slightly fuller lengths. It (pink ball) is more like the white ball than the red ball."

"We were really positive with bat and ball and got the rewards. It's nice when the ball hits the stumps."

He further credited his skipper Pat Cummins for helping in his growth and highlighted improvements in his bowling,

including mastering deliveries that move away and those that swing back. He also talked about enhancement in his accuracy with the wobble seam technique.

"I have been learning a lot from Pat Cummins over the last seven years or so. So I have added to my bow the one that goes away and still able to bring one back."

"I always had that air speed and swing but I have also been someone who leaked a bit. Developing the wobble seam helped me improve my accuracy over the years. To be able to have the longevity in putting that hard yards in that people don't always see," he added.

Cummins also hailed Starc for his impact

"He's amazing. He's been doing it for over a decade. I feel very lucky and privileged to have him in the team."

"That's a great week for us. We were far from the team we wanted to be in Perth, but this was much better. It's always good to contribute with a few wickets myself."

Cummins also lauded Travis Head's game-changing innings of 140 from 141 balls that gave Australia a decisive first-innings lead.

"Head loves batting here. The game could have gone either way when he walked in, but he shifted the momentum in our favor."

World Chess Championship: Gukesh takes lead in 11th game as Ding Liren blunders

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Grandmaster D Gukesh made a huge strike forward towards becoming the youngest-ever world champion defeating Ding Liren of China in the 11th game of the World Chess Championship here on Sunday.

With just three games to come, Gukesh took the lead for the first time in the match, with scoreline now reading 6-5 in favour of the 18-year-old Indian.

History is now on Gukesh's side as no challenger in modern chess has ever scored a win after being tied 5-5 after the 10th game.

For Liren, the only comforting thing could be the fact that he had won the 12th game in the last World Championship match against Ivan Nepomniachtchi of Russia.

The Indian started off with the Knight move on his first turn and was surprised as Liren went for a reverse Benoni opening.

The move was shocking as it



looked like it was an over-the-board decision rather than a planned one.

After only five moves, Gukesh had a lead of over an hour on the clock, which is never too easy for the opponent to recover in crunch games.

However, if everyone thought that the opening had gone seriously wrong for Liren, the Chinese had different ideas as he capitalised on an erroneous plan by Gukesh in the early middle game.

Things turned upside down when Liren went for completing his development and missed out on a simple manoeuvre that would have probably given the defending champion slightly better prospects.

Gukesh himself spent a lot of time in the middle game but the nature of the position remained double-edged.

As the clouds began to clear, Gukesh came up with a spectacular pawn sacrifice on

the queen side to give moving space for his rooks. Just as he doubled them on the file to exert pressure, Liren simply crashed and made the blunder in a blink. The Chinese player was left dejected as he immediately realised the mistake. Gukesh played the winning move in quick time.

In the remaining three games, Liren will have two games as white and this would be the best chance for him if he has to stage a comeback. Gukesh is just three draws away from winning his maiden world championship title.

The moves: D Gukesh - Ding Liren

1.Nf3 d5 2.C4 d4 3.B4 c5 4.E3 Nf6 5.A3 Bg4 6.Exd4 cxd4 7.H3 Bxf3 8.Qxf3 Qc7 9.D3 a5 10.B5 Nbd7 11.G3 Nc5 12.Bg2 Nf7 13.0-0 Ne5 14.Qf4 Rd8 15.Rd1 g6 16.A4 h5 17.B6 Qd6 18.Ba3 Bh6 19.Bxc5 Qxc5 20.Qe4 Nc6 21.Na3 Rd7 22.Nc2 Qxb6 23.Rab1 Qc7 24.Rb5 0-0 25.Na1 Rb8 26.Nb3 e6 27.Nc5 Re7 28.Rdb1 Qc8 29.Qxc6 black resigned.



Don't waste time in hotel, no room for optional practice sessions, says Gavaskar

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Batting legend Sunil Gavaskar has urged India not to "waste" time in their hotel rooms after the early finish of the pink ball Test, but utilise the two extra days by sweating it out in training so they can bounce back in the third game.

India were thoroughly exposed in their 10-wicket loss in the second Test of the Border Gavaskar Trophy with the match ending in less than two-and-a-half days as Australia bounced back to level the five-game series 1-1.

"Look at the remainder of the series as a three-match series. Forget it was a five-Test series. What I would like this Indian team to do is use the next couple of days for practice," Gavaskar told the official broadcaster.

"It's very important. You can't be sitting in your hotel room or wherever you're going because you have come here to play cricket."

"You don't have to practice the whole day. You can practice a session in the morning or afternoon, whichever time you choose, but do not waste these days. You would have been here playing a Test match if the Test match were to go on for five days," he added.

The third Test begins on December 14 and Gavaskar said the Indians should utilise the intervening time to get

their rhythm back.

"You have to get yourself that much more time to get into the rhythm because you have not got the runs. Your bowlers haven't got the rhythm. There are others too who need time in the middle," he added.

Indian pacers were found wanting on a fast wicket that offered lateral movement, giving away plenty of runs in the first innings and allowing Australia, especially centurion Travis Head, to take a huge 157-run lead.

Gavaskar added that he did not believe in the concept of optional practice sessions, stating that the decision should solely rest with the captain and coach, not the players.

"This optional practice session is something that I don't believe. The decision for optional training should rest with the captain and the coach. The coach should say, 'Hey, you hit 150, you don't need to come to practice. Hey, you bowled 40 overs in the match, you don't need to come to practice.'"

"They should not be given the option. If you give the players that option, a lot of them, especially the certainties, will say, 'No, I am going to stay in my room.' And that's not what Indian cricket needs."

He reminded the players that it was a privilege to play for India and they should do it wholeheartedly.

India defeat Singapore, eye best-ever finish Asian Women's Handball Championship

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India registered a commanding 35-22 win over Singapore at the Asian Women's Handball Championship here on Sunday, opening up the opportunity for their best-ever finish in the tournament.

India, who have never finished above sixth, will face China on Tuesday in the 5th/6th place playoff match.

Charged by the backing of their fans, India opened the placement match against Singapore with high energy, leading 9-6 midway through the first half, courtesy Menika and Bhawana Sharma's consistent scoring.

At the other end, captain Diksha Kumari and goalkeeper Nina Shil, who made key saves including a penalty, kept Singapore



at bay.

The hosts maintained their overall dominance on the other side of the interval to secure a comprehensive win.

"Our team has shown incredible spirit and resilience throughout this tournament, whether against Hong

Kong, Singapore, Iran, and even Japan. Every match has been a learning experience for us and we have pushed ourselves to compete with some of the best teams in Asia at our home," Diksha said.

"Scoring consistently and staying strong defensively has been our focus, and we're proud of how we've come together as a unit. This journey inspires us to aim higher."

Earlier in the day, China ensured their place opposite India in the 5th/6th place playoff by beating Hong Kong with a resounding 38-14 scoreline.

In the top bracket, South Korea booked their berth in the final by outclassing Iran 33-20. South Korea will play the winner of the match between Japan and Kazakhstan for the title on Tuesday.

England beats New Zealand by 323 runs in 2nd test to take 2-0 lead in three-match series

AP ■ WELLINGTON

England conquered the Wellington gale Sunday to seal a 323 run win over New Zealand on the third day of the second test and to take a 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Joe Root completed his 36th century as England batted for less than 30 minutes in the morning before declaring with a lead of 582 runs and New Zealand crumbled under the weight of the deficit and was all out for 259 in its second innings.

England's win followed its comprehensive eight wicket win in the first test at Christchurch, capping its first series victory in New Zealand since 2008 ahead of the final test in Hamilton which begins on Saturday.

The third day differed from the first two in Wellington which were warm and sunny. It was cool, gloomy and windy but otherwise England's thorough command of the series continued.

Root resumed on 73 with England already 533 ahead. He sped to his century from 127 balls with 10

boundaries and then was out for 106 at which point Ben Stokes declared England's second innings at 427-6.

Stokes left himself high and dry at 49 not out, just short of his 49th half century.

Chris Woakes had the job at first of bowling into the Wellington wind and he was rewarded with the wickets of Devon Conway (0) and Kane Williamson (4) as New Zealand slumped to 59-4 by lunch.

Brydon Carse removed captain Tom Latham (24) and Rachin Ravindra (6) before the break to lift his tally of wickets for the series to 16 at an average of 12.8.

New Zealand showed more resistance in the afternoon and evening as wicketkeeper Tom Blundell, under pressure to hold his place, compiled his fifth test century from 96 balls.

Blundell put on 94-run partnership with Nathan Smith which saw England having to chase leather for the first extended period in the series. He was out for 115 which included 13 fours and five sixes and Smith followed for a career-bet 42 just before the end.



Carse and Harry Brook have been in the engine room for England throughout the series. Brook's 171 at Hagley Oval in the first test and Carse's 10-106 — his 4-64 in the first innings and 6-42 in the second — propelled England's to its emphatic win.

Brook then scored 123 from only 115 balls in the first innings at Wellington to lead England's recovery from 43-4 to 280.

"It's amazing to be stood here winning the series and particularly after being 40-4 on day one and I think looking back to the start of this game I think that's a huge reason why we have (won)," Stokes said.

"Harry Brook and Ollie Pope were just amazing on day one to play like that. That wicket in cricket terms was what we call a snake pit. Especially on day one it was doing plenty and providing a lot of assistance for the bowlers."

"To have the bravery and the backing of your own ability and to also have the skill to go out and play like that was just absolutely phenomenal."

Carse took 4-46 and Gus Atkinson

took 4-31 including a hat-trick as New Zealand was bowled out for 125, giving England a lead of 155.

Atkinson took the last three New Zealand wickets to become the first England bowler since Moeen Ali in 2017 to compete a test hat-trick.

England's second innings of 427-6 in the second innings included contributions of 96 by Jacob Bethell — out just short of a maiden century — 92 by Ben Duckett, 55 by Brook and then Root's 106. Brook has scored 349 runs in the series so far at an average of 116 and now has three centuries and three half centuries in four tests against New Zealand. After a stunning 3-0 series win away in India last month, New Zealand has slumped in this series, particularly with the bat and changes may be considered before the final test.

"We're obviously hurting," Latham said. "It's disappointing to lose in that fashion."

"I think after the first innings, putting them under pressure, Harry Brook played a fantastic innings there. Obviously when you only score 125 in the first innings you're on the back foot."

ALLU ARJUN STRUGGLES TO RECALL TELANGANA CM'S NAME

The makers of *Pushpa 2* held a media conference to announce the film's collections and express gratitude to the audience for its success. The press meet, was attended by lead actor Allu Arjun, director Sukumar and producers Yelamanchili Ravi and Naveen Yerneni.

The producers spoke briefly, thanking the audience for making the film a huge success. Director Sukumar then introduced his assistant directors, acknowledging their valuable contributions to the film. Sukumar's gesture of recognising each assistant director by name and highlighting their specific contributions was particularly noteworthy!

Allu Arjun then took to the stage, expressing his gratitude for the film's success. However, he surprisingly forgot the name of Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Andhra Pradesh's cinematography minister Kandula Durgesh's names respectively.

Allu began by thanking the producers for investing in the film and believing in him and Sukumar. "Behind every film's success lies the hard work of many individuals," he said. "However, I attribute my success

solely to Sukumar. While people praise my performance, I believe the entire credit goes to Sukumar." Arjun then attempted to thank the Telangana Government and its chief minister but paused, struggling to recall the chief minister's name. After a brief pause, he asked for water and then continued, eventually mentioning Revanth Reddy's name.

He also thanked the Andhra Pradesh Government and its Chief Minister, Nara Chandrababu Naidu. Allu expressed gratitude to Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan for facilitating a special GO to permit a ticket price hike. "On a personal note, thank you so much, Kalyan Babai," he added. When attempting to thank the AP Cinematography Minister, Allu again forgot the name. After inquiring with his team, he was informed that the minister's name was Kandula Durgesh. Arjun then pretended to have known the name all along, thanking the minister for his support. Some have speculated that Arjun's team failed to prepare him adequately for his speech.

Pushpa 2: The Rule has been creating new records at the box office, becoming the highest-grossing Indian film on its opening day and the fastest to reach Rs 500 crores in just two days. This achievement is a historic moment for the Telugu film industry, cementing Allu Arjun's position as a leading actor.



Manchu family feud escalates

The Manchu family is in the news again and this time, it's due to an alleged altercation involving Manoj, the younger son of actor Mohan Babu. This isn't the first time the family has made headlines. Earlier, in March last year, Manoj released a video claiming that some individuals associated with his brother Vishnu had assaulted his friends at their residence. The video went viral and the Manchu family was at the center of attention. At the time, Manchu Vishnu responded by posting a video clip on his social media, jokingly referring to the incident as a "Manchu Family

reality show." However, it was reported that there were underlying differences between the brothers, Manoj and Vishnu.

Now, the Manchu family is in the news again, with Manoj allegedly seeking police protection. According to reports, he called the police emergency number '100', claiming that some individuals associated with his father, Mohan Babu, had attacked him. Manoj reportedly wanted to visit the hospital before filing a complaint at the Pahadi Sharif police station.

Although the Manchu family's PR team has denied these reports as baseless, the police have confirmed

receiving a call from Manoj. Whether the allegations are true or false, the Manchu family's internal differences have once again become a topic of discussion in the Telugu film industry.

It appears that veteran actor Mohan Babu is struggling to maintain control over his sons amidst their ongoing differences. Some reports suggest that the family's substantial assets and share distribution may be contributing factors to their public feud. It remains to be seen how Manchu Vishnu will respond to this issue. According to sources, Vishnu is currently not in India.

Haritha Gogineni talks about her directorial debut, *Fear*

Director Haritha Gogineni is making her debut with the film *Fear*, a horror thriller starring Vedhika in the lead role. "Actually, Vedhika was not our first choice," Haritha revealed. "We approached many actresses for the role, but they asked us to wait for a year. Then, we approached Vedhika and she agreed. Once the film was completed, we were satisfied that Vedhika was the perfect choice."

Haritha added that Vedhika's experience in horror films like *Kanchana* and *Muni* made her an ideal choice for the role. Haritha, who has been interested in films since childhood, also enjoys reading books and writing stories. "I wanted to become a director, and three years ago, the story of *Fear* came to me," she said.

Initially, the film was titled *Bhayam*, but Haritha decided to change it to *Fear* because it is a more universal and catchy title. The film has screened at several film festivals and won awards, but Haritha believes that the true test of success is the audience's response. "Even if we won awards at a film festival, if the Telugu audience likes it, that's equal to an award," she said.

The film was originally scheduled for release earlier, but Haritha decided to postpone it to December 14 to avoid clashing with other films. "We will release it first in Telugu and later in other languages," she said.

Haritha praised actor Aravind Krishna, who played a key role in the film. "Although it's a small role, he accepted it immediately," she said. She believes that her film offers a unique take on the horror genre. "Generally, family audiences don't watch horror films, but they can watch my film. Music director Anup Rubens has given his best background music for this film," she said.

Haritha emphasised the importance of content in small films. "Big films should be made with top stars, but for small films, the content should be good. Many people advised me to add elements for OTT and theatre audiences, but I didn't follow that advice because I genuinely made this film," she said.



Naresh's character is completely different from *Pushpa's*: Director Subbu

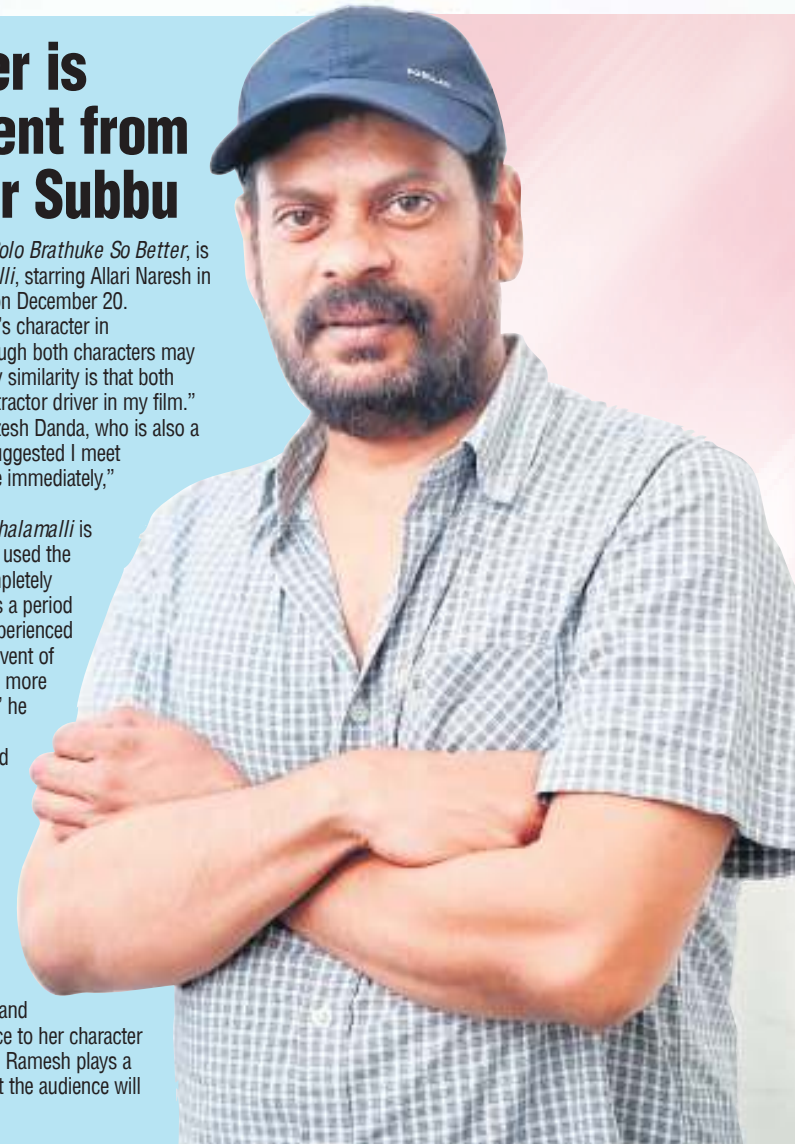
Director Subbu Mangadevi, known for his film *Solo Brathuke So Better*, is now directing another film titled *Bachchalamalli*, starring Allari Naresh in the lead role. The film is scheduled to release on December 20.

When asked about the comparisons between Naresh's character in *Bachchalamalli* and *Pushpa*, Subbu clarified, "Although both characters may appear similar, they are completely different. The only similarity is that both characters work as labourers, with Naresh playing a tractor driver in my film." Subbu expressed his gratitude towards producer Ramesh Danda, who is also a close friend. "When I narrated the story to him, he suggested I meet Naresh, and to my surprise, Naresh accepted the role immediately," Subbu said.

The director emphasised that the character of *Bachchalamalli* is entirely fictional and not based on any real person. "I used the name Bachchalamalli, but the characterisation is completely imaginary," he clarified. Subbu described the story as a period drama set in the 1990s. "Growing up in the 90s, I experienced a more natural and emotional way of life. With the advent of technology and social media, emotions have become more artificial. That's why I chose to write a period drama," he explained.

Subbu also shared a personal experience that inspired him to write the story. "I lost my mother during the pandemic and I wanted to convey the emotions of a mother in this film. The story revolves around the theme of regret and the importance of expressing emotions before it's too late," he said.

The film's shooting took place primarily in live locations near Tuni. "One of the biggest challenges we faced was hiding mobile phones on set, as everyone was using them," Subbu recalled. Amritha Aiyer plays the female lead opposite Naresh and Subbu praised her performance. "We gave importance to her character and she delivered a great performance," he said. Rao Ramesh plays a significant role in the film and Subbu is confident that the audience will appreciate his performance.



Intensity personified with Vijay Sethupathi's fury in *Vidudala 2*



Vidudala 2, which highlights Vijay Sethupathi's performance, is a much-awaited sequel. The Telugu release rights for this film have been acquired by the renowned producer and head of Sri Vedaakshara Movies, Chintapalli Ramarao. Made as an intense period crime thriller by the visionary director Vetri Maaran, the film will hit the screens on December 20.

Already, the first song from the movie, titled *Pavurama Pavurama*, has been successful. Maestro Ilaiyaraaja's tune is haunting.

The makers have unveiled the film's terrific trailer. The powerful sequel explores the suspenseful past of Perumal (Vijay Sethupathi), chronicling his formative years, his romantic relationship and the transformative journey that propelled him from a charismatic union leader to the formidable head of the influential Makkal Padai. The trailer offers a glimpse into Perumal's complex character, hinting at a pivotal moment where he finds himself in challenging circumstances. This dramatic trailer sets the stage for an intense equations between Perumal and Kumaresan (Soori).

The sequel is coming at a time when another sequel is going great guns at the box office. *Pushpa 2* is a much bigger hit than its first part. In the same way, *Vidudala 2* has a vast potential to become a bigger blockbuster than *Vidudala: Part 1*.

Rahul Ramakrishna teams up with Loukya Entertainments for his next



The Indian film industry is abuzz with excitement as talented actor Rahul Ramakrishna joins forces with Loukya Entertainments for their upcoming project, Production No. 5. This highly anticipated collaboration promises to bring together the best of storytelling, acting and direction.

Rahul Ramakrishna, known for his impressive performances in films like *Arjun Reddy* and *Taxiwaala*, will be working with Loukya Entertainments. The project will be directed by Benny Muppaneni.

The film's cast includes Maniika and Sivaji, who are expected to deliver impressive performances. While details about the film's plot and genre are still under wraps, sources close to the project have hinted that it will be a unique and engaging story that will appeal to a wide range of audiences.

With Rahul Ramakrishna teaming up with Loukya Entertainments, fans can expect a cinematic experience that is both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Stay tuned for more updates on Production No. 5, which is sure to be one of the most talked-about films of the year.