

sunday pioneer

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'Your 'supreme leader' Savarkar preferred Manusmriti to Constitution'



Dept of Posts to go **DIGITAL** soon: Scindia

A voice for **YOUTH** and Congress



QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

The financial resources of Telangana are not enough to pay even the interest on the loans taken by the BRS Government. It is a fact that the BRS Government failed to implement some of the assurances it had given to the people during elections. Delay is taking place in implementing welfare schemes due to the KCR government's extortion. The government will definitely implement all its assurances

- Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister, Telangana

P4

DON'T MISS...

Efforts on for 'Bharat Ratna' to NTR: CM

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reaffirmed his commitment to securing the 'Bharat Ratna' award for TDP founder and former chief minister NTR. He assured that efforts would persist until the nation's highest civilian honour is conferred on NTR. A programme was organised at Poranki, near Vijayawada, on Saturday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the release of NTR's first film. The event witnessed the participation of several prominent personalities, including...

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Tomato price crisis hits farmers hard

The tomato market at Pattikonda is in turmoil as wholesale traders reportedly form a cartel to drive prices down, leaving farmers with little to show for their hard work and investment. At the heart of the crisis, farmers are being offered a pittance for their produce which comes between Rs 3 and Rs 6 per kilogram. This is a price so low that it doesn't even cover the farmers' transport and harvesting expenses. For the tomato farmers in Pattikonda, this comes as a bitter pill to swallow blow.

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Farmers' march to Delhi foiled again

Protesting farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi after some of them were injured on Saturday in teargas shelling and use of water cannons by Haryana security personnel, who foiled the agitators' third attempt in less than 10 days to cross the Punjab-Haryana border. Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher claimed that 17 farmers were injured in the action by the Haryana security personnel. "The two forums (of farmers' unions) have decided to call back our 'jatha' (group)," Pandher told reporters...

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E-commerce to adopt Safety Pledge

Major e-commerce platforms such as Zomato, Ajo, and Ola will adopt a Safety Pledge on National Consumer Day on December 24 as part of steps to enhance product safety for online shoppers. The voluntary commitment, announced by the Department of Consumer Affairs, aims to detect and prevent the sale of unsafe and spurious products on digital marketplaces, an official statement said. A committee chaired by consumer activist Pushpa Girimaji developed the pledge after extensive stakeholder consultations in November 2023. With India projected to have 500 million online shoppers by 2030 and currently hosting 880 million internet users, the initiative addresses critical challenges in the rapidly expanding...

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CM reaffirms support for 'One Nation-One Election'

SAYS AP POLLS WILL BE HELD AS SCHEDULED IN 2029

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has reiterated his firm support for the One Nation-One Election (ONOE) initiative, affirming that State elections will be held as scheduled in 2029 despite discussions surrounding the policy's implementation. Responding to demands for early elections under ONOE, Naidu criticised the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) for indulging in "desperate measures," asserting that the Opposition has lost public trust.

"The YSRCP leaders have lost the confidence of the people, and their behaviour is being ridiculed," Naidu remarked, emphasising the stability of his government. He also highlighted the importance of popularising the 'Swarna Andhra Vision 2047', calling for discussions on the initiative across universities, colleges, and schools.

Reflecting on the success of the Vision 2020 programme, Naidu stated that it had brought transformative changes to the state. He expressed optimism about achieving similar progress through Vision 2047, describing it as a comprehensive, long-term roadmap to secure a brighter future for the youth.

Naidu criticises YSRCP for demanding early elections, accusing them of desperation and loss of public trust.

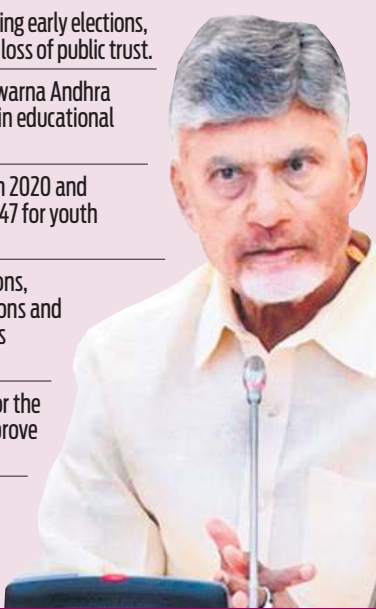
CM emphasises promoting the 'Swarna Andhra Vision 2047' through discussions in educational institutions.

Highlights achievements of Vision 2020 and expresses confidence in Vision 2047 for youth development.

CM assures that local body elections, including for water user associations and cooperatives, will be conducted as scheduled.

Chief Minister announces plans for the next collectors' conference to improve governance efficiency.

Naidu extends wishes for veteran leader LK Advani's recovery, acknowledging his contributions to Andhra Pradesh.



Naidu confirmed that local body elections, including those for water user associations and cooperatives, would be conducted as planned. He also announced preparations for the upcoming collectors' conference, aimed at enhancing administrative efficiency by circulating discussion topics to officials in advance to streamline responses. Extending his best wishes for the recovery of veteran leader L.K. Advani, Naidu reflected on their close association and acknowledged Advani's contributions to Andhra Pradesh's progress.

TDP sets record with 73 lakh members

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has achieved a milestone with 73 lakh people enrolling as members.

At a meeting on Saturday held at the party headquarters, TDP supremo and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu lauded the leaders and cadre for this accomplishment. The membership drive is being spearheaded by TDP national general secretary and Minister for Education, Nara Lokesh.

Party leaders informed Chandrababu Naidu that of the 73 lakh members enrolled, 85,000 are from Telangana, with 54% being new members. Rajampet topped the list with 1.18 lakh members, followed by Nellore city (1.06 lakh), Kuppam (1.04 lakh), Palakollu (1.02 lakh), and Mangalagiri (90,000).

Expressing satisfaction, Chandrababu Naidu envisioned building a strong cadre and set a target to ensure that one in every four persons in Andhra Pradesh becomes a TDP member. He assured the cadre of enhanced welfare and empowerment programmes to support them politically and financially.

Continued on Page 2



TG Ministers justify Allu Arjun's arrest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress Ministers of Telangana defended the arrest of Telugu film 'Pushpa' fame Allu Arjun.

Transport Minister Ponnamparthi said that the Congress Government had always encouraged cinema and the arts.

"Why should we harbour anger at cinema people and Allu Arjun? If the government is angry with the cinema industry then will it make Dil Raju the Chairman of the Telangana Film Development Corporation," Ponnamparthi said on Saturday.

He said the BRS has lost its common sense along with power and that it is politicising all issues. BRS leaders should be aware of the law, he added. He said that KTR who did not respond when a woman died in the Sandhya theatre incident, has no right to speak about the arrest of Allu Arjun.

He asked KTR whether the BRS

Government had filed murder cases against KTR when Sircilla handloom workers died.

He said that if a case was filed against them then they could file a case against the Congress Government now.

Panchayat Raj Minister Seethakka said they don't have any enmity against Allu Arjun and that action was taken as 'per the law'.

She said that actor Chiranjeevi and Allu Arjun's father-in-law are Congress activists and that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has ties with their family. However, the police acted as 'per law', she added.

Stating that Allu Arjun is his relative, Congress MLA Danam Nagender said that he was pained by the arrest of Allu Arjun and the developments that took place after that. However, it is not proper for the opposition to say that the Congress government made the police arrest Allu Arjun. He said the arrest of Allu Arjun was an 'unfortunate' incident.

Amaravati roads to be linked to NHs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P Narayana has revealed plans for the design and construction of roads that will connect Amaravati, the State's capital, directly to national highways, with a focus on the next 30 years. These roads are set to link the Seed Capital to the highways while ensuring minimal disruption to the public during construction. The minister has appealed to residents whose homes might be affected by the road designs to cooperate with the government.

During a recent field visit, the minister inspected the routes for several ongoing road projects in the capital. Over four hours, he toured villages including Mangalagiri, Navuluru, and Erraballam, assessing the design plans for the E11 and E13 roads in Seed Capital, which will be extended to connect with National Highway 16. The designs for these roads have been



handed over to Lee Associates. Along with inspecting these projects, the minister also reviewed the progress of the Vijayawada West Bypass and made several recommendations to the National Highways Authority of India.

Continued on Page 2

Our govt strengthened Constitution, asserts Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday alleged that the Congress, having "tasted blood", repeatedly wounded the Constitution while his government's policies and decisions since it took office in 2014 have been aimed at boosting India's strength and unity in line with the vision of the Constitution.

Replying to a two-day debate in Lok Sabha on the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution, he took a swipe at the past Congress governments, accusing them of planting "poisonous" seeds in the country's diversity to accentuate its contradictions and damage its unity.

Training guns at the Nehru-Gandhi family of the Congress, he said they left no stone unturned to strike blows to the Constitution.

"This family challenged the Constitution at every level," he said, adding that he was singling out the family as its members were in power for 55 years. The family, having "tasted blood", repeatedly wounded the Constitution, he said, citing several decisions of Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi when they held the office of prime minister.

Their next generation is also into the same game, he said in a swipe at the Leader of Opposition in the House Rahul Gandhi and his MP sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Modi said leaders like him and many others who came from ordinary families could never have reached where they did but for the strength of the Constitution, as he underlined his long commitment to its values.



I&PR Minister K Parthasarathy and Director Himanshu Shukla on Saturday inspected the arrangements for observance of the 'Atmarpana Dinotsavam' in Vijayawada.

Naidu to take part in 'Atmarpana Dinotsavam' event today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In honour of Sri Potti Sriramulu's death anniversary, the State government will observe December 15 as Atmarpana Dinotsavam (Self-Sacrifice Day). Special events will be held to commemorate his sacrifice. Minister for Information and Public Relations, Kolu Parthasarathy, accompanied by Director Himanshu Shukla, on Saturday, visited Tummalalappalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada to review the arrangements for the programme.

The event will be attended by Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu,

along with other public representatives, senior officials, and citizens.

Minister Parthasarathy emphasised the importance of the day and assured that the government would organise the event with utmost respect, honouring Sri Potti Sriramulu's selfless sacrifice for the formation of Andhra Pradesh.

The Minister urged the authorities and staff involved to work in coordination and dedication to ensure the programme's success, maintaining the highest standards of organisation and execution to respect the legacy Sri Potti Sriramulu.

AP wins natl energy conservation award

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh has won the First Prize in the State Energy Efficiency Performance Award (Group 2) category of the National Energy Conservation Award 2024. The state was recognised for its consistent efforts in promoting and implementing energy efficiency and conservation measures across sectors such as Buildings, Industry, Municipalities, Agriculture, DISCOMs, and Transport.

On the occasion of National Energy Conservation Day, 14th December 2024, the award was presented to the Andhra Pradesh State Energy Conservation Mission (APSECM) by India's Minister of State for New and Renewable Energy, Shripad Naik, at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi.

Help the poor: Naidu to industrialists

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu visited the Sri Bhusametha Venkateswara Swamy Brahmotsavam at the Dokiparru Mahakshetram in Gudlavallu Mandal, Krishna district, on Saturday. The CM was welcomed by the temple's founding trustees, PV Krishna Reddy and his wife. Special prayers were conducted as part of the event, followed by the offering of Theertha Prasadam by Vedic scholars.

After the rituals, the Chief Minister inspected the ongoing temple construction and urged Krishna Reddy to extend support to Below Poverty Line (BPL) families in Gudlavallu mandal through the P4 policy. The trustees agreed to take the initiative.



Speaking to the gathering, CM Chandrababu called on industrialists to contribute towards the welfare of the poor, particularly in rural areas, to uplift them economically. He emphasised that poverty eradication is a key focus in the Swarnandhra 2047 Vision Document, with an aim to position India and Andhra Pradesh at the forefront globally by 2047.

Continued on Page 2

OBTUSE ANGLE



JAVVADI LAKSHMANA RAO lakshmana123@gmail.com ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Simhachalam temple, a centuries-old spiritual and cultural landmark, has recently been at the centre of controversies. Allegations of financial mismanagement, illegal land encroachments, and administrative inefficiencies have raised serious concerns, casting a shadow over this once-revered institution. Devotees and stakeholders alike are deeply troubled by the temple's predicament, particularly under the previous YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) government, which has faced repeated criticism for not

addressing these systemic issues. One of the most contentious events in recent years was the removal of Puspapati Ashok Gajapathi

Raju, the hereditary chairman of the temple's board of trustees. Raju, a scion of the Vizianagaram royal family, described his dismissal as "a



Allegations of financial mismanagement, land encroachments, and administrative failures tarnish the temple's revered status

personal vendetta." Speaking about his ongoing legal battle to reclaim his position, he said, "I was unfairly removed from my post, and there were concerted efforts to tarnish my reputation through false cases." Despite his continued pursuit of justice in the courts, his reinstatement remains uncertain.

The temple's extensive landholdings have been the subject of repeated controversy. In 2019, a gravel racket involving the illegal diversion of gravel from the temple's Simhachalam hill properties was exposed. A local activist claimed, "Gravel worth lakhs was sold off, and it was all done under the watchful eyes of powerful people."

In 2020, accusations surfaced that temple employees had encroached upon temple land and constructed unauthorised buildings. A senior official from the Endowment Department admitted, "We identified the employees involved, but the political pressure was too strong, and no serious action was taken." Legal disputes over land encroachments escalated in 2022, with several cases being lost due to alleged negligence by the Endowment Department. A local advocate expressed concern, saying, "The department seemed more focused on silencing complaints than protecting the temple's assets."

Continued on Page 2

Revanth Reddy turns 'Robin Hood' of Congress

Many Congress insiders are in awe of the public image of the party's Telangana firebrand leader and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy. From taking bold decisions, be it arresting national icon Allu Arjun in his 'Pushpa Raj' avatar or launching HYDRAA operations to fix 'concrete' blunders being committed from the dim past, Revanth seems to have mastered the art of impactful governance. HYDRAA isn't just a disaster management authority, with the Revanth administration subtly rebranding it as one that will be involved in continual course correction of brazen violations in civic areas. In the process, Revanth has cemented his image as a go-getter in people's minds. Initially after the regime change, there were occasions when, due to a slip of the tongue (or perhaps Freudian slip), some called the CM 'KCR'. That stopped abruptly when HYDRAA amplified its operations (perhaps not coincidentally) with another actor's N Convention. It looks as if Revanth has planted a flag emblazoned with unmistakable words: "This is my era. Revanth's critics may pan the bulldozer-driven civic operations and high-profile confrontations as a PR gamble or stunts, but Congress cadre are thrilled. "Our leader isn't afraid of big names, and this shows he can't be tamed", a party insider shared, beaming with pride. Nationally, the Congress has begun branding Revanth as the legendary Robin Hood or the do-gooder with whom no one messes, when it comes to delivering what he believes is justice. The lightning speed with which his administration has acted on a stampede that caused one death is now being compared in political circles to the Bharatiya Janata Party's kid-glove approach towards handling of the Hathras stampede tragedy that had left 121 dead, with agonizingly delayed response from the BJP government. Going by whispers, Congress insiders are gloating over the stark fact that party moneybag DK Shivakumar may have been in currency for a while, but now Revanth is surely the man of the moment.

point of the public, weekends, instead of being time to unwind over Netflix-and-chill sessions, feature live political thrillers. Opposition leaders in political crosshairs are no longer unwinding on Fridays; they're watching their backs. The buzz is palpable, with people glued to news channels, waiting for the next twist in the tale. Revanth Reddy summed it up best when he reportedly said, "I'm a star, and I have fans". His fan base is bound to expand in direct proportion to time for which he will keep the dramas as well as political potboilers alive and the people hooked to news channels as distinct from entertainment channels.

Rejoinders passé: FIRs become the norm

In Telangana, some of the Congress leaders have brought about a dramatic shift in how they deal with inaccuracies in media reporting. The age-old standard practice of issuing a rejoinder to the publication or channel first and then following it up with legal notices in the absence of a clarification has now been replaced with post-haste filing of police cases and registration of FIRs. This somewhat coercive approach has raised questions about press freedom and the boundaries of government intervention. A recent incident surrounding the

Palana Vijayotsavalu celebrations enraptured people with breathtaking aerial maneuvers by the Indian Air Force's Suryakiran over the Hussain Sagar on Sunday. Nine jets took to the skies as the team of 13 highly skilled pilots wowed the crowd with intricate formations like loops, rolls, and heart-shaped patterns. However, to share another dil ke baat, the widely-anticipated Drone Show left many of spectators unimpressed. Interestingly, it was not a standalone misfire. The Drone Show, popularized by former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao and followed by AP CM Chandrababu Naidu, former AP CM YS Jagan, and even Revanth Reddy, was expected to be taken to the next level under CM Revanth's leadership. But the whole thing fell flat. Naturally, parallels were drawn. "The Air Show was mesmerizing; no one cared much about the drones after that," a spectator remarked. Even the roads mirrored the pull of the shows. Traffic, which had come to a standstill during the Air Show on Sunday, remained unaffected during the Drone Show on Monday.

Media support does not work always

If the situation demands, actors at times tend to overact in the absence of a script. The recent episodes involving Allu Arjun at Sandhya theatre during the premiere of Pushpa - 2: The Rule and Mohan Babu at their residence while dealing with Manchu Mohan Babu's tantrums are cases in point. According to cops, Allu's bid to spring a surprise caused the stampede that claimed a woman's life. Mohan Babu has a history of not thinking of a script when it comes to his impulsive and violent responses. No wonder he chose a mic to fracture a media person's jawbone. In both cases, the real life action clashed with the expectations of people and law-keepers. Media circles, political parties and lay people have differing opinions about the way the actors or their families treated the media. Some suggested that Mohan Babu's family should learn lessons from the manner in which Allu Arjun family treated media persons. Mohan Babu and company initially defended their attack on media personnel alleging that they had barged into his house and that he was confused as to who among the intruders were media personnel and who 'anti-social elements'. In contrast, Allu's family thanked the media for extending 'full support' in Allu Arjun's issue. Otherwise, some reasoned, the police would have arrested Mohan Babu's family members. The TG High Court however questioned what work the media had at Mohan Babu's residence? One senior scribe wondered why, despite media's supposed 'role', Allu Arjun went to jail and why Mohan Babu did not go to jail. Another scribe chipped in quite insightfully: 'Media support' doesn't work always. Only one party will be in power if media support works'.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate and K Venkateshwarlu)

REPORTERS' DIARY

Vemulawada cattle issue illustrates this new trend. When a Telugu newspaper affiliated with the Bharat Rashtra Samithi published a report critical of the government, Minister Konda Surekha followed the traditional protocol by issuing a rejoinder. However, what happened next was unprecedented—an FIR was filed about the publication and also against individuals who had shared the report on social media. Among those named in the FIR were accounts like 'BRS Party', 'Federal TG', and 'Sripaada', sparking concerns about the implications of distasteful (for the government) digital discourse. This isn't the only instance. Dileep Konatham, former Digital Media Director, found himself in a similar situation after sharing an image originally posted by a Telugu electronic media outlet. Instead of targeting the source, the government opted to extend its net to those amplifying the content. While the Congress administration defends these actions as measures to curb the spread of 'misinformation', critics see it as administrative overreach that bypasses established norms. Unlike rejoinders, FIRs and case do not allow room for amicable clarifications and dialogue. As this approach becomes the norm, it is not just journalists but also social media users who will find themselves walking on eggshells, if not paranoid about sharing or amplifying any report that might not sit well with the ruling establishment.

Air Show takes the spotlight, Drone Show flops

The Telangana government's Air Show organized as part of the Praja

Weekend ka war: Revanth's arrest playbook keeps Telangana on edge

In Telangana, Fridays are no longer just dates saved for release of movies made with massive budgets. Real life excitement seems to have an edge in Telangana under the Congress regime, given headline-grabbing arrests. The Bharat Rashtra Samithi may have seen the writing on the wall, but Tollywood certainly couldn't envision it. From HYDRAA's swift crack-downs to high-profile detentions, it seems the Sherlockian suspense begins on the weekend, leave alone relaxation. The strategy is simple yet impactful: arrest on Friday, ensuring the detainee spends the weekend in jail due to court holidays or 'normal' time taken for scrutiny of frantically obtained bail papers. BRS insiders admit they've grown accustomed to this routine. Alas Allu! Tollywood has become a cameo in the political narrative. From the stand-

Naidu, Lokesh welcome green energy investments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Education, Electronics, and IT Nara Lokesh have welcomed investments in renewable energy projects under the Andhra Pradesh Integrated Clean Energy (ICE) Policy-2024. Delegations from SAEL Ltd. and leading financial institutions like Norfund, NDB Bank, and Société Générale met them on Saturday to discuss opportunities and the regulatory framework for clean energy investments in the state.

Taking to the social media platform 'X', CM Chandrababu expressed enthusiasm about collaborating with SAEL Ltd. on waste-to-energy projects.



"We welcome investments in AP to support India's energy transition. SAEL introduced their innovative waste-to-energy technology, which can utilise agricultural waste and boost farmer incomes," he posted.

Minister Lokesh highlighted SAEL's 1,200 MW investment in Andhra Pradesh, set to be developed in two phases. "Work on the 600 MW first phase will begin soon under our attractive ICE policy," he shared on 'X'. Lokesh also discussed facilitating further investments with representatives of Norfund, NDB Bank, and Société Générale, emphasising AP's investor-friendly climate.

These developments reflect Andhra Pradesh's commitment to renewable energy and its role in driving sustainable economic growth.

WUA polls peaceful in NTR dist amid political setbacks

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Elections for 237 Water Users' Associations (WUAs) and 1,936 Territorial Constituencies (TCs) were held peacefully on Saturday in the NTR district. However, voting for five WUAs and 42 TCs was postponed due to issues such as voter apathy, disputes, and administrative hurdles.

According to the Water Resources Department (WRD), the district comprises 242 WUAs and 1,978 TCs. Elections for WUA No. 73 (Major) and WUA No. 74 (Major) were deferred as voters boycotted over inadequate water supply. Similarly, polls for WUA No. 20 (Ravula Tank, Rangapuram) and WUA No. 51 (East Tank, Ganapavaram) were postponed due to conflicts among voters.

Elections for president and vice president posts in WUA No. 21 (Rangapuram, Reddigudem Mandal) could not be conducted, although Territorial Constituency elections in the area were completed. These delays highlight challenges in ensuring smooth elections, underscoring the need for enhanced coordination and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Gannavaram MLA and government Whip Yarlagadda Venkata Rao suffered a significant setback in the WUA elections for Jangamavani Tank in Nunna, Vijayawada Rural Mandal. Kolaprolu Krishna



Reddy, supported by the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), defeated the TDP-backed candidate for the president's post. The TCs election for Jangamavani Tank resulted in a tie, with both TDP and YSRCP-backed panels winning three seats each. A tiebreaker for TC No. 3 was won by a YSRCP candidate. Following this, the election

officer conducted a draw for president and vice president positions. Krishna Reddy emerged as president, while Kotaiah, a TDP candidate, was elected vice president.

This defeat is seen as a political blow to Yarlagadda, with the election reflecting the tussle for dominance between TDP and YSRCP in the region.

Voter dies of heart attack

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a tragic incident, Munaganti Rama Rao, a 60-year-old farmer, passed away due to cardiac arrest while participating in the Water Users' Associations (WUA) elections at Aligineni Pedda Muttaiah Zilla Parishat High School in Kothuru Tadepalli in Vijayawada Rural Mandal on Saturday.

Rama Rao had been actively campaigning for his brother, Munaganti Krishna, who was contesting in the Kothuru Tank WUA elections. Sources

revealed that Rama Rao had been deeply involved in the election preparations and campaign in the village for several days.

On the day of the election, while at the polling station to cast his vote, Rama Rao suddenly collapsed on the school premises. Residents quickly rushed him to a nearby hospital, but he was declared dead on arrival.

The incident has left the local community in shock and mourning. However, the election proceedings continued as scheduled.

TDP sets record...

Continued from Page 1

The CM stressed the importance of skill development, closer engagement with government welfare schemes, and creating sustainable financial opportunities for members. He also emphasised merit-based recognition and financial support for committed workers. During the meeting, Naidu announced that all pending bills under Neeru-Chettu and NREGA, withheld during the previous regime, would be cleared soon.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	Dec 14 04:58 PM to Dec 15 02:31 PM
Purnima:	Dec 15 02:31 PM to Dec 16 12:27 PM
Krishna Paksha Pratipada:	Dec 16 12:27 PM to Dec 17 01:13 AM
Nakshatram:	Dec 15 03:54 AM to Dec 16 02:20 AM
Mrigashirsha:	Dec 16 02:20 AM to Dec 17 01:13 AM
Ardra:	Dec 17 01:13 AM to Dec 18 12:27 PM
Rahukalam:	4:18 PM to 5:40 PM
Yamaganadam:	12:11 PM to 1:33 PM
Variyam:	10:20 AM to 11:52 AM
Gulika:	2:55 PM to 4:18 PM
Amritkalam:	06:06 PM to 07:36 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:49 AM to 12:33 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 57%
Sunrise: 6:28 AM
Sunset: 5:37 PM
Updated: December 14, 2024 5:00 PM

Lokesh, Lanka discuss tech edn issues

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chairman of the Twenty Points Programme Implementation, Lanka Dinakar, met State Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh in Undavalli to discuss crucial issues concerning technical education, skill development, and the proposed Skill Census. The meeting focused on gathering suggestions from leading companies to help design modern technical curricula and practical skill development strategies for students



pursuing technical education. Minister Lokesh emphasised that achieving the vision of Swarna Andhra 2047 would depend on closely aligning technical education and skills with industry needs

to create job opportunities for the youth. He highlighted the importance of incorporating practical, real-world approaches in education. Lanka Dinakar lauded the "Skill Assessment" pilot project

initiated by Minister Lokesh, calling it a significant step towards skill development across various sectors. He suggested that this initiative could serve as a model for the country, offering opportunities for suitable employment by matching the right skills with the right individuals.

Dinakar also stressed the importance of implementing the Twenty Points Programme as part of the Swarna Andhra 2047 vision to ensure long-term development and progress in the state.

Borra sworn in as Teachers' MLC

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Borra Gopimurthy, who won the by-election for the Teachers' MLC seat from the united East and West Godavari districts as an independent candidate, took the oath of office on Saturday. The ceremony was held at the State Assembly building in Velagapudi, where Legislative Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju administered the oath. After the oath-taking, the Chairman congratulated Gopimurthy and presented him with documents outlining the rules, regulations, and activities of the Legislative Council.



The event was attended by several dignitaries, including Progressive Democratic Front (PDF) MLCs KS Lakshman Rao and I. Venkateswar Rao, Assembly Secretary General Surya Devara Prasanna Kumar, teachers, family members of the newly elected MLC, and Assembly staff.

Our govt...

Continued from Page 1

As chief minister of Gujarat, he said, his government celebrated the 60th year of the Constitution's adoption by placing a copy of the document on an elephant while he walked underneath barefoot in a symbolic gesture to highlight its supremacy.

Slamming the Nehru-Gandhi family, he said first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru amended the country's guiding document to curb freedom of expression and his daughter Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency to defy a Supreme Court judgment that annulled her election as an MP.

The "throttled India's democracy and mutilated the Constitution" when the 25th year of its adoption was approaching, to save her chair as prime minister, he said, noting that she also effected an amendment to protect the president, vice president and herself from any legal challenge to their position with a retrospective effect.

The country was turned into jail and the judiciary was throttled, he said. Rajiv Gandhi, who took over as prime minister after his mother's assassination, also amended the Constitution.

This blot on the Congress cannot be washed off, Modi asserted.

A sacred legacy embroiled...

Continued from Page 1

The temple's financial dealings have further eroded public trust. In 2021, irregularities in the tendering process for engineering works led to accusations of favouritism and a lack of transparency. "There were questions about the tendering process, but nothing ever came of it," said an opposition leader. In 2023, the Chandanotsavam festival, one of the temple's most celebrated events, faced public backlash due to chaotic organisation, fake ticket scams, and delays. A devotee lamented, "This is supposed to be a spiritual event, but the way it was organised was a disaster. The lack of accountability is troubling." The latest scandal involves allegations of adulterated ghee being used in temple rituals, raising concerns about the sanctity of the offerings. A temple official expressed

suspicion, saying, "The sudden change in suppliers raised several eyebrows, and now, with the adulteration claims, it's hard to ignore the possible implications."

Despite multiple investigations and public outcry, critics argue that the government's response has been insufficient. A political analyst noted, "The people deserve to know the truth. The Simhachalam temple is a sacred place, and its administration should be beyond reproach. Unfortunately, the issues under the current leadership paint a very different picture." Devotees and activists are demanding a comprehensive audit of the temple's operations and greater accountability from the authorities. As the controversies continue, the question remains whether justice and reform will prevail to restore Simhachalam to its former revered status.

Amaravati roads...

Continued from Page 1

Speaking to the media, the minister emphasized that the road designs would aim to minimize damage to private property. He confirmed that the government is extending the E11 and E13 roads from Seed Capital to National Highway 16, which will link Amaravati to the Chennai-Kolkata route. These road designs are being planned with the future in mind, covering the next 30 years. Narayana also acknowledged the contributions of farmers, highlighting that 34,000 acres of land were voluntarily donated to the capital city within just 58 days. He

praised the current government for overcoming the challenges faced during the capital's development.

To date, the authority has approved tenders worth ₹22,000 crores, with an additional ₹20,000 crores set to be approved in the upcoming CRDA authority meeting. The construction includes 16 roads running from east to west and 18 roads from north to south, covering a 217-square-kilometre area. The E11 and E13 roads will be extended as part of this project.

The minister assured that efforts would be made to minimize the impact on private properties, with the roads pass-

ing through forested areas and affecting only a few houses. Authorities, along with local representatives, will engage with the affected families to ensure fairness and appropriate compensation. The roads will be designed for speeds of 80 to 100 km/h. The minister also noted that the construction of the Vijayawada West Bypass is nearing completion. This road, which passes through Amaravati, will connect each section of the bypass with the capital city's roads. He instructed that construction proceed as planned and inspected the bridge over the Krishna River, which is part of the West Bypass project.



Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy presenting a portrait of Goddess Durga Devi to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat at the Durga temple atop Indrakeeladri on Saturday.



Endowments Minister Ramanarayana Reddy unveiling a brochure for the special app at the Durga Temple on Saturday.

Durga Temple gears up for Bhavani Deeksha relinquishment from Dec 21

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Preparations are in full swing at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri as the Bhavani Deeksha relinquishment ceremony is set to take place from December 21 to 25. Endowments Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy announced that around five lakh devotees are expected to participate in the grand event. Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Chief Mohan Bhagwat visited the temple on Saturday, offering prayers to Goddess Durga Devi and performing special pujas. Minister Ramanarayana Reddy, along with Endowments Department Principal Secretary S Satyanarayana and Temple Executive Officer K.S. Rama Rao, welcomed the RSS Chief and facilitated his darshan.

Vedic scholars at the Veda Ashirvachana Mandapam blessed Mohan Bhagwat, while the temple authorities hon-

oured him with Seshu Vastram, Laddu Prasadam, and a portrait of Goddess Durga Devi.

Minister Reddy highlighted the comprehensive arrangements being made for the upcoming Bhavani Deeksha relinquishment and reiterated the government's support to the Durga Temple authorities. He directed officials to coordinate with other departments to ensure the smooth conduct of the event.

In a significant move, the Minister unveiled a special app developed by Amaravati Software Innovations. The app, available on the Play Store, provides information about facilities and arrangements for the devotees. He encouraged Bhavani devotees to use the app for a seamless experience. Later, Minister Reddy and Principal Secretary Satyanarayana reviewed the preparations and sought updates from temple officials on the progress of the arrangements.

'Kalasha Jyothula Utsavam' held

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The grand 'Kalasha Jyothula Utsavam', part of the Bhavani Deeksha relinquishment, was held on Saturday, beginning from Sivaramakrishna Kshetram at Satyanarayanaapuram and concluding at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Temple atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada. The event was inaugurated by Durga Temple Executive Officer KS Rama Rao, attracting a large number of devotees.

The Kalasha Jyothulu Utsavam is a significant ritual marking the conclusion of the 41-day Bhavani Deeksha, celebrated with much devotion. Devotees carried holy Kalashas and lit sacred lamps (Jyothulu), symbolising their devotion



to Goddess Kanaka Durga.

The procession passed through key areas like Gandhinagar, Governorpet, Police Control Room, Vinayaka Temple, and Canal Road, with cultural programs adding to the vibrancy of the event. Temple authorities ensured smooth arrangements with facilities such as drinking water, medical aid, and crowd management, while special rituals were performed to bless the devotees.

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Naidu vows to continue efforts for 'Bharat Ratna' to NTR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu reaffirmed his commitment to securing the 'Bharat Ratna' award for TDP founder and former chief minister NT Rama Rao (NTR). He assured that efforts would persist until the nation's highest civilian honour is conferred on NTR. A programme was organised at Poranki, near Vijayawada, on Saturday to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the release of NTR's first film. The event witnessed the participation of several prominent personalities, including former Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister reminisced about NTR's illustrious career, noting that he acted in over 300 films and portrayed diverse characters. "NTR founded the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to uphold the self-respect of the Telugu people, who extended overwhelming



support to him," Naidu stated. He expressed hope that the TDP would thrive as long as Telugu people exist.

"Honouring NTR with the 'Bharat Ratna' is akin to respecting the pride of the Telugu people. Our efforts in this regard will continue relentlessly," Chandrababu Naidu asserted.

Naidu also recalled significant milestones in NTR's life, including the 1984 political crisis, when he opposed NTR's removal as Chief Minister and

led a successful struggle to reinstate him.

On this occasion, former Vice-President Venkaiah Naidu released a book titled 'Tara Rama - Annagari Antarangam', published by the Savonire and Website Committee.

Prominent attendees included film producers D Suresh Babu and G Adishesagiri Rao, veteran actress Jayapradha, Shyamala Devi (wife of Krishnam Raju), and Nandamuri Rama Krishna.



Ex-DGP advocates youth leadership for strengthening rule of law

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Former DGP J Poornachandra Rao has stressed the importance of empowering youth from diverse backgrounds to become leaders and officers, ensuring that the 'rule of law' benefits everyone equally.

Speaking at the 'Ruler's Law, Rule of Law' conference held at the Visakhapatnam Public Library on Saturday, Rao highlighted the growing influence of politics on the rule of law in contemporary India. "The Constitution and system were based on the concept that the law should apply equally to all. However, today, while rulers don't create laws, the implementation of rules has

increased," Rao observed, emphasizing the need to uphold the constitutional principle of equality before the law.

Rao pointed to the ongoing disinvestment of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant as a major issue in the region. "Since 1966, the plant has supported local communities, but it is now being dismantled without replacing jobs, highlighting broader societal imbalances," he said. He also spoke about economic disparities in India, noting that one-third of the country's wealth is controlled by 167 corporate entities. "While the assets of the rich continue to grow, the poor are getting poorer. Every day, the number of millionaires increases, but the poor

are left behind," he commented.

Criticizing the privatization of public institutions, particularly in education, Rao remarked, "While foreign education is prioritized, domestic institutions are being neglected. The government must strengthen public institutions instead of privatizing them for business interests." Rao also raised concerns about corporate influence on politics, particularly through electoral bonds, which he claimed are exacerbating inequality. Additionally, he questioned the inaction on the Rs. 1,750 crore solar scam, warning, "If societal issues aren't addressed, criminals may take control of the country."

Industry leaders laud AP's new tourism policy

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Andhra Pradesh government's newly unveiled tourism policy has been met with widespread enthusiasm from industry leaders, who are optimistic about its potential to establish the state as a premier tourist destination. K Vijay Mohan, President of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Forum (APTF) and the Tours and Travel Association of Andhra (TTAA), praised the Tourism Department's initiatives and credited Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for his visionary approach.

"The Chief Minister has laid a strong foundation for the future of tourism in Andhra Pradesh," Mohan said in an interview with The Pioneer. He emphasised the importance of policy reforms to attract investment and reduce operational costs for entrepreneurs. One of his key suggestions is the introduction of a Tradable Incentive Certificate (TIC), a mechanism he believes would ease financial burdens on tourism entrepreneurs. "Upon project approval, the govern-



ment could issue TICs for part payment of incentives receivable," he proposed.

Mohan also advocated for deferring municipal approval fees, which could be adjusted against incentives for timely project completion. Simplifying tax processes, particularly for the State Goods and Services Tax (SGST), is another priority. "SGST paid can be credited back every six months directly through the portal, eliminating the need for reimbursements," he noted.

However, Mohan highlighted a critical omission in the policy: the absence of provisions for bar licenses in hotels. He called for a reduction in the annual bar license fee to Rs. 5 to 10 lakh, pointing out the significant economic losses to neighbouring states. "Andhra Pradesh is losing nearly Rs. 500 crore annually as many MICE events and weddings are being organised elsewhere," he said, referring to the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions sector.

Despite these concerns, Mohan remains optimistic about the policy's potential to transform the tourism landscape of Andhra Pradesh. "With the right reforms and swift implementation, the state can leverage its natural and cultural assets to create a thriving tourism ecosystem," he said. Industry stakeholders are now eagerly awaiting concrete steps from the government to implement these ideas and ensure that Andhra Pradesh reclaims its position as a leading destination for both domestic and international travellers.



Vijayawada Catholic Diocese awards 1,000 scholarships to needy girls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Catholic Diocese of Vijayawada, under its initiative Talithacumi Unnati (TCU, meaning 'Young Girl Arise'), awarded 1,000 scholarships to underprivileged girls on Saturday. The scholarships cover tuition, books, uniforms, and other essential materials. The event was held at the Fr Devaiah Auditorium on the Andhra Loyola College (ALC) campus in Vijayawada.

This programme aims to break financial barriers, promote personal growth, and nurture leadership potential among young girls. Renowned singer and fundraiser Rob Galea from Australia, along with Alan (USA), Janine (Australia), Zabadee (Australia), and Jessica (New Zealand), visited various communities in Vijayawada

and Guntur to meet the scholarship recipients. A celebratory concert at the Fr Devaiah Auditorium featured Fr Galea's message on love, acceptance, and inner peace. Jessica highlighted how educating girls can positively impact families and society as a whole.

Fr Darsi Don Bosco, Director of TCU, credited Bishop T Raja Rao, donors, and the community for making the programme a success. He emphasised the Diocese's commitment to reducing gender disparities and empowering women through education.

Notable attendees included Bishop T Raja Rao, Youth Director Fr Joji Thambi, ALC Correspondent Saharaj, TCU Operational Executive Dominica Lavanya, and Assistant Director Kolakani Kumar Raja.

Kankanala appointed Chair of Amaravati Yi chapter

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director of SR & Sons Infra Tech Pvt Ltd, Hari Krishna Kankanala, has been appointed as the Chair of the CII Young Indians (YI), Amaravati Chapter for the year 2025. Balakrishna Chittineni, Director of Cultural Canvas India Pvt Ltd, has been named as the Co-Chair. The announcement was made by Dr Srinivas Joshi, Regional Chair of Yi Southern Region (Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh), during the 9th Annual Meeting of the Yi Amaravati Chapter held in Vijayawada on Saturday.

Hari Krishna Kankanala is the Director of SR & Sons Infra



Tech Pvt Ltd, which is involved in manufacturing steel, real estate, and construction. He holds a B.Tech in Computers and a Master's in Entrepreneurship and has extensive experience in pharmaceutical manufacturing.

Balakrishna Chittineni is the Director of Cultural Canvas India Pvt Ltd. He has made significant contributions as the Business Development

Manager for Asia and Africa at a prestigious Australian educational institution. His role involves leading strategic initiatives and promoting growth across diverse markets. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering and a Master of Administration.

In his Special Address, Dr Srinivas Joshi lauded the Yi Amaravati Chapter for its innovative approach in achieving various goals related to stakeholder engagement and community initiatives. He highlighted the remarkable range of activities undertaken by the chapter, each of which strengthens the social and moral fabric of society.



Free heart surgeries give new lease of life to 16 children

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a remarkable effort, 16 free paediatric heart surgeries were successfully carried out by the Heart & Brain Institute, Andhra Hospitals, in collaboration with the Healing Little Hearts UK team, from December 9 to 14.

The surgeries were performed by a team of experts, including Dr. Nelson Oliver David Alphonso, a consultant paediatric cardiac surgeon from Australia, along with the cardiac surgical team from Andhra Hospitals. Dr. PV Rama Rao, Director of

Children's Services, stated that the success rate of the surgeries was nearly 99%, thanks to the combined efforts of the hospital's paediatric cardiology, surgical, and intensive care teams. Over the past decade, the hospital has performed over 4,000 paediatric cardiac surgeries and interventions. It is recognised for conducting the highest number of such surgeries in Andhra Pradesh, averaging 50-60 surgeries per month.

The camp was supported by the Andhra Mother & Child Foundation, Vasudha Foundation, Mahesh Babu Foundation, and NTR Vaidya Seva.

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

In a remarkable display of humanity and generosity, Aarangi Vijaya Kumari, a 58-year-old government school teacher, has donated her body for medical research, leaving a lasting legacy of kindness and service. Known for her compassionate nature, Kumari decided in 2023 to contribute to medical education by donating her body for experiments by MBBS students. She formalised this decision by submitting a consent form, earning widespread admiration for her extraordinary commitment to society.

"Aarangi Vijaya Kumari's decision reflects her extraordinary commitment to society, even in death," said Dr. C. Ravi



Venkatachalam, Principal of Sriakulam Medical College. "Her noble act will greatly benefit our students and advance medical education."

On Saturday morning, Kumari's son honoured her wish by donating her body to the Anatomy Department of RIMS Medical College.

Speaking on the occasion, the family described her as a person who consistently prioritized the welfare of others. "She had always believed in giv-

Aarangi Vijaya Kumari's Selfless act leaves a legacy of service, inspiring generations and advancing medical education

ing back to society. This was her way of continuing to serve humanity even after her passing," said her son.

The selfless act has set a powerful example, inspiring others to consider similar contributions. "Her generosity is a lesson for all of us," said Dr. KV Ramprasad, a faculty member

at the college. "Her donation will help future doctors gain invaluable knowledge, which ultimately benefits society as a whole." Other staff members, including Dr M Hema Radhika and Dr Tarani, echoed these sentiments, expressing heartfelt gratitude to Aarangi Vijaya Kumari's family. "This act of kindness will be remembered for years to come," they remarked, emphasizing the transformative impact such donations have on medical education.

Aarangi Vijaya Kumari, who succumbed to an illness while undergoing treatment, leaves behind a legacy of kindness and service. Her contribution not only advances medical science but also inspires a spirit of selflessness in others.

Tomato price crisis hits Pattikonda farmers hard

BEARING THE BRUNT OF CARTEL PRICING AND RISING COSTS

PNS ■ KURNOOL

The tomato market at Pattikonda is in turmoil as wholesale traders reportedly form a cartel to drive prices down, leaving farmers with little to show for their hard work and investment. At the heart of the crisis, farmers are being offered a pittance for their produce - between Rs 3 and Rs 6 per kilogram - a price so low that it doesn't even cover their transport and harvesting expenses.

For the tomato farmers, this is a bitter blow. "We are being offered only Rs 3 to Rs 6 per kg. This is far below what we spend on transport, pesticides, fertilizers, and labour. We can't even cover the cost of getting our tomatoes to the market," lamented Raghava Reddy, a local farmer. With tomatoes selling for Rs 15 to Rs 20 per kg in open markets across the State, the disparity between what farmers are paid and what consumers pay is stark, causing growing frustration among the farming community. The situation has escalated to the point where many farmers feel it is no longer worth selling their produce. "At one point, the wholesale traders were offering just Rs 1 per kg. It's better to dump the produce than to sell it at such a loss,"



said Narasimhulu, another farmer at the Pattikonda market. In protest, many farmers have taken to dumping their tomatoes on the road in a desperate bid to draw attention to their plight. Despite the hardships, the farmers have little choice but to continue bringing their produce to the market, hoping for a fair price. However, even the marketing department's recent decision to buy tomatoes at Rs 4 to Rs 6 per kg has left the farmers dissatisfied.

They argue that these prices are far from sufficient to cover their costs or make a profit.

Local officials are now taking notice of the situation. Pattikonda RDO Bharat Naik visited the market to understand the situation firsthand and brought the issue of cartel pricing to the attention of Joint Collector B Navya. In response, Agriculture Minister K Atchannaaidu has instructed officials to purchase tomatoes from farmers at a minimum

price of Rs 8 per kg. Wholesale traders have their explanations for the price drop. Chandrasekar, a trader in the market, attributed the decline to the large quantities of tomatoes being brought in by farmers from neighbouring states. "The influx of tomatoes from other states, coupled with the high volume brought by local farmers, has caused prices to collapse," he explained. He also suggested that the majority of the tomatoes being sold were of

lower quality, which contributed to the price decline.

Despite these claims, the ongoing crisis has left farmers questioning the fairness of the pricing system. With costs continuing to rise and profits shrinking, the question remains: will the government step in to protect the interests of the farming community and ensure fair prices for their hard-earned produce? Until then, the farmers of Pattikonda face an uncertain future.

CM to visit Polavaram tomorrow; Eluru SP inspects arrangements

The SP directed officials to finalise all arrangements by Sunday evening, ensuring that no untoward incidents occur during the Chief Minister's visit. He emphasised the need for regulating traffic and making adequate arrangements for vehicle parking



Ahead of the visit, Superintendent of Police K Pratap Shiva Kishore and Joint Collector Dathri Reddy, along with Additional SP N Harichandra Rao, inspected the security arrangements at Polavaram on Saturday.

The SP directed officials to finalise all arrangements by Sunday evening, ensuring that

no untoward incidents occur during the Chief Minister's visit. He emphasised the need for regulating traffic and making adequate arrangements for vehicle parking.

He further instructed police officials to coordinate with other departments and ensure there are no security lapses during the visit.

PNS ■ ELURU

CM N Chandrababu Naidu is set to visit the Polavaram project on December 16.

Telangana's income not enough to service BRS Govt's debts: Ponguleti



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The financial resources of Telangana are not enough to pay interest for the loans taken by the BRS government, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said.

He said that it is a fact that the Congress government could not implement some of its assurances given to the people during elections.

He said the delay in implementing welfare schemes is due to the KCR government's financial imprudence. The Congress Government will implement all its assurances, he added.

He said that it is a fact that the state has financial problems and that the Congress government will strive for the welfare of the poor after solving its financial problems. Ponguleti said that due to KCR admin's policies conditions in hostels have become miserable. The KCR government kept children in sheds of old chicken and dairy farms and in dilapidated rundown buildings.



Naidu's Vision-2047 an unrealistic political gimmick: Kannababu

PNS ■ KAKINADA

Former minister Kurasala Kannababu has dismissed Chandrababu Naidu's Vision-2047 as an unrealistic political gimmick aimed at misleading the public. He likened it to "old wine in a new bottle," pointing out that previous versions of such visions had ended in failure.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, Kannababu criticised Naidu's repeated failures with past plans, including Vision-2020 and Vision-2029. "Naidu's earlier promises failed to materialise, leaving the people of Andhra Pradesh in disappointment and stagnation rather than progress," he said, highlighting the unrealised

goals of Vision-2020, which Naidu had once touted as a blueprint for a developed Andhra Pradesh.

Kannababu accused Naidu of prioritising superficial policies over substantial development, while under the leadership of Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, Andhra Pradesh has made genuine strides with welfare-oriented programmes that have directly benefited the people.

He urged the public to remain cautious and not be swayed by "hollow promises and exaggerated vision documents." "The people of Andhra Pradesh deserve practical solutions and sincere leadership, not empty rhetoric," Kannababu concluded.



Bike lifter arrested; 11 bikes, 3 autos recovered

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The police arrested a notorious bike lifter and recovered 11 motorcycles and three auto-rickshaws from him.

DSP Abdul Ajeer informed the media on Saturday that the accused, Parikala Sagar, hails from Piduguralla town and has been involved in multiple

crimes across the district. The Kothapet police apprehended him at Srinivasa Pet. During interrogation, he confessed to stealing motorcycles and auto rickshaws. Based on the information provided by him, the police were able to recover the stolen vehicles, which are valued at over Rs 10 lakh. The accused was produced before the court.

Kadapa MP Avinash alleges undemocratic tactics in WUA polls

PNS ■ KADAPA

YSRCP MP YS Avinash Reddy has strongly criticised the ruling alliance for conducting the water users' society elections in an undemocratic and oppressive manner, calling it a mockery of democracy.

Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Avinash Reddy accused the government of deliberately suppressing farmers' participation by withholding No-Dues Certificates (NOCs) and resorting to conspiracies.

He highlighted the injustice, stating that Village Revenue Officers (VROs) were forcibly detained at mandal offices for two days, treated like prisoners, and kept under police surveillance to prevent farmers from obtaining the neces-



sary certificates. "If the ruling alliance was confident of its support, why were NOCs deliberately denied to farmers wishing to contest?" he questioned. Refuting government claims that no farmers had approached for certificates, he termed such statements as "outright lies." Avinash Reddy also criticised the TDP in-charge for Pulivendula, asserting that if the elections had

been conducted fairly, farmers would have shown them their place. Describing the government as "incompetent and cowardly," he accused it of using police protection to manipulate elections instead of allowing free voting.

The MP also pointed out the government's failure to fulfil promises like investment support, free crop insurance, crop procurement, and ensuring minimum support prices, leaving farmers disillusioned. "Why would farmers vote for you when you have failed them on every front?" he asked. Avinash Reddy condemned the ruling alliance for misusing revenue and police officials to manipulate the election process, particularly in Pulivendula and Jammalamadugu.

Abducted boy traced, reunited with parents

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The swift action of the police ensured the tracing of the abducted boy and the reunion with the parents. SP AR Damodhar here on Saturday said that a couple from Odisha, Urvashi and Pradeep have been residing in Ongole for the past five years.

Pradeep works as a mechanic at a local car care shop. Urvashi handed her 10-month-old baby boy to a neighbour named Dayamani, on Friday requesting her to look after him while she went for a bath.

However, upon returning, the mother asked the baby but she said that she would hand



over the baby after the return from a nearby shop and disappeared with the baby. Realizing something was amiss, Urvashi searched for Dayamani in her house and found her belongings were also gone. On suspicion, the parents complained to Ongole Taluk PS around 3 PM.

The Taluka police registered the case and formed 5 teams to trace the boy. The special teams' efforts included circulating the child's and suspect's photos across multiple WhatsApp groups, including Mahila police, village groups and railway police groups.

This proactive approach yielded a lead and located the child in a Mango Garden in Gudluru Mandal. Acting on the received information, Taluka CI, HCs Singayya and Ravi, along with assistance from Ulavapadu SI Ankamma reached the spot. The abductors, Manikanta and Dayamani abandoned the baby and fled away. The police rescued the

baby safely, brought it to the PS and handed it over to his parents at the hands of District SP.

SP Damodhar appreciated the swift action and teamwork of Ongole DSP Rayapati Srinivas Rao, Ongole Taluka CI K. Ajay Kumar, One Town CI Nagaraju, Two Town CI Srinivas Rao, Rural CI N. Sreekanth Babu, Singarayakonda CI H.A. Rathayya, Ongole Taluka SI Krishna Pavani, Ulavapadu SI Ankamma, SB ASI Ravi, HC Singayya, Constables Venkat Rao and Srinivas Rao and handed out appreciation certificates for their commendable efforts in solving the case within hours.



Eluru Railway Station in image makeover mode

PNS ■ ELURU

Long neglected, the Eluru Railway Station is undergoing major modernisation thanks to MP Putta Mahesh Kumar's efforts. Since being elected as MP, Mahesh Kumar has prioritised development, addressing the longstanding demands of Eluru residents. He committed to transforming the station, which had suffered decades of neglect.

"Through discussions with senior officials and the Union Minister for Railways, Rs 21 crore was secured under the Amrit Bharat Scheme to modernise the Eluru railway station," the MP informed the

media. He highlighted that the funds sanctioned by the Central Government have facilitated the rapid progress of the station's development works. Mahesh Kumar emphasised his vision of converting the station into a modern hub, alleviating the lack of amenities, and improving the travel experience for passengers.

Railway officials report that approximately 70% of the renovation has been completed. Platform height upgrades are finished, while passenger waiting halls and toilet block construction are in the final stages. Shade roofing has been installed on both sides of the station, ensuring comfort for passengers, and clean drinking

water taps have been added. Upgrades to the far-end platform are underway, with further development planned. The authorities aim to complete the modernisation works by March 2025. Eluru Railway Station, ranked 85th among India's busiest stations and classified as an 'A' grade facility, caters to around 10,000 passengers daily. Citizens have lauded the MP's efforts, describing the pace of development as unprecedented.

Residents expressed optimism about the future, with many acknowledging Mahesh Kumar as a development-focused leader who has significantly contributed to the constituency's progress.

APEPDCL chief champions energy conservation and sustainability

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Chairman and Managing Director of the Eastern Power Distribution Company of Andhra Pradesh Limited (APEPDCL), Prudhvi Tej Immadi, called on citizens to embrace energy-efficient practices and adopt rooftop solar installations to foster a sustainable future. Speaking at the corporate office on Saturday during the launch of wall posters and pamphlets for National Energy Conservation Week, Immadi underscored the pressing need for conservation.

"Energy conservation is not just a responsibility but a necessity. The resources we save today will pave the way for a better tomorrow," Immadi said. The



week-long observance, spanning December 14 to 20, covers 11 districts under APEPDCL's jurisdiction and is packed with educational and motivational initiatives. "This week is an opportunity to educate and inspire people about adopting sustainable practices and conserving electricity," he added.

Immadi encouraged the use of energy-efficient appliances and LED lighting, emphasizing their dual benefit of cost savings and environmental impact. "Using star-rated appliances and embracing rooftop solar systems can not only reduce electricity bills but also help the environment," he noted. To lead by example,

APEPDCL employees have been directed to install rooftop solar systems at their homes. Awareness campaigns, rallies, art exhibitions, and competitions for students are also part of the week's agenda. Visakhapatnam Circle Superintending Engineer G. Shyambabu echoed Immadi's sentiments. "Our collective efforts can make a big difference in reducing energy wastage and promoting sustainability," he said.

The event witnessed the participation of senior officials, including Executive Engineers Polaki Srinivasa Rao and B.K. Naidu, as well as Deputy Executive Engineers Suman and P. Jyothi, signalled APEPDCL's unified commitment to energy conservation.

ACROSS THE STATES



Have not resigned as Maha Congress chief: Patole

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Saturday said he had not tendered resignation from his party post. Party sources had claimed on Friday that following the rout faced by the Congress in the assembly elections, Patole had emailed a letter to party president Mallikarjun Kharge and expressed the desire to be relieved of his current responsibility. "I have not tendered any resignation...rumours are being spread," he told reporters here. "Actually, the tenure of MPCC (Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee) chief is of three years, and I have completed four years. I have earlier also said that I fulfilled my responsibilities properly, and it is an internal matter, not to be disclosed. The party will decide, and I feel everyone should get the opportunity to work in the organisation."



Assam: Inter-state cybercrime gang busted

An inter-state cybercrime gang was busted with the arrest of five people in Nagaon district of Assam, police said on Saturday. Following intelligence inputs, a team of the Jura police station arrested the accused on Friday night. Nagaon Additional Superintendent of Police Jayanta Barua told reporters here. The gang was mostly involved in making fake Aadhaar cards apart from other financial crimes, he said. Barua said that out of the five accused criminals, two each are from Assam and Uttar Pradesh, and one hails from Bihar. The investigation is underway to find more members of the gang and expose the complete network. We appeal to the public that don't let cybercrime go unnoticed," he added.



Cold wave sweeps Punjab, Haryana

Cold weather conditions persisted across many parts of Haryana and Punjab on Saturday, with Faridkot shivering at a minimum temperature of one degree Celsius, the meteorological department said. According to the data from the Met department, Faridkot was the coldest place in Punjab. Pathankot recorded a low of 2.3 degrees Celsius, while Gurdaspur and Bathinda experienced chilly nights with minimum temperatures of 2.8 degrees Celsius and 3.4 deg Celsius, respectively, the data read. The data showed that Amritsar logged 3.4 degrees Celsius, Ludhiana 7.8 deg C and Patiala recorded a low of 6 degrees Celsius. In Haryana, mercury plunged in Karnal recording a low of 4 degrees Celsius while Hisar and Bhiwani registered a minimum of 4.1 degrees Celsius, as per the data. The weather office said that piercing cold swept Narnaul, which logged a low of 4.5 degrees. Rohtak recorded 6.8 degrees Celsius while Ambala recorded 7.5 degrees Celsius, it said. Chandigarh, the joint capital of Haryana and Punjab, recorded a minimum temperature of 6.6 degrees Celsius, the weather office said.

Another attempt by farmers to march to Delhi foiled

PNS ■ SHAMBHU

Protesting farmers suspended their foot march to Delhi after some of them were injured on Saturday in teargas shelling and use of water cannons by Haryana security personnel, who foiled the agitators' third attempt in less than 10 days to cross the Punjab-Haryana border.

Farmer leader Sarwan Singh Pandher claimed that 17 farmers were injured in the action by the Haryana security personnel. "The two forums (of farmers' unions) have decided to call back our 'jatha' (group)," Pandher told reporters here.

"How are 101 farmers a danger to the law and order and peace of the country? You are debating the Constitution (in Parliament). Which Constitution allows the use of force against farmers," he asked. No discussion is taking place on the issue of farmers in Parliament, Pandher said. On the next course of action,



he said a tractor march will be taken out in states except Punjab on December 16. A 'rail roko' protest will be held on December 18 from 12 noon to 3 pm in Punjab, he added.

The farmers under the banner of Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha have been pressing for various demands, including a legal

guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). They have also demanded that the Centre initiate talks with them to address their issues.

It was the third attempt by protesting farmers to march towards the national capital. Farmers had earlier made two attempts to cross the Shambhu border point on December 6 and December 8 but they

were not allowed to proceed by security personnel in Haryana.

Ahead of the resumption of their march, the Haryana government had on Saturday suspended mobile internet and bulk SMS services in 12 villages in Ambala till December 17 "to prevent any disturbance of peace and public order".

Cong must earn its place as INDIA bloc leader: Omar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Acknowledging growing discontent among INDIA bloc partners with the Congress, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has asked the party to justify its leadership role in the alliance instead of taking it for granted.

Abdullah, while recognising the Congress' significant position as a pan-India party and the largest opposition in Parliament, emphasised that leadership "has to be earned" and cannot be taken for granted. He also suggested that the party should raise the issue of restoration of statehood in



Jammu and Kashmir.

"By virtue of being the single largest party in Parliament, and also having the leader of opposition in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, the fact that they have a pan-India footprint, which no other party can lay claim to, they are nat-

ural sort of leaders of an opposition movement," Abdullah in his first interview after becoming the chief minister in October.

Yet some of the allies feel disquiet because they feel the Congress is "not doing enough to justify it or to earn it or to keep it. That's something the Congress might wish to consider."

Still, Abdullah praised former Congress president Sonia Gandhi, describing her as a leader of unparalleled stature within the opposition alliance. "When the INDIA bloc comes together, she plays an important leadership role," he added.

65 people booked for forging age proof for pension

PNS ■ KENDRAPARA (ODISHA)

Odisha Police have registered cases against 65 people for forging their age proof documents to reap benefits of old-age pensions under social security schemes in Kendrapara district, officials said on Saturday. The 65 people are aged between 40 and 50 years, and all of them are from Argala gram panchayat area.

They received old-age pension from February to August this year on the basis of school certificates and other documents, which were later found to be fake.

Jharkhand to be taken forward by strengthening all sections of society: CM

PNS ■ SAHIBGANJ (JHARKHAND)

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Saturday said his government would take the state forward by strengthening all sections of the society.

Soren said his government made all efforts to empower women in the state.

Jharkhand became the first state in the country, which has increased the monthly financial assistance to women to Rs 2,500 from Rs 1,000 under 'Maiyan Samman Yojana', the CM claimed.

Soren was speaking at a government function at Bhojnadih in Sahibganj, where he inaugurated and laid the foundation stones for 331 projects worth around Rs 350 crore for Sahibganj and Pakur districts.

He also distributed assets worth around Rs 187 crore among beneficiaries of various government schemes in the two districts.

The CM said that the people of Jharkhand have again elected 'Abua Sarkar (our government)' and voted for the state's dignity, development of tribals, farmers, workers, women and



protection of 'jal, jungle and jamin' (water, forest and land). "The state's mineral resources strengthen the country's economy but there has not been any change in the lifestyle of the poor, tribals and original inhabitants of the state. Jharkhand remained backward. We will all work together to delete the stigma of backwardness and take the state forward by strengthening all sections of the society," Soren said.

The CM said his government made all efforts to strengthen women in the state. "We have linked more than 50 lakh women with the 'Maiyan Samman Yojana' under which Rs 1,000 assistance was given to them. Jharkhand has become the first state in the country, which is honouring the struggle of women by increasing monthly assistance amount from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,500," he said.

NEW DELHI ASSEMBLY SEAT

Kejriwal faces off against sons of former CMs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The prestigious New Delhi Assembly seat is likely to witness a fierce electoral contest with sitting MLA and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal pitted against the sons of former Delhi chief ministers as the BJP and Congress candidates.

Parvesh Verma, the son of former Delhi chief minister Sahib Singh Verma, on Saturday told PTI that he has been asked to prepare for contesting from the New Delhi constituency. The Congress has already announced its candidate Sandeep Dikshit on



the seat. He is son of three-time former Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit.

Speaking at an event earlier on

Friday, Kejriwal rejected the rumours that he was going to shift from the New Delhi seat to some other constituency in the

upcoming assembly elections which are due in February next year. "There will be no change. I will contest from New Delhi seat and Chief Minister Atishi from Kalkaji," he said when asked about the possibility of changing seats by them.

Referring to Dikshit and Verma, the AAP supremo said they are the sons of former chief ministers and claimed himself to be an "Aam Aadmi".

The former Delhi chief minister asserted that the contest in the New Delhi constituency will be a battle between the "CM sons and the common man".

'Need systemic solution to stubble burning'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhanekar emphasised the need for a systemic solution to stubble burning, stating that our negligence endangers people's lives.

Addressing the National Energy Conservation Day function, Dhanekar said the national capital suffers every year due to hazardous environmental conditions arising out of stubble burning.

Society needs to embrace innovation and seek a systemic

solution rather than leaving it to individuals, he added.

"The system must come of age...Just imagine our lack of attention. Our negligence is putting us in jeopardy in several ways. One is our health. Second, loss of hours of work. Third, disruption of normal life. And fourth, we need to take care of our children.

"You can't go to school on this day because pollution is very high, and therefore, everyone must converge to contribute," Dhanekar stated.

He also called for finding a systemic solution to stubble burning, saying it should not be left to individuals.

"Climate change, the crisis...The threatening problem obliterates social barriers. Rich or poor, urban or rural. We must act together, or we perish together," he noted. Referring to ethos and traditional wisdom, Dhanekar said, "Our civilisational wisdom is a heritage, and I would say, in a sense, survival manual, encyclopaedic, for this climate emergency."



Mahakumbh: NGT gives UP govt time to submit sewage plan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has allowed time for the Uttar Pradesh government to place on record a "comprehensive sewage management system" plan for the upcoming Mahakumbh mela.

The 2025 Mahakumbh will be held at Prayagraj from January 13 (Paus Poonima) to February 26 (Maha Shivratri). It is organised every 12 years.

The green body was hearing the issue of preventing sewage discharge into the Ganga and Yamuna rivers in Prayagraj.

In the order dated December 9, a bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava noted the submissions by the additional advocate general (AAG) for Uttar Pradesh seeking three days to "place on record the comprehensive sewage management system which had been prepared by the authorities concerned, in view of the existing load and increased load" during the Mahakumbh.

India-Indonesia to consolidate strategic partnership

Navy Chief on a 4-day visit from today

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi will begin a four-day visit to Indonesia from Sunday to consolidate a comprehensive strategic partnership, especially in the maritime domain, between the two countries.

Admiral Tripathi is scheduled to hold talks with Indonesia's top defence brass, including Defence Minister Lt Gen Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin (ret'd), Commander of Indonesian Armed Forces Gen Agus Subiyanto, and Navy Chief Admiral Muhammad Ali, officials said.

particularly maritime security, joint training initiatives, and exploring avenues for further strengthening the operational collaboration between the two navies," the Indian Navy said. The visit is part of ongoing efforts to further consolidate bilateral defence relations in line with the comprehensive strategic partnership, with a focus on enhancing naval cooperation, it said.

The visit from December 15 to 18 underscores the strong maritime relations between the two countries, conforming to the shared vision of India-Indonesia maritime cooperation in the Indo Pacific, the Navy said in a statement.

Paracetamol linked to side effects in digestive tract

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Paracetamol, a common over-the-counter medication, may increase the risk of gastrointestinal, heart- and kidney-related complications among adults aged 65 and above, a new study has found.

Taken commonly for treating mild-to-moderate fever, paracetamol is also the first drug recommended for treating osteoarthritis -- a chronic condition causing pain, stiffness and swelling in the joints due to wear-and-tear -- as it is considered effective, relatively safe and accessible.

However, some studies have provided evidence to contest the effectiveness of paracetamol in relieving pain while others have shown increased risks of gastrointestinal side effects, such as ulcers and bleeding,

from prolonged use. The latest study, conducted by researchers from the University of Nottingham, UK, found that paracetamol use was linked to a 24 per cent and 36 per cent increase in risk of peptic ulcer bleeding (bleeding due to ulcer in the digestive tract) and lower gastrointestinal bleeding, respectively.

Taking the drug may also

increase the risk of chronic kidney disease by 19 per cent, heart failure by 9 per cent and hypertension by 7 per cent.

"This study shows a significant incidence of renal, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal side effects in older people, who are prescribed acetaminophen (paracetamol) repeatedly in the UK," the authors wrote in the study

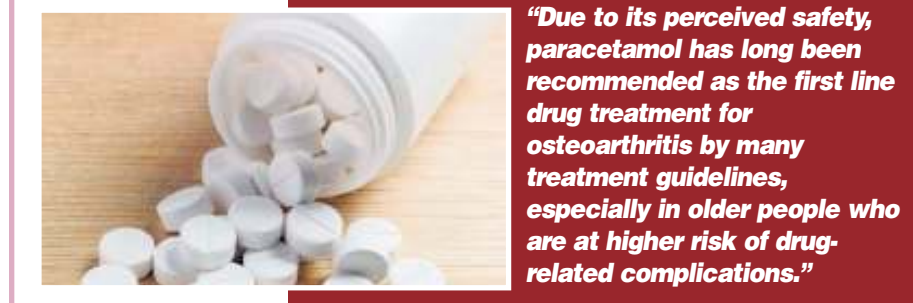
published in the journal Arthritis Care and Research. "Due to its perceived safety, paracetamol has long been recommended as the first line drug treatment for osteoarthritis by many treatment guidelines, especially in older people who are at higher risk of drug-related complications," said lead researcher Weiya Zhang from the University of

Nottingham's School of Medicine.

"Whilst further research is now needed to confirm our findings, given its minimal pain-relief effect, the use of paracetamol as a first line pain killer for long-term conditions such as osteoarthritis in older people needs to be carefully considered," Zhang said. For their analysis, the researchers looked at health records of 1,80,483 (1.80 lakh) people repeatedly prescribed paracetamol (more than two prescriptions within six months).

Their health outcomes were compared to those of 4,02,478 (4.02 lakh) people of the same age who were never prescribed paracetamol repeatedly.

Data from the Clinical Practice Research Datalink-Gold was analysed for the study.



"Due to its perceived safety, paracetamol has long been recommended as the first line drug treatment for osteoarthritis by many treatment guidelines, especially in older people who are at higher risk of drug-related complications."

A TASTE OF TOKYO IN THE HEART OF DELHI



Boya Restaurant at Chanakyapuri, Delhi, is a gastronomic gem with finely curated dishes from celebrity chef Augusto and equally tastefully done interiors, writes TEAM AGENDA



Chanakyapuri, Delhi's diplomatic enclave, has welcomed a new culinary star, *Boya Restaurant*. This contemporary dining destination promises a delightful experience that blends innovative gastronomy with an inviting ambience. Helmed by the celebrated *Chef Augusto*, who is both the Executive Chef and Chief Operating Officer (COO), *Boya* has quickly become a beacon for food connoisseurs and culinary adventurers alike.



ingredient is chosen with care, and every preparation is a homage to its origin." This ethos is evident in every bite, where the harmony of textures and flavours takes centre stage.

A CULINARY VISION REALISED

"Boya represents my vision of creating a dining experience that celebrates authenticity while embracing creativity," shares *Chef Augusto*. "Every dish on the menu has been crafted with passion, ensuring that it tells a story, evokes an emotion, and leaves a memorable impression." True to his words, the menu at *Boya* is a masterpiece that showcases an eclectic mix of global flavours with a modern twist.

The restaurant's menu is a symphony of carefully curated dishes that highlight seasonal ingredients and culinary finesse. Signature offerings include the succulent *Charcoal-Grilled Lamb Cutlets* infused with exotic spices and the delicately balanced *Miso-Glazed Black Cod*, a dish that perfectly marries sweet and savoury notes. Vegetarians will rejoice at the *Truffle-Scented Wild Mushroom Risotto*, which *Augusto* describes as "a warm embrace in a bowl".

"For me, food is more than just sustenance; it's an art form," *Chef Augusto* explains. "Every

An Ambience That Speaks Volumes
The allure of *Boya* extends beyond its food. The restaurant's design is a visual treat that complements the culinary journey it offers. With its understated elegance, *Boya* combines modern architecture with subtle cultural motifs. The interiors are adorned with warm, earthy tones, ambient lighting, and bespoke art pieces that create an atmosphere of refined comfort.

"We wanted *Boya* to be more than just a place to eat," says *Chef Augusto*. "It's a space where people can connect, celebrate, and create

memories." This philosophy resonates throughout the establishment, from the welcoming staff to the thoughtful table settings.

The open kitchen design adds another layer of intrigue, allowing diners to witness the chefs in action. The theatrical display of culinary craftsmanship not only enhances the dining experience but also reinforces the transparency and authenticity that *Boya* embodies.

A TOAST TO CRAFTSMANSHIP

Boya's beverage programme is equally impressive, featuring a curated selection of wines, artisanal cocktails, and non-alcoholic options. The Sommelier's Selection highlights rare vintages and regional specialties, while the signature cocktails, like the *Citrus Bloom Martini* and *Smoked Maple Old Fashioned*, are crafted to perfection.

"Our drinks menu is an extension of our culinary philosophy," *Augusto* notes. "It's about balance, creativity, and ensuring every sip complements the flavours on the plate." The mocktails, such as the refreshing *Basil Lemonade* and the exotic *Lychee Rose Fizz*, are equally delightful, catering to diverse palates.

ACCOLADES AND ANTICIPATION

Despite its recent launch, *Boya* has already garnered acclaim from critics and patrons. Food enthusiasts have praised

the restaurant for its innovative menu and impeccable service. Many have also commended *Chef Augusto's* ability to create an experience that feels both luxurious and personal.

"The response has been overwhelming," says *Augusto*. "It's heartening to see diners appreciate the effort and thought we've put into *Boya*. For us, this is just the beginning."

A MUST-VISIT DESTINATION

Whether you're a seasoned foodie or simply looking for a memorable meal, *Boya Restaurant* is a destination that should be on your radar. With its exceptional menu, stunning ambience, and the genius of *Chef Augusto* at the helm, *Boya* is set to redefine the dining landscape in Delhi.

"Boya is not just a restaurant; it's a celebration of life, flavours, and togetherness," *Augusto* concludes. "We're here to create moments that linger long after the last bite."

In a city teeming with culinary options, *Boya* shines bright as a testament to what passion, creativity, and excellence can achieve.

Make your reservations soon, this is one dining experience you won't want to miss.



Basko: All-Day Culinary and Cocktail Experience



By TEAM AGENDA

Step into *Basko*, the newly launched culinary bar in Noida, where ambience, impeccable service and gastronomic artistry converge to create an unparalleled dining experience. Perched on a stunning rooftop, *Basko* exudes contemporary elegance with its warm, inviting interiors that seamlessly transition from a relaxed daytime haven to an energetic evening hotspot.

Basko's menu is a curated journey across global cuisines, featuring standout dishes like the *Lebanese Breaking Balloon*, a feast for both the eyes and palate, and the *Balochistan Raan*, a richly spiced lamb delicacy slow-cooked to perfection. Adventurous foodies will love the *Basko Surf & Turf Wings* and the umami-packed *Sesame Crusted Tofu with Teriyaki Glaze*.

The handcrafted cocktail program elevates the experience further, with offerings like the *Basko Ball*, blending buttery popcorn flavours with refreshing twists, and the *Picante Twist*, a fiery delight for spice lovers. Each sip is as inventive as it is indulgent.

With its exceptional service, vibrant social atmosphere, and thoughtfully curated events, including live performances and exclusive launches, *Basko* is redefining Noida's dining and entertainment scene. It's more than a restaurant; it's a destination where every visit feels like a celebration.



Hours of Operation: 11 AM to 1 AM, Monday to Sunday
For Reservations, Please Contact: 95991 99499
Address: Basko, 6th Floor, Staring Mall, Sector 104, Noida, Uttar Pradesh, 201303



UNIQUE DUAL DINING EXPERIENCE

Experience two different worlds at *Blaq and Wyte*, with both daytime relaxation and rocking nightlife on the rooftop, writes TEAM AGENDA

Under the open sky and also for people loving indoors, *Blaq and Wyte* in the Defence Colony, opens its doors to a chilling concept for the food and party lovers. With a unique concept of both daytime and evening preferences with flair and sophistication one side of the place is *Blaq* and the other is referred to as *Wyte*. With doors above the urban hustle, *Blaq and Wyte* promises a meal and a mood with slices of the heavens on both sides. *Blaq's* menu specialises in Pan Asian cuisine, featuring signature dishes like *crunchy iceberg vegetable dumplings*, *Chengdu Lamb*, and *Tuna Tataki*. By day, *Blaq* is a refined dining destination, but after 9 PM, it transforms into a lively party space with led displays and Asian-inspired cocktails, creating a nightlife experience.

On the other hand, the *Wyte* offers a contrasting and complementary atmosphere as a day-themed chill cafe and resto-bar. *Wyte* features Mediterranean cuisine, serving dishes like *Lamb Adana Kebab*, *Mezze Platter*, and *Stuffed Cannelloni*. *Wyte* provides a relaxed, airy ambience that's perfect for casual gatherings or unwinding over a leisurely meal.



Its bright and inviting decor makes *Wyte* an ideal daytime spot for savouring a curated selection of Italian and Mediterranean dishes in a laid-back setting.

"The *Blaq's* interiors feature black and gold, highlighting how black enhances the prominence of other colours. Our vision was that without black, other colours wouldn't stand out as much. *Blaq* evolved into a proper party destination after 9-10 p.m., catering to Delhi's party crowd. However, we noticed a demand from guests seeking a more relaxed and conversational ambience. That inspired *Wyte*, chill space with subdued music where guests can unwind, enjoy their food and drinks, and connect," said *Nikhil Sharma*, Founder of *Blaq and Wyte*.

Together, the place offers a great chill time from day to night bringing its own unique flair and appeal to Delhi's upscale dining scene. Whether it's a relaxed afternoon at *Wyte* or an elegant, vibrant evening at *Blaq*, guests are invited to explore both spaces and embrace the full range of experiences offered in this exceptional dual dining destination.

A PERUVIAN EXTRAVAGANZA

By TEAM AGENDA



Delhiites experienced a rare glimpse of Peru's vibrant culture and cuisine during the Peru Festival, organised by the Embassy of Peru in Delhi. The event was inaugurated by H.E. Mr. Javier Manuel Paulinich Velarde, Ambassador of Peru to India, who kicked off a week-long celebration promising an immersive journey into the culinary and cultural treasures of the South American nation. Held at Le Méridien, the festival quickly became a highlight for food enthusiasts, culture lovers, and those passionate about exploring global traditions. The grand inauguration set an engaging tone, featuring mesmerising performances of traditional Peruvian music that captivated attendees. The event was launched by the distinguished ambassador alongside senior executives of Le Méridien, underscoring the shared values of cultural exchange and hospitality. The heart of the *Peru Festival* lay in its culinary offerings, curated by renowned Peruvian *Chef Julio*

Castillo. Guests indulged in an authentic menu featuring iconic dishes such as *ceviche*, *lomo saltado*, *anticuchos*, and *aji de gallina*. Dessert lovers enjoyed classics like *suspiro a la limeña* and *picarones*, paired with traditional beverages such as *pisco sour* and *chicha morada*.

Chef Castillo highlighted Peru's rich and diverse culinary heritage, shaped by Indigenous, Spanish, African, and Asian influences. "Food is the soul of our culture, and we're thrilled to share this with the world," he said.

Le Méridien's Marketing Manager *Gitanshu Jetly* echoed this sentiment, stating, "The Peru Festival exemplifies our commitment to celebrating global cultures and connecting our guests to enriching experiences. This partnership allows us to bring the vibrancy of Peru's heritage to our guests in a unique and memorable way."

The *Peru Festival* was an instant hit, drawing crowds eager to savour the sights, sounds, and tastes of Peru. The event offered Delhiites an opportunity to immerse themselves in the essence of Peruvian culture without leaving the city—a chance that visitors embraced wholeheartedly.



By TEAM AGENDA

If you've ever found yourself dreaming of a regal feast fit for royalty, look no further than the heart of Lucknow, brought to life at *Tamra, Shangri-La Eros New Delhi*. Here, home chef *Mansi*, a culinary prodigy from the UP Khatri community, delighted food lovers with an exquisite journey through Lucknowi *Dawat*, a celebration of *Awadhi* cuisine, reimagined with a deeply rooted respect for tradition. *Chef Mansi*, whose expertise in authentic *Awadhi* flavours is steeped in generations of family recipes, hosted a unique pop-up event at the renowned international cuisine restaurant. Her cooking, inspired by the women of her family, honoured the vegetarian traditions of her community while introducing a delightful array of North Indian delicacies. Focusing on slow cooking and seasonal ingredients, she brought life to every dish, from the rich *Zaffrani Biryani* to the soul-soothing *Dal*. The evening began with *Shammi Kababs*, delicate, spiced patties of minced meat, their tender texture and bold flavours setting the stage



REGAL FLAVOURS OF LUCKNOWI DAWAT



for what was to come. Then, guests were treated to *Khasta* and *Aloo* – the crisp, golden kachoris paired with tangy potatoes in a tomato gravy, a comforting prelude to the main course.

For the grand finale, the *Zaffrani Biryani* emerged as the hero – tender meat and fragrant rice slow-cooked under a blanket of saffron-infused steam, capturing the essence of *Awadhi* luxury. The *Nihari*, a slow-cooked stew of tender meat, braised overnight with aromatic spices, was a hearty winter delight, while the vegetarian dishes like *Lauki Musallam* – a stuffed gourd in a rich gravy – and the fresh, zingy *Nimona*, stole the spotlight.

The evening ended with the indulgent *Phirni*, a saffron-flavoured rice pudding crowned with dry fruits and silver waq, served in charming earthenware bowls.

Chef Mansi's Lucknowi *Dawat* was not just a meal, but a celebration of culture, heritage, and culinary craftsmanship, a truly magical experience at *Tamra*, where tradition and innovation met with warmth and hospitality.

FACT SHEET

BLAQ

Address: D-21, Third Floor, Defence Colony, Delhi - 110024
Contact Number: 958222702, 9582222703
Timings: 5 PM - 1 AM

WYTE

Address: D-21, Third Floor, Defence Colony, Delhi-110024
Contact Number: 9582221704, 9582221705
Timings: 12 PM - 1 AM



THE QUINTESSENTIAL BOLLYWOOD HIDEOUT



In the heart of Westminster, London, St. James' Court offers a unique blend of Indian warmth and British charm, loved by Bollywood stars, says **RUPALI DEAN**

St. James' Court, a luxurious retreat nestled in the heart of Westminster, exudes an irresistible charm that makes it a favourite among the glitterati. This opulent hotel seamlessly blends grandeur with the warmth of Indian hospitality, creating a setting that feels as if it's been plucked straight from a glamorous film set.

Celebrities such as the Bachchans, Ajay Devgan, Sunil Shetty and Manisha Koirala have often sought solace here, drawn by its enchanting ambience and impeccable service. From the moment you enter its grand lobby, the elegance of marble floors and the soft glow of chandeliers whisk you into a world of sophistication. The melodious strains of a grand piano fill the air, offering a romantic atmosphere perfect for both lively conversations and intimate moments. Cosy nooks adorned with vibrant artworks provide ideal spots for quiet reflection or a relaxing chat over chai, making the hotel a discreet haven for stars escaping the public eye.

A Serene Oasis of Elegance

The hotel's fairy-tale-like courtyard, shared with the adjacent *Taj 51 Buckingham Gate*, offers a tranquil oasis featuring a picturesque fountain encircled by lush greenery. It's an ideal setting for celebrity sightings or impromptu photoshoots. This serene environment allows guests to unwind, far removed from the city's hustle and bustle, making it a sanctuary for those seeking both luxury and tranquility.

The accommodation at *St. James' Court* is a sensory delight, blending modern design with Indian elegance. Rich textiles and intricate details

evoke the splendour of royal living, ensuring guests a sumptuous retreat after a day of exploring. A standout feature is the renowned *Jiva Spa*, where rejuvenating treatments transport visitors into a state of bliss, proving that relaxation here is an art form perfected.

Conveniently located just a ten-minute stroll from Victoria Station, the hotel is a prime base for discovering London's iconic attractions. Landmarks such as Westminster Abbey and Big Ben are just a leisurely walk away, while St. James's Park offers stunning views and peaceful pathways. This enchanting locale has not only captured the hearts of tourists but also photographers and filmmakers seeking inspiration.

Where Bollywood Glamour Meets Exquisite Cuisine

Dining at *St. James' Court* is a culinary adventure designed to impress even the most discerning Bollywood stars. With an array of dining options, each venue celebrates global cuisines with a touch of flair.

TH@51 Restaurant & Bar delivers an international menu catering to diverse palates, making it a hotspot for both locals and globe-trotting celebrities. For a quintessentially British experience, *Kona* reimagines afternoon tea with innovative themes that are as Instagram-worthy as they are delicious.

For authentic Chinese cuisine, *The House of Ming* offers a menu inspired by Sichuan and Cantonese traditions, guaranteed to captivate any A-lister. Meanwhile, the Michelin-starred *Quilon* presents a vibrant tribute to the culinary treasures of India's southwest coast, each dish weaving a story that could easily inspire a Bollywood screenplay.



For those drawn to adventurous Indian flavours, a short cab ride to the *Bombay Brasserie* unveils a modern twist on traditional recipes, reminiscent of a Bollywood blockbuster reinterpreting a classic tale.

As evening falls, the *Hamptons Bar* beckons with masterfully crafted cocktails, set against the soothing melodies of a resident pianist. In the summer, the *TH@51 Courtyard* transforms into a magical alfresco dining venue, complete with fairy lights, offering an experience straight out of a romantic Bollywood scene.

Blending Indian Hospitality with British Elegance

St. James' Court not only boasts exceptional cuisine but also offers beautifully appointed rooms and suites that balance luxury with comfort. Thoughtfully designed, these spaces are perfect for families and friends, echoing the ensembles often seen in Bollywood films.

With its unique combination of Indian hospitality and British sophistication, *St. James' Court* has earned its place as a favourite among Bollywood's elite. It is more than just a luxury hotel; it is an elegant canvas capturing the essence of a magical getaway.

For stars who seek not only opulence but also a serene escape from the crowds, *St. James' Court* stands as a testament to comfort, charm, and an unforgettable London experience.

Where? 54 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AF, United Kingdom

— *Rupali Dean, awarded 'Best Food Writer in the Country' by the Indian Culinary Forum, WACS, and the Ministry of Tourism, writes on food and travel*

Where Luxury Meets Holistic Wellness In Perfect Harmony

A luxurious sanctuary of tranquility and wellness, Jetwing Lagoon is a perfect retreat for holistic wellness, says **SHARMILA CHAND**

Sri Lanka beckons, a land where vibrant city life is in synergy with calming pulse of pristine beaches. Adding to the Sri Lankan hospitality is a luxury wellness haven, *Jetwing Lagoon*, a signature masterpiece originally envisioned in 1965 by legendary architect Geoffrey Bawa, as his first resort design project.

REVIVE. REJUVENATE REFLECT

Nestled between the quiet Negombo lagoon and the gorgeous Indian Ocean, this luxury wellness resort embraces the serenity of the inland waters for a perfect island retreat.

As I step in, a feeling of calm and peace embraces me. I walk from the reception towards the suites, crossing the centrepiece 100 metre swimming pool which boasts of being one of the largest in the region. To my utmost pleasure, I have the company of one pretty egret following me in the garden. She stops when I go towards the staircase as my suite is located on the first floor. We look at each other conveying the message of 'see you' later.

Suites here are epitome of luxury and mine is lagoon facing while featuring all modern amenities. With the sunrise, I look forward to my bespoke wellness plan which begins with yoga and meditation session. And yes, meeting my friend once again in the garden.

There is something about the air at the resort that comforts, heals, and brings in peace. An in-house Senior Ayurvedic Physician, Dr. Gayathri Nissanka awaits, ready to curate a wellness plan following a personalised consultation.

WELLNESS ETHOS

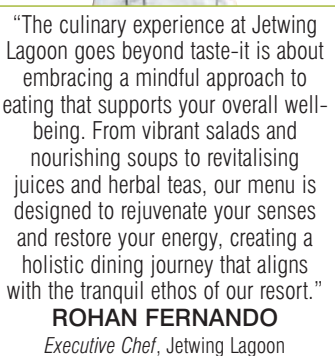
Dr. Gayathri explains, "At Jetwing Lagoon, the Wellness Experience is thoughtfully crafted around five key pillars: Mindfulness, Nutrition, Movement, Rest, and Community.



The wellness packages integrate these pillars, ensuring that every guest embarks on a transformative journey that inspires lasting lifestyle changes. From slow flow yoga and meditation sessions, luxurious spa treatments, age-old ayurvedic treatments, and nourishing wellness cuisine, we provide a comprehensive approach to rebalancing and restoring your body, mind, and spirit."

MINDFUL DINING

Dining at the Resort is a journey through a wholesome culinary experience. Designed to nourish the body, mind, and spirit in harmony with serene surroundings, wellness cuisine is at the heart of the culinary philosophy at *Jetwing Lagoon*. The culinary philosophy focuses on the use of fresh, natural, and nutrient-rich ingredients, thoughtfully prepared to enhance health, vitality, and balance. Every dish is crafted with care, prioritising plant-based whole foods while also offering lean meats and seafood, ensuring a diverse



"The culinary experience at Jetwing Lagoon goes beyond taste—it is about embracing a mindful approach to eating that supports your overall well-being. From vibrant salads and nourishing soups to revitalising juices and herbal teas, our menu is designed to rejuvenate your senses and restore your energy, creating a holistic dining journey that aligns with the tranquil ethos of our resort."
ROHAN FERNANDO
Executive Chef, Jetwing Lagoon



FACTS:
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Pamunugama Rd, Negombo 11504,
Sri Lanka Phone: +94 312 233 777

menu that caters to a variety of dietary preferences. There is a commitment towards preserving the integrity of each ingredient, avoiding processed foods and artificial additives.

Set within the tranquil surroundings of the resort, 'Blue Lagoon' restaurant lives up to its name with a spacious, serene setting that overlooks the stunning Negombo Lagoon. Inspired by the impressive length of the swimming pool, '100 Meters' is the Poolside Bar with a menu as extensive as its name. Have your pick from tropical cocktails and mocktails, or from a range of international beverages and spirits. Here at the Pool Bar, you will also find refreshing station, featuring fresh juices, smoothies, detox beverages, and selected mocktails.

'Pier Dining' turned out to be my favourite. On a cloudy evening, I chose to dine at the table set up right at the edge of gentle waters of the Negombo Lagoon. An open-air setup on a private pier that extends into

the open expanse of the lush landscapes is truly a memorable experience.

THE LOCAL NARRATIVE

Step out of the resort and explore fascinating tales of Negombo and its surrounding regions.

For the birding enthusiasts, a journey through the historic Dutch canals that lead to the famed mangroves of Muthurajawela in the south, or the lush open sanctuary of Anawilundawa to the north are great natural aviaris abound with a number of endemic and migratory species that can be spotted on special excursions. For the adventure seekers, there are water sports to indulge in adrenaline-filled experiences on a sunny Negombo afternoon.

Take a city tour and discover history and culture at every turn. How the ruined Dutch Fort reflects Negombo's colonial legacy, while the bustling Lellama Fish Market pays tribute to its roots as a traditional



"With luxurious villa-styled rooms sprawling expansively in a harmonious blend of tropical modernism, spaces bathed in natural light and lush gardens that transcends the calm of the gentle waters, Jetwing Lagoon is a sanctuary of peace and tranquility for a wellness getaway that rebalances, restores and revives."
ROMELLO PERERA
General Manager, Jetwing Lagoon

fishery. I was not surprised why Negombo is also fondly known as 'Little Rome' as it is home to outstanding collection of churches. Also, do not miss the 300-year old Angurukaramulla Temple, which abounds in a number of ancient murals while a large Buddha statue stands as an icon prominently.

TO CONCLUDE

In this serene environment, worries melt away as you prepare to embark on a transformative journey. So go ahead and discover an iconic sanctuary meticulously designed to welcome guests seeking rejuvenation amidst luxe pampering.



"Besides therapies we also curate specific meals that align with guests' individual health goals. For a more interactive experience, we let guests join the chefs in preparing nutritious dishes, offering a hands-on journey into wellness cooking. This immersive approach allows you to savor the satisfaction of dining on meals you've crafted yourself. Such experiences go beyond just dining—they offer a chance to connect with nature, embrace wellness, and enjoy mindful eating in the tranquil atmosphere of Jetwing Lagoon."

DR. GAYATHRI NISSANKA

Senior Ayurvedic Physician,
Jetwing Lagoon

IN BRIEF



Eleganz Interiors files IPO papers with NSE Emerge

Eleganz Interiors, a leading provider of interior fit-out solutions provider, on Saturday said it has filed draft papers with NSE Emerge to mobilise funds via an initial public offering. The initial public offering (IPO) is entirely a fresh issuance of up to 60.05 lakh shares, each with a face value of Rs 10, the company said in a statement. The shares of the company will be listed on the SME platform of the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Emerge, according to the draft red herring prospectus. Vivro Financial Services is the sole book-running lead manager, while Bigshare Services is the registrar for the IPO. Mumbai-based Eleganz intends to leverage its existing footprint and expand its presence in these key regions to further solidify its market position. Proceeds from the issue worth Rs 25 crore will be utilised by the company to repay outstanding debt and Rs 30 crore to fund working capital needs.



Pune sees 11 pc drop in property registration

Registration of properties in Pune fell 11 per cent year-on-year in November to 13,371 units despite strong demand, according to Knight Frank India. In a statement on Saturday, real estate consultant Knight Frank India said Pune recorded 13,371 property registrations in November 2024, generating Rs 475 crore in revenue for the state exchequer. As many as 14,988 units were registered in November last year. Registration of properties fell 36 per cent in November compared to 20,894 units in October this year. Knight Frank India Chairman and Managing Director Shishir Bajjal said, "Pune's property market continues to exhibit steady registrations, adapting to evolving buyer preferences and market conditions". Commenting on the data, Rohit Gera, Managing Director of Pune-based Gera Developments, said the registrations in November typically result from sales made in September.



Senco Gold raises Rs 459 crore via QIP

Kolkata-based jewellery retail chain Senco Gold Limited said it raised Rs 459 crore through a Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) by allotting 40.8 lakh equity shares. The QIP committee of the company's board approved the issuance and allotment of equity shares of Rs 10 were issued at a price of Rs 1,125 per share, including a premium of Rs 1,115. Senco Gold said in a regulatory filing on Friday evening. Post the QIP, the company's paid-up equity share capital has increased to Rs 81.80 crore, comprising 8.18 crore shares, from Rs 77.72 crore (7.77 crore shares), the company added. Among the major allottees, four funds under Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. grabbed 14.49 per cent of the issue size. On a standalone basis, Tata Multicap Fund received the largest portion with 8.77 per cent of the issue size, followed by Tata AIA Life Insurance Co. Ltd's Emerging Opportunities Fund (6.40 per cent) and ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co. Ltd (6.54 per cent).

"DAK SEWA IS JAN SEWA"

Dept of Posts to go digital soon: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Saturday said the Department of Posts is going through a business process restructuring exercise to transition to a digital platform as he asserted that Dak Sewa is Jan Sewa (postal service is public service).

Speaking on the occasion of the 50th Foundation Day of Indian Post & Telecommunication Accounts and Finance Service, the minister said the shift is particularly relevant in the context of e-commerce growth, positioning the department to lead in this emerging business avenue.

"Our department is going to go digital. Our department is going through a business process restructuring exercise, where we will transform ourselves in the days to come into a logistics corporation, where we must become the leaders in the world, with a new business avenue that is growing in terms of e-commerce," he said.

He noted that the Department of Posts today is the largest distribution network across the world, with 1,64,000 post offices.

"We serve the common man...Not only officers sitting in Dak Bhawan, but my grameen (rural) Dak Sewak... who on the field goes from house to house...he is the epitome of the slogans -- Dak Sewa is a Jan Sewa," he said.

The digital transformation aligns with India's broader goals of bridging the digital divide and



enhancing access to information for all citizens, he said.

India has made remarkable strides in telecommunications, achieving a penetration rate exceeding 86 per cent, the minister said, adding that innovation, inclusivity, and security should be taken as guiding principles for future developments.

"The minister further spoke on the transformative journey of the telecommunication sector over the past 50 years and acknowledged the critical contributions of various stakeholders."

"We were dependent fully on foreign technology. We were limited to the landline phones...we were used to manual switching systems, and mobile technology was a very, very distant dream, and in that environment, it is this cadre (IP&TAFS) that has formed the very backbone of our telecom

sector, strengthening us financially and empowering us to look at new fields of development," he said.

It will be a quantum leap for the country as it moves from terrestrial networks to non-terrestrial networks, he added.

He said the country has experienced remarkable growth in internet and broadband subscriptions over the past decade.

"10 years ago, we had 250 million internet subscribers. Today, we have 954 million internet subscribers. Every single person in this country would only consume 1 GB of data. Today, the average GB of data consumed is 20 GB. Broadband subscribers have increased from 60 million to 924 million."

"India followed the world in 4G, it marched with the world in 5G, and it will lead the world in 6G," Scindia reiterated his statement.

RBI raises collateral-free agricultural loan limit to Rs 2 L

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has enhanced the collateral-free loan limit for farmers from Rs 1.6 lakh to Rs 2 lakh, effective January 1, 2025, a move aimed at supporting small and marginal farmers amid rising input costs.

The new directive instructs banks nationwide to waive collateral and margin requirements for agricultural and allied activity loans up to Rs 2 lakh per borrower.

According to the agriculture ministry, the decision comes in response to the rising input costs and the need to improve credit accessibility for farmers.



"This measure will significantly benefit over 86 per cent of farmers who are small and marginal landholders," the statement said.

Banks have been instructed to implement the guidelines swiftly and ensure widespread awareness about the new loan provisions.

The move is expected to facilitate easier access to Kisan Credit

Card (KCC) loans and complement the government's Modified Interest Subvention Scheme, which offers loans up to Rs 3 lakh at a 4 per cent effective interest rate.

The initiative is seen as a strategic step to enhance financial inclusion in the agricultural sector, providing farmers with much-needed financial flexibility to invest in agricultural operations and improve their livelihoods.

Agri experts view the initiative as a critical step towards enhancing credit inclusivity and supporting agricultural economic growth, addressing inflationary pressures on farming input costs.

Bihar gets over 3,800 proposals for setting up industries: CS

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar has received more than 3,800 proposals for setting up factories in the state since it floated a progressive industrial investment promotion policy in 2016, proving to be a pivot for its rapid development, its Chief Secretary Amrit Lal Meena said.

Bihar Industrial Investment Promotion Policy, 2016, offers a slew of incentives to investors that range from interest subvention to reimbursement of State GST, stamp duty waiver, export subsidy and concessions for transportation, power, and land fees. It also created a State Investment Promotion Board to approve investment proposals.

"From 2016 till now, in the last nine years, there has been a massive response from the industry because of the promotional policy, and subsequently, sectoral policies have been



approved by the government. So, from different sectors, there are over 3,800 proposals for consideration of a state industrial promotion board and 3,100 proposals have been accorded first-stage approval," he said.

Over 780 industries are operational, providing employment to about 34,000.

"Rs 8,000 crore worth of investment has come (so far)," he said, adding that the industries are mainly from the food processing, textile, manufacturing, renewable energy, IT and cement sectors.

The state has created a land bank of over 3,000 acres to be provided to set up industries. Bihar is also offering about 2.4 million square feet of ready-to-move plug-and-play industrial sheds, equipped with all basic infrastructure requirements, situated in industrial areas across the state. These are available for any industry at a fixed rate.

China keen to invest USD 1 billion in Pakistan

PNS ■ KARACHI

A Chinese business delegation has met with President Asif Ali Zardari here and expressed interest in investing USD 1 billion to establish a medical city in Pakistan, according to a media report. Pakistan has held strong bilateral relations with China which has supported it through many investments and development projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project which was termed as a "lifeline" for the country's economy.

The delegation of Chinese investors during a meeting with Zardari on Thursday outlined their plans to invest USD 1 billion into creating the medical city in Karachi's Dhabaji

Economic Zone which is outside Pakistan's biggest city and financial hub. The medical city would be Pakistan's first fully integrated pharmaceutical and medical ecosystem.

Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) which is tasked with the running of the Dhabaji Economic Zone said in a statement that the pledge by the Chinese investors is an example of the growing economic ties between the two countries.

The meeting which was also attended by Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah and the Chinese Consul General was held after successful negotiations between the Sindh government and the conglomerate of Chinese investors.

ED restitutes assets worth Rs 4,025 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ED has restituted assets worth Rs 4,025 crore of the erstwhile Bhusan Steel and Power Limited to JSW Steel following approval from the Supreme Court, the federal probe agency said on Saturday.

JSW Steel was the successful resolution applicant to the assets of the insolvent company under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP).

These assets were earlier attached by the federal probe agency under provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in an investigation against Bhusan Steel and Power and its pro-

BHUSHAN STEEL BANK 'FRAUD' CASE



motors on charges of alleged bank loan fraud and "diversion" of those funds for personal investments.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) said the restitution of assets worth Rs 4,025 crore was made under Section

8(8) of the PMLA (restitution pending trial), read with Rule 3A of PMLA Restoration of Property Rules.

E-commerce to adopt Safety Pledge to protect online consumers

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Major e-commerce platforms such as Zomato, Ajo, and Ola will adopt a Safety Pledge on National Consumer Day on December 24 as part of steps to enhance product safety for online shoppers.

The voluntary commitment, announced by the Department of Consumer Affairs, aims to detect and prevent the sale of unsafe and spurious products on digital marketplaces, an



official statement said. A committee chaired by consumer activist Pushpa Girimaji developed the pledge

after extensive stakeholder consultations in November 2023.

With India projected to have 500 million online shoppers by 2030 and currently hosting 880 million internet users, the initiative addresses critical challenges in the rapidly expanding e-commerce landscape. The pledge requires platforms to cooperate with statutory authorities and raise product safety awareness among sellers.

"The unique nature of e-commerce, where physical product examination is impossible, makes this safety initiative crucial," the department said.

The move aligns with the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, which mandates protection against hazardous products and unfair trade practices.

E-commerce entities are now duty-bound to ensure product standards and consumer safety.

Sonowal to launch cargo promotion scheme



PNS ■ KOLKATA

Union Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal is scheduled to flag-off three cargo vessels from here on Sunday, launching a new Cargo Promotion Scheme and Scheduled Cargo Vessel Services along National Waterways 1 and 2, with routes to Varanasi, Patna, and Guwahati.

The Guwahati-bound cargo vessel will follow the Indo-Bangladesh protocol route, which has so far remained unaffected despite the ongoing unrest in the neighbouring country.

The cargo vessel headed to Patna will carry gypsum, while the one bound for Varanasi will transport coal, and the one to Guwahati will carry cement, officials said.

Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) officials told PTI that trade via the protocol route has not been disrupted despite the political unrest in Bangladesh.

has declined over the past year due to several factors.

Sagar Khastagir, an Indo-Bangladesh trade analyst, pointed out that the transportation of fly ash—a key commodity for cement plants in Bangladesh—has dropped by nearly 35-40 per cent in recent months.

"This decline is linked to a slowdown in infrastructure development in Bangladesh, following the fall of the Hasina government and the resulting political instability," he said, adding that delays in payments are also affecting vessel operators.

He noted that under normal circumstances, over 3,000 vessels used to annually transport fly ash, but both the volume and the number of vessels have declined due to the ongoing political and financial challenges.

Former FIEO (Federation of Indian Export Organisations) Eastern Region chairman Sushil Patwari, however, claimed that while there have been no significant disruptions in trade, the business volume has taken a hit because of broader economic challenges.

'India needs strategic approach for int'l taxation treaties'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The suspension of the MFN (most favoured nation) clause by Switzerland underscores the need for India to adopt a more consistent and strategic approach to international taxation treaties, think tank GTRI said on Friday.

This suspension introduces tax challenges for Indian firms operating in Switzerland, particularly in sectors like financial services, pharmaceuticals, and IT, it said.

They will now have to pay a 10 per cent tax on dividends and other incomes, up from the earlier 5 per cent, effective January 1, 2025.

It said that proactive negotiations to clarify and harmonise interpretations of treaty

provisions are essential to safeguard Indian firms' interests abroad.

Additionally, India must ensure that its treaty frameworks reflect contemporary business realities, particularly in the digital and service sectors, to reduce tax uncertainties and promote global competitiveness, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

The Swiss government has suspended the most favoured nation status (MFN) clause in the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between India and Switzerland, potentially impacting Swiss investments in India and leading to higher taxes on Indian companies operating in the European nation.

According to a December 11



India must ensure that its treaty frameworks reflect contemporary business realities, particularly in the digital and service sectors, to reduce tax uncertainties and promote global competitiveness, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said

statement by the Swiss finance department, the move follows the Supreme Court of India last year ruling that the MFN clause doesn't automatically trigger when a country joins the OECD if the Indian government signed a tax treaty with

that country before it joined the organisation.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said the suspension of the MFN clause is a setback for Indian firms operating in Switzerland.

Previously, Indian compa-

nies benefited from a reduced tax rate of 5 per cent on dividends and other incomes, thanks to Switzerland's earlier application of MFN benefits.

With the reversion to a 10 per cent residual rate starting January 1, 2025, these firms

face higher tax liabilities, reducing their competitiveness compared to businesses from countries still benefiting from MFN provisions, he said.

The Supreme Court judgment sets a precedent that could influence how India handles similar clauses in agreements with other trading partners, he said, adding that if disputes over MFN interpretations persist, Indian businesses could face similar challenges in other jurisdictions, potentially deterring outbound investments.

"The suspension of the MFN clause by Switzerland and earlier issues with Australia underscore the need for India to adopt a more consistent and strategic approach to international taxation treaties," Srivastava said.

OPENING VISTAS OF SOCIAL IMPACT VIA ART DESIGN CULTURE COLLECTIVE

The Pioneer brings you an exclusive glimpse into the groundbreaking event, where India's cultural icons gathered to celebrate the powerful intersection of art, design and social impact at the launch of the Art Design Culture Collective, presented by KHUSHII NGO.

On the evening of December 12th, the storied house became the epicenter of artistic brilliance and purposeful philanthropy. The inaugural event of the Art Design Culture Collective (ADCC), organised by KHUSHII NGO, transcended the boundaries of a typical art gathering. This invite-only evening united India's cultural luminaries, patrons and visionaries for a celebration that seamlessly blended art, design and humanity. With its gilded chandeliers, historic architecture and an air of exclusivity, it provided the perfect stage for an unforgettable night, setting the tone for the days to come.

At the helm is Rahul Kumar, a Fulbright Scholar with a master's degree in arts from the USA. With works that have graced Sotheby's auctions and are featured in collections like the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Rahul's eye for talent and innovation is unmatched. For him, it is a labour of love and a clarion call for the future of Indian art. Among the luminaries gracing the inaugural evening of the Art Design Culture Collective was Vandana Luthra, the iconic founder of VLCC and vice chairperson of the NGO, Khushii. She shared her thoughts: "For 21 years, I have dedicated myself, nurturing it like my own child, alongside Khushii, which has also been a labour of love. My connection stems from my deep affection for children. As a grandmother to four, I've always valued the importance



of fostering growth in the younger generation. Today, more than ever, I believe that empowering the future begins with education and that empowerment extends beyond academics to include mental health and holistic wellness." She further added, "Khushii's programs were a natural progression of this vision, particularly given the pressures children face in today's world. Even in early education, the competitive atmosphere can weigh heavily on young minds. Drawing from personal experience—having faced similar challenges as a child—I recognise the value of support systems such as child psychologists and counselors. These professionals not only help children navigate their emotions but also guide parents in understanding and addressing their children's

needs. Counseling, both for children and their parents, fosters healthier relationships and equips families to manage the complexities of modern life. Through Khushii, I hope to continue empowering children and their families, ensuring a brighter, more balanced future for the next generation." No event celebrating Indian art would be complete without the presence of Shabana Azmi and Javed Akhtar. As ambassadors, this revered couple brought their unmatched gravitas and passion to the gathering. Akhtar reflected on the power of art: "Art is like a flag—it begins with society and has the ability to unite people, even without an established group. But for it to truly resonate, it needs a clear mission and presence in society. Once established, it reaches beyond its immediate circle and

begins to inspire a wider audience." Azmi, speaking on the role of art in today's world, remarked, "In an age where resources are abundant, we must view art as a contribution to society, not as a luxury. It is only through such a perspective that we can inspire a new generation of creators, who can produce fresh and meaningful content." The couple also lauded the work of Ngo, which is currently educating over 240,000 children. Azmi shared, "What is truly remarkable about Khushii is its focus on mental health. Many children today are overwhelmed by the pressures of exams and competition. We often overlook the emotional toll this takes on them." Their involvement underscored mission to intertwine creativity with societal change, ensuring that art is not just

a visual experience but a catalyst for social transformation. The night reached new creative heights with a talk by celebrated designer Sussanne Khan. Chronicling her journey through the ever-evolving world of design, Khan captivated the audience with her tales of resilience, innovation and inspiration. Her narrative of melding modern aesthetics with timeless Indian elements provided a window into her artistic process. Khan began, "In today's world, I believe that spaces should not be designed based solely on trends or external influences but rather with a focus on the needs and lifestyle of the people who live or work there. As a designer, I see luxury as a deeply personal concept. For some, it lies in simplicity—creating spaces that embrace

sustainability and harmonise with nature, where the natural environment becomes a form of luxury. For others, it may be defined by cutting-edge technology and innovation. Ultimately, luxury is subjective, shaped by the unique preferences and aspirations of each individual we design for." Central mission is its partnership with Kinship for Humanitarian Social and Holistic Intervention in India, founded by cricket legend Kapil Dev in 2003. In an exclusive conversation, Kapil Dev reflected on the importance of both mental and physical well-being, especially for younger generations. "As a sportsman, I have always believed in the power of physical activity to alleviate stress," he said. "Today, with children and young people so engrossed in gadgets, it's critical to encourage them to step away, get moving and embrace an active lifestyle. Physical activity is essential not just for the body, but for the mind." The evening's literary highlight was the much-anticipated book launch of *The Serengeti: Wild Wonders of Africa* by Rajan Kapoor. Guests were enthralled by Kapoor's visual journey through the untamed landscapes of Africa, accompanied by conservationist Dr. Rajiv Bhartari's compelling insights on the urgent need to preserve wildlife. The book, a confluence of stunning photography and evocative storytelling, reminded the audience of humanity's shared responsibility to protect the planet's fragile ecosystems. In a nutshell, the opening night of the Art Design Culture Collective was a triumph of vision, artistry and purpose. It set the stage for what promises to be an extraordinary journey over the coming days—a journey where creativity meets compassion and where every moment inspires change.

TAKOS MS

Imagine a garden or outdoor space adorned with big flower pots, contributing to a visual symphony of contemporary elegance. They are huge U-shaped geometric planters that provide you with that feat. These planters embody design innovation and modern style.

Price: 28,550/-



ULTIMATE CHRISTMAS GIFT AND HOME MAKEOVER IDEAS FOR YOUR HOME

The holiday season is here along with the joy of decorating our homes and the excitement of finding the perfect gifts for loved ones. Christmas is about sharing special moments and creating a cozy, welcoming environment and not only about having fun. This year, transform your celebrations with a curated selection of exquisite products that effortlessly blend style and utility

EVAN LATTE WOVEN THROW WITH CUSHION COVERS

There is nothing a bed wants more than to be draped with one of these fabulous woven throws and free matching cushion covers. Drape this textured throw over any solid or neutral-coloured sofa with cushions that complement each other. This premium throw is an all-season home essential that you just can't do without.

Price: 3,999/-



DECORATIVE SPARKLE MOUSSE VELVET CUSHION COVER

Add a touch of elegance to your home with this decorative sparkle mousse velvet cushion cover. Featuring a plush velvet texture and shimmering details, it's perfect for enhancing any space with luxurious charm.

Price: 1,499/-



PRINTED RUNNER

Mona B table runners are perfect for special occasions be it Diwali, Holi, Christmas, or Eid. These table runners for the center table are just perfect. They can be used as living room decorative items or as the best fit for a dining room table, or bedside table.

Price: 1,574/-



OLEZIO

Perfectly sized it helps you transform your balcony into a dreamy and vibrant space. Whether you prefer blooming flowers or lush greenery, this planter is the perfect fit for styling your balcony.

Price: 4230-20700/-

THALI CENTER TABLE

An exquisite piece of furniture that seamlessly blends elegance and functionality: a striking red table with a luxurious gold base. This table is designed to be a statement piece in any room, featuring a vibrant red tabletop that captures attention and adds a pop of color to your decor. The rich hue of the red surface is complemented by a beautifully crafted gold base, which not only provides sturdy support but also enhances the overall aesthetic appeal of the table.

Price: On request



Top Christmas & holiday menus in India!

In the spirit of the holiday season, excited to take your readers on a festive journey to the most iconic feasts around India. Each place brings its own holiday magic. With joyful celebrations, delicious feasts and experiences crafted to create lasting memories, these destinations are all set to make this Christmas extra special!

Trincas - Christmas magic on Park Street

In Kolkata, Christmas comes alive on Park Street and Trincas stands as its shining star—a 97-year-old icon brimming with festive cheer. This December, don't miss out on an exclusive celebration at Trincas, an icon that embodies the magic of Christmas like no other.

Live entertainment: From nightly music (6 PM–midnight) to jazzy weekend lunches and Karaoke Thursdays, it fills every moment with melody and joy.

Heritage menu: Indulge in festive classics, including the Christmas Special—smoky Bandel cheese-wrapped chicken breast with garlicky greens, slow-cooked gravy and caramel custard.

Festive setting: A nostalgic red, gold and green décor adorned with poinsettias, candy-cane ribbons, and holiday accents creates the perfect backdrop for celebrations.

The Westin Goa - tropical Christmas bliss

Celebrate the magic of Christmas in the tropical elegance of The Westin Goa, where festive joy meets tropical charm.

Festive hampers: Discover indulgent hampers filled with artisanal treats and seasonal surprises, perfect for gifting or savouring.

Christmas eve dinner: A lavish buffet

showcasing seasonal specialties with live performances.

Cost: Starting from INR 3,500 + taxes

Christmas day brunch: A vibrant affair featuring a specially curated festive menu, lively music and family-friendly activities.

Cost: INR 4,000 + taxes onwards

Drift sundowner: End Christmas Day with a dazzling poolside celebration under the stars.

JW Marriott Aerocity - A feast for season

Celebrate the holiday season at JW Marriott Aerocity, where great food, festive cheer, and joyful celebrations come together for the perfect Christmas experience.

Christmas eve dinner: Relish a decadent festive buffet at K3, featuring classic holiday dishes like roast turkey with cranberries, plum pudding with brandy sauce and more.

Prices: INR 4,600+ (non-alcoholic beverages) INR 6,200+ (alcoholic beverages) INR 2,300+ (kids)

Omakase brunch experience: Indulge in a luxurious seven-course fine-dining brunch at Adrift Kaya, crafted by Chef Vladimir and paired with a curated selection of beverages.

Price: INR 7,000+ per guest

These festive celebrations weave together the flavors, music and joy of Christmas, making them perfect for a feature. From culinary brilliance to the warmth of traditions, each venue brings its own magic to the season.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams"

— Eleanor Roosevelt



CELEBRATING THE RICH CULTURE OF NORTHEAST INDIA



The Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav 2024 brought the traditions, art, and flavours of the eight northeastern states to the national stage, celebrating their unparalleled cultural richness at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) took a remarkable step in celebrating and showcasing the diverse culture and vibrant traditions of Northeast India. In an effort to bring the essence of this unique region closer to the heart of the nation, the Government of India concluded the first edition of the *Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav*, a festival that honoured the unparalleled cultural heritage of the eight northeastern states. Held in the national capital Delhi, the event resonated with the lively spirit, colours, and flavours of the region, leaving an indelible impression on visitors.

The festival's name, "Ashtalakshmi," has been derived from the eight northeastern states namely Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, and Sikkim, which were often referred to as the 'Ashtalakshmi' or the eight forms of prosperity. These states played an important role in enriching India's cultural, social, and economic fabric, making them indispensable contributors to the nation's diversity. True to its name, the festival served as a lively celebration of the region's unparalleled beauty, artistic heritage, and deep-rooted traditions.

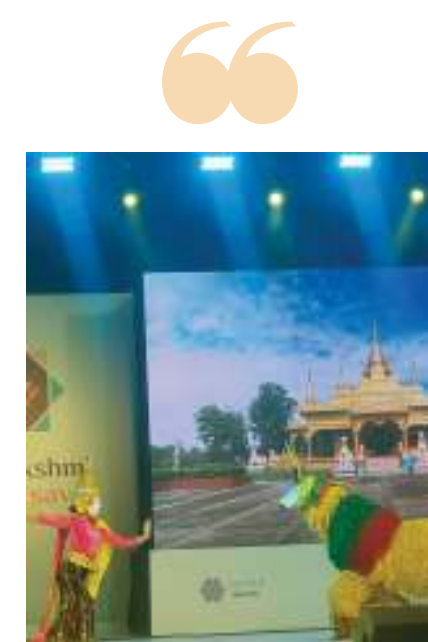
The *Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav 2024* was a three-day event held from December 6th to 8th at the Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The event provided a grand platform to showcase the region's thriving textile industry, elegant artisanal crafts, and distinct Geographical Indication (GI) products. It was a unique opportunity for the audience to engage with the intricate artistry and cultural richness of the northeastern states.

The festival's inauguration was graced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose presence underscored the government's commitment to promoting and uplifting the northeastern states. The opening day featured an impressive array of performances and exhibitions, offering a glimpse into the vibrant artistic traditions of the region. A key highlight of the day was a spellbinding performance by the renowned *Shillong Chamber Choir*, whose unique fusion of traditional and contemporary music set a magical tone for the festival. The choir's soulful melodies were accompanied by traditional dance performances and folk music, providing an alluring and enriching cultural experience for the attendees.

One of the major attractions of the *Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav* was the food journey through the region's diverse cuisines, each dish telling a story of its own. Visitors had the opportunity to

savour an array of flavours that beautifully captured the essence of the Northeast. Assam's simple yet delectable offerings included rice, fish curry, and traditional pitha. Arunachal Pradesh presented its flavourful rice-based dishes like *Thukpa* and *Zan*, often prepared with locally sourced ingredients like bamboo shoots. Manipur delighted the crowd with healthy delicacies such as *Eromba* and *Singju*, which highlighted the region's love for fresh vegetables and aromatic spices. Nagaland's bold flavours took centre stage with dishes like *smoked pork* and *Akhuni*, while Mizoram's milder but equally delicious offerings included *Bai* and *smoked pork*. Tripura brought forth an exquisite blend of Bengali and indigenous influences with dishes like *Wahan Mosdeng* and *Mui Borok*. Meghalaya's hearty preparations, such as *Jadoh* and *Dohmeiong*, resonated with the region's rich culinary heritage, and Sikkim's popular *Phagshapa* and *Momos* emphasised fresh ingredients and simple yet delightful flavors. Together, these dishes created a vibrant gastronomic experience, allowing visitors to relish the authentic taste of Northeast India.

The second day of the Mahotsav continued to captivate audiences with a mesmerising blend of music and artistry. *Pangpari*, a talented singer-songwriter from Aizawl, Mizoram, enchanted the audience with her emotive blend of pop, indie, and jazz. Her heartfelt performance seamlessly merged modern music with traditional influences, offering a soulful



THE ASHTALAKSHMI MAHOTSAV NOT ONLY CELEBRATED THE TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF NORTHEAST INDIA BUT ALSO PROVIDED A SIGNIFICANT PLATFORM FOR THESE STATES TO GAIN BROADER NATIONAL RECOGNITION.



experience. Following *Pangpari* was *Sofiyum*, a Lepcha folk fusion band from Gangtok, Sikkim, that enthralled the crowd with its unique blend of traditional *Lepcha* folk songs and contemporary musical styles. Their performance beautifully illustrated the importance of preserving cultural heritage while adapting it to modern sensibilities.

The day also featured the Eastern Elements Unplugged session, an innovative musical experience that fused the *Blues* with *Raga jazz*, delivering a fresh perspective on regional music. The performances underscored the Northeast's incredible ability to adapt its traditional art forms to contemporary frameworks, creating something entirely unique and memorable.

A major highlight of the festival was the *Ashtalakshmi Fashion Show*, which celebrated the rich textile heritage of Northeast India. Curated under the creative direction of renowned fashion stylist and show director *Prasad Bidapa*, the fashion show presented a stunning amalgamation of traditional handlooms and contemporary designs. The event emphasised sustainable fashion, highlighting eco-friendly and ethically produced garments as a part of the growing global discourse on sustainability.

Prominent designers from the region showcased their creations, each bringing their unique vision and dedication to preserving the Northeast's sartorial traditions. *Jenjum Gadi* from Arunachal Pradesh mesmerised with nature-inspired, gender-neutral designs. *Bambi Kevichusa* from Nagaland showcased her exquisite bridal wear while promoting sustainable craftsmanship. *Richana Khumanthem* from Manipur collaborated with local weavers to present garments that told stories of the region's weaving traditions.

Other notable designers included *Patricia Zadeng* from Mizoram, who focused on

uplifting female artisans, and *Daniel Syiem* from Meghalaya, whose work highlighted the indigenous fabric *Ryndia*. *Karma Sonam Bhutia* from Sikkim revived the traditional art of nettle-weaving, while *Priyanka D Patwari* from Assam and *Jyotsana Dev Verman* from Tripura brought their distinct styles to the event. Together, these designers painted a vivid picture of the Northeast's creative and cultural potential.

The final day of the *Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav* was a fitting conclusion to the three-day celebration, featuring a series of breathtaking performances. *Basavdutta Chongtham* (BASAV) from Manipur attracted the audience with her emotive vocals and poetic storytelling, while *FeatherHeads Haokui*, a Tangkhul Naga folk band, delivered lively renditions that celebrated the oral traditions of the Tangkhul tribe. Adding a traditional touch was the graceful *Peacock Dance* (Kaa Kingnara Kingnari) from Arunachal Pradesh, which showcased the beauty and elegance of Tai Khanti culture. The festival's final act, *Imnainla Jamir*, an exceptional electric guitarist from Nagaland, brought a modern twist to the celebration. Her performance blended Western music with Indian influences, embodying the fusion of tradition and innovation that defines the artistic spirit of Northeast India.

The *Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav* not only celebrated the traditions and cultural heritage of Northeast India but also provided a significant platform for these states to gain broader national recognition. Through its rich array of performances, exhibitions, and culinary delights, the festival strengthened the cultural bonds between India's diverse regions and highlighted the immense potential of the northeastern states. It was a tribute to the spirit and resilience of the people of the Northeast India, whose contributions continue to enrich the nation's cultural and social fabric.

CHAT-O-CINO

Not Agar Tum Saath Ho, Irshad Kamil reveals they had different song for scene!

TEJAL SINHA
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A lyrical genius' words have shaped the soul of Indian cinema's most unforgettable songs. A poet at heart and a storyteller in spirit, Irshad Kamil has an unparalleled ability to capture the complexities of human emotions with simplicity and elegance.

His career took off with *Chameli* (2003), where his evocative lyrics stood out and marked the beginning of a remarkable journey. Over the years, he has penned unforgettable songs for iconic films such as *Jab We Met*, *Love Aaj Kal* (both 2009 and 2020 versions), *Rockstar*, *Tamasha*, *Raanjhanaa*, *Highway*, *Jab Harry Met Sejal* and *Atrangi Re*. Each project has showcased his versatility, from the soul-stirring *Kun Faya Kun* in *Rockstar* to the heartbreakingly tender *Agar Tum Saath Ho* in *Tamasha*. Hits like *Tum Se Hi*, *Matargashti*, *Raabta*, *Hawayein*, *Chaka Chak* and *Tu Chahiye* highlight his ability to adapt to a wide range of genres and moods. His lyrical genius extends beyond romance, delving into themes of self-discovery, spirituality and unspoken emotions, as seen in tracks like *Phir Se Ud Chala* (*Rockstar*) and *Rait Zara Si* (*Atrangi Re*).

As *The Pioneer* connects with the maestro for our special segment, the lyricist behind the iconic songs reflects on the immense love and appreciation he has received for his work. "It's a good feeling when you do something seriously, and people respond positively," he shares with a smile. "It's not just one or two songs that I'm proud of; I believe all three of my songs should have my lyrics. I have that much faith in them." For Kamil, the recognition he receives is more than just validation—it serves as a constant source of motivation and inspiration to keep creating.

When it comes to his collaboration with the legendary AR Rahman, his gratitude is evident. "Working with Rahman sir is like going to music school—no, it's more like a spiritual school. You learn so much from him, not just about music, but about life and how to approach

it with a deeper sense of understanding."

One of the most significant lessons Kamil has taken away from Rahman is how to handle both criticism and praise with grace. "Rahman sir has this incredible ability to take it all—good and bad—with composure. He has a unique, non-fear attitude. There's always pressure to make a song a hit, but Rahman sir stays calm and focused and without that pressure, you can truly enjoy the work you're doing."

Irshad Kamil recalls a memorable moment working with AR Rahman on the song *Tu Kya Jaane* from *Amar Singh Chamkila*. While working late at Rahman's studio, Kamil was about to leave when Rahman insisted they stay and continue working. Despite being exhausted, Kamil complied and within 15 minutes, a line came to him: "*Tu Kya Jaane Mere Yaar, Chup Chup Takhti Hoon, Rehna Sakhti Hoon*." Rahman immediately loved it, and the song became a cherished creation. Kamil fondly remembers how Rahman's determination and sweet insistence helped bring the song to life.



I never anticipated that *Agar Tum Saath Ho* from *Tamasha*, *Ranjhanaa* songs or *Shayad* would resonate so deeply with people. The song becomes the audience's once it's out there. You can't force it or tell people to like it. The credit also goes to the listeners and the collectors who, in their own way, embrace and elevate the song

The *Atrangi Re* fame also fondly remembers another magical musical moment: the creation of *Vidaah Karo*. "I remember sitting with Imtiaz and Rahman sir, and Rahman sir was playing the piano. He suddenly said, '*Lights kamam kar dete hai*'—and as he began composing, I started writing the lyrics. *Vidaah Karo* came out of that magical sitting."

For the *Mausam* songwriter, every song is like a child and each one must be treated with care, depending on its nature. "Every song is different. When you write an emotional song, the process is different from that of a dance number. With a dance number, we usually get the composition first, and then the lyrics follow. You look for that one line—the refrain—that becomes the song's hook, the headline of the piece. But in emotional or romantic songs, it's all about the feel. The thought behind the lyrics matters more than the words themselves. When I first listen to a composition, I hear it 20 to 25 times to understand the approach. It's important to align myself with the mood of the music and understand where the song is taking me. Once the thought is clear in my mind, the words start to flow naturally. It's a seamless process—feeling the composition and enhancing it with the words."

Reflecting on his experience, the *Raabta* fame reveals a thoughtful perspective on creativity and the unpredictability of success. "I remember once reading a quote by Charles Dickens when he was asked about the message in his novel. He said, 'Message? Why message? I'm not a postman, I'm a writer.'" Kamil chuckles before continuing, "That resonates with me a lot. When you're working on something, you're not thinking about whether the song will be a hit or a flop, or whether it will be a classic. You're focused on capturing the essence of the song in the moment, within the circumstances you've been given. Your job is to write with honesty and integrity. That way, later, you don't look back and think, 'I should have made this part better.'" Speaking about his long-standing collaboration with filmmaker Imtiaz Ali, the *Highway* lyricist highlights the musical synergy they share. "Imtiaz is a very musical director. He tries to create magic on-screen, both visually and emotionally," Kamil says.

Recalling the making of *Tamasha*'s iconic *Agar Tum Saath Ho*, the *Kun Faya Kun* lyricist reveals, "Initially, a different song was shot for that scene. But when Rahman sir and I saw the visuals, we felt something was missing in the song. The visuals were so touching, and we kept trying again and again to reach their emotional depth. It's directors like Imtiaz, Anurag Basu, Sanjay Leela Bhansali, and Anand L Rai who value music deeply and understand its importance in storytelling."

Reflecting on some of his most cherished works, Kamil shares, "There are so many songs close to my heart. In *Raanjhanaa*, I love *Aise Na Dekho*, but I feel it didn't reach as many people as it deserved to. Similarly, in *Oo Meherama* and *Tanhaa Joh* are personal favourites out of the many. Sometimes, despite the effort, a song doesn't receive the appreciation it deserves when the film releases, but later, it finds its audience. For instance, *Seedhe Saadha Saara Saadha* from *Aakrosh* is now trending with reels being made, though it went unnoticed at the time."

He remains humble about his contributions to the industry. "I don't think I have a legacy of my own," he chuckles. "I just try to do my best with every project. Time is the true judge of one's work."

Looking ahead, Irshad Kamil has an exciting lineup of projects, including *Baby John*, *Sky Force* in *January*, *Chhava* and *Kesari 2*. With his unwavering dedication to storytelling through music, Kamil continues to leave an indelible mark on the hearts of audiences.

TRENDING

D GUKESH



PERSON

D Gukesh's historic win at the FIDE World Chess Championship 2024 has made the whole nation proud. At just 18 years old, he became the youngest World Chess Champion, defeating China's Ding Liren in the championship match.

CONGO ENTREPRENEUR WORE DRESS MADE OUT OF CONDOMS



VIDEO

Anado Kabika, just went to the 73rd Miss Universe pageant, wearing a condom-only outfit, she turned heads. In order to offer protection against sexually transmitted diseases, her outfit promoted safe practices!

Manoj Bajpayee's *Despatch* is a trending film due to its aspirational and ambitious narrative, capturing the spirit of fearless journalism and highlights how ordinary individuals can challenge high-stakes corruption.

DESPATCH



MOVIE

FATEH KAR FATEH



SONG

Arijit Singh, India's hitmaker, has returned with *Fateh Kar Fateh*, a fiery patriotic song for Sonu Sood's first feature film as director. The dynamic combo Haroon-Gavin and Mandeep Khurana wrote the song, which is a throbbing blend of raw emotion and unwavering energy.

KEERTHY SURESH'S FAIRYTALE WEDDING



PICTURE

Actress Keerthy Suresh has tied the knot with her longtime boyfriend, Antony, in an intimate ceremony. The couple, who has been dating for several years, exchanged vows in a private function attended by close family and friends.

PN|HYDERABAD

The *Pioneer* had the privilege of interacting with Chanchalpathi Dasa, gaining unique insights into the Chandrodaya Temple's groundbreaking vision, where spirituality, sustainability and modernity converge to reshape the future of devotion in the sacred town of Vrindavan, where the stories of Lord Krishna's divine pastimes echo through every temple and alleyway, a monumental structure is taking shape. The Chandrodaya Temple, envisioned as the tallest religious structure in the world, is not just an architectural marvel but also a spiritual beacon. It is a project that seeks to harmonise devotion, heritage and modernity on a scale never before seen.

At the heart of this transformative endeavour is ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) and one of its leading voices, Chanchalpathi Dasa, Vice Chairman of ISKCON



Bangalore. In an exclusive conversation with us, Dasa shared his insights into the purpose, philosophy and aspirations behind the temple. "This temple is going to be more than a place of worship. It is a cultural and spiritual complex to present the timeless teachings of Krishna." Dasa began, outlining the project's purpose. Towering over 700 feet, the temple will not only become a record-breaking landmark but also serve as a "center to attract people from all over the world to experience Vedic culture and Krishna consciousness."

Dasa emphasised that the temple's primary goal is spiritual upliftment. "We want to introduce the world to the glories of Vrindavan and the message of the Bhagavad-gita, which is so relevant for humanity today," he explained.

Once a tranquil town steeped in spirituality, Vrindavan has faced challenges with urbanisation and ecological degradation. The temple, Dasa believes, will play a pivotal role in addressing these issues.

"Our goal is not just to build a temple but also to contribute to Vrindavan's restoration. We want to revive the spiritual sanctity of this place by promoting Krishna bhakti and ecological sustainability," he said. ISKCON's initiatives include planting trees, cleaning the Yamuna riverbanks and creating infrastructure that supports both pilgrims and residents.

An immersive experience
Unlike traditional temples, the temple is designed to offer a multidimensional experience. "It's going to be an immersive experience. The temple will feature exhibits, sound and light shows and interactive spaces to help people understand the



teachings of the Vedas in a contemporary way," Dasa shared. One of the highlights will be the "Vedic Planetarium," a unique feature that will explore the cosmology described in ancient scriptures. "It's an opportunity to blend spirituality with science, to show people the profound knowledge contained in our scriptures," he said.

Building such a massive structure while preserving its spiritual authenticity has been no small feat. "The architectural design combines traditional elements with state-of-the-art technology. This is a once-in-a-lifetime project, and we're determined to get it right," Dasa remarked. The project's scale has attracted top talent from around the world, including architects, engineers and artisans dedicated to realising this vision. While deeply rooted in the bhakti tradition, the temple is being built with an inclusive spirit. "The message of Krishna consciousness is universal. It is not limited to any one religion or community. It is about understanding our eternal nature and our connection to God," Dasa explained. He emphasised that the temple is open to people of all faiths. "We want everyone to feel welcome, to experience the joy of devotion and the peace it brings."

Reflecting on the relevance of this project in today's world, Dasa said, "Krishna's message is timeless. His teachings on dharma, devotion and detachment are solutions to the problems we face in modern life. This temple is an effort to share those teachings with the world in a way that resonates with them."

Transforming lives
Beyond its physical structure, the temple is poised to have a profound social impact. Through educational programs, healthcare initiatives and community outreach, ISKCON aims to uplift the lives of people in and around Vrindavan. "We believe in serving humanity as a service to God. Whether it's feeding the hungry, educating children, or protecting cows, every act of service is an offering to Krishna," Dasa said.

As the temple rises higher each day, it stands as a testament to what faith, vision and determination can achieve. For Chanchalpathi Dasa and his team, the journey is as sacred as the destination. "This temple is not just a building. It's a symbol of our devotion, our aspirations, and our commitment to Krishna," he said.

Set to redefine Vrindavan as a global spiritual destination, the temple embodies a timeless message in a modern world: that devotion is limitless, and so is the potential of humanity when guided by divine purpose.

Reviving Krishna's spiritual homeland
In a reflective moment, Dasa shared a story that highlights the profound vision of Sri Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). "Rupa Goswami was deep in his scholarly work when Prabhupada sat with a group of Western disciples, delivering a class on one of Goswami's texts. In this session, Prabhupada expounded on the concept of Yukta Vairagya—the idea of using material resources for spiritual purposes. Prabhupada noted that Western society's tendency to build towering skyscrapers could be redirected for spiritual benefit. Rather than constructing buildings for personal indulgence, he suggested these skyscrapers could be used to create towering temples for Krishna. These structures, Prabhupada envisioned, would become spiritual havens, promoting Krishna consciousness globally."

This vision, rooted in Prabhupada's teachings, has evolved over time and is beginning to take shape in projects such as the Heritage Tower. The tower, set to rise beyond its 70-foot frame, is designed to be more than just a building. The project includes biodiversity parks, reflecting Vrindavan's sacred forests and Krishna's divine pastimes. According to Dasa, the Heritage Tower seeks to recreate the sacred ambience of Braj—the region where Krishna spent his youth—integrating nature, spirituality and

history into a cohesive experience. Braj is home to twelve sacred forests or *kananas*, each tied to Krishna's divine activities. Vrindavan, for example, was known for its abundance of Tulasi plants, while *Talva* was renowned for its palm trees. Yet, the essence of these sacred forests has been compromised by poverty, invasions, and natural calamities. "The ambition of the project is not merely to recreate these forests but to revive them in their original glory," said Dasa. "The project plans to feature dioramas and miniature depictions of Krishna's pastimes, allowing visitors to experience the stories that unfolded in these sacred spaces. The aim is to restore their spiritual essence and offer visitors a deeper connection to Krishna's 5,000-year-old heritage."

Ecological sustainability and spiritual integrity
A core aspect of this project is ecological sustainability. Beyond the biodiversity parks, the entire design incorporates environmental consciousness, from renewable energy sources to a zero-waste approach. The Heritage Tower strives to balance spirituality with environmental stewardship, offering spaces where visitors can enjoy nature while learning about Krishna's teachings.

However, preserving the space's spiritual integrity amid modern development is another challenge. Religious sites often become commercialised tourist attractions, but the mandir intends to maintain its sanctity as a place of devotion. Dasa explained, "The Heritage Tower will feature educational components like the Bhagavad Gita Expo, which will offer profound spiritual insights and practical applications for daily life. This balance of education and entertainment—referred to as 'edutainment'—aims to engage visitors on both intellectual and spiritual levels." Additionally, an International Youth Center will address contemporary issues such as loneliness and depression, particularly among young people in the digital age. By offering spiritual teachings and life skills training, the center will help youth navigate personal challenges and foster healthier, more fulfilling lives.

The Science and Spirituality Expo will further bridge the gap between reason and faith, presenting scientific perspectives on spiritual practices to demonstrate that the two can coexist harmoniously. Lastly, the project will emphasise the preservation of India's cultural heritage through courses in traditional arts and performances that showcase the region's rich spiritual traditions. These cultural initiatives will ensure that the spiritual and artistic heritage of India is passed on to future generations. Through these layers of innovation, the Heritage Tower aspires to be more than just a physical structure—it aims to be a living space of spirituality, environmental sustainability and cultural preservation, reviving Krishna's homeland's spiritual traditions in the modern world.

A VOICE FOR YOUTH AND CONGRESS

BALMOOR VENKAT'S JOURNEY FROM BEING A STRIPLING IN HYDERABAD TO BECOMING A PROMINENT LEADER IN TELANGANA POLITICS IS ONE MARKED BY SEVERAL MILESTONES OF RESILIENCE AND PASSION. DESPITE PERSONAL HARDSHIPS, INCLUDING LOSING HIS FATHER AT A YOUNG AGE, VENKAT PURSUED MEDICINE TO FULFIL HIS MOTHER'S DREAM BEFORE DISCOVERING HIS TRUE CALLING IN STUDENT ACTIVISM. IN A CONVERSATION WITH NAVEENA GHANATE OF THE PIONEER, HE SHARES HOW HE ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS OF THE NATIONAL STUDENTS' UNION OF INDIA AGAINST ODDS TO BECOME A STAND-OUT CHAMPION FOR YOUTH AND EDUCATION



EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

I was born and raised in Hyderabad, immersed in its vibrant culture and dynamic pace of life. My schooling began at Gitanjali High School, where I studied from LKG to fifth grade, before moving to Brilliant Grammar High School in Narayanaguda for classes five through ten. Later, I pursued my first year Intermediate education at Little Flower Junior College, Uppal and the second year at Narayana College. Fulfilling my mother's dream, I joined MBBS in Chalmers Anand Rao College, securing a seat in management quota. I lost my father Madan Mohan Rao in an accident when I was in my sixth class. Yet, his influence during my early years has stayed with me till today. My mother Padma Rao worked tirelessly as a chemist, running a medical shop to ensure we had everything we needed. Watching her resilience taught me the importance of perseverance and sacrifice. Although I was brought up in the city, my roots lie in Karimnagar, the native place of my grandparents. My brother Rahul has completed engineering and runs a business of polymer drums manufacturing unit. I was briefly married but due to my political career, resulting in cases being filed against me, we have separated. When we recollect anything from the past, with one good moment, I have 10 bad moments in my past. I am a fitness freak and used to do workout until a year ago. I am a professional bodybuilder. But after my rib injury, I stopped. The cops beat me during an agitation and six of my ribs got fractured. Doctors advised me to take rest for 3 years.

MY MOTHER'S SUPPORT AND HER ONLY RULE

Although my mother's dream was to see me do medicine, I found my calling in student activism. Throughout my journey in student politics, my mother never stopped me from pursuing what I was passionate about. She understood my drive and the importance I placed on making a difference. However, she did set one clear rule for me: I should never do anything that could tarnish the name of our family or society. She would often remind me that my father never smoked or drank alcohol and she expected me to uphold the same standards. Her words resonated deeply with me. Even as I navigated the often-chaotic world of politics, I kept her advice close to my heart. I knew that every action of mine would reflect not just on me but also on her as my mother. I was always mindful of how society might perceive her, especially as a single parent who had worked hard to raise me. This sense of accountability kept me grounded and ensured that I never crossed any ethical boundaries, no matter how intense the challenges became. My mother's unwavering support and her principles have been a guiding force throughout my life.

VENTURING INTO STUDENT POLITICS

My journey began during my Intermediate years (2009-10) when I joined the National Students' Union of India (NSUI). There is no such post as Intermediate college president. But I was deemed to be Intermediate college president. In 2011, the Congress was in power in the (erstwhile AP) state. I became increasingly drawn to its ideology and its youth organization, NSUI. What fascinated me most was the democratic election process within the organization. Unlike other groups, in which leadership roles were handed out by senior leaders, NSUI required candidates to contest elections and secure membership support from colleges. This participatory structure was new to me and deeply inspiring. Initially, I encouraged two of my friends to contest for leadership roles in the Hyderabad district. However, they weren't as enthusiastic about politics and questioned why I wasn't contesting myself. Their response made me realize that perhaps I was the one who truly wanted to take the plunge. My social circle was large, and I was actively involved in various student issues, which gave me the confidence to step forward. Contesting for the post of district president wasn't easy. There were ideological debates and even confrontations with others vying for leadership roles. I decided to run for the position myself.

FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITIES IN NSUI

What drew me to NSUI was the freedom it offered. Unlike other organizations and youth wings of parties like Bharat Rashtra Samithi, NSUI didn't impose restrictions or autocratic practices. Even as a state president, I had the liberty to question the Congress party itself—a privilege explicitly mentioned in the organization's framework. This openness resonated with me, especially as a young leader eager to make a difference. Initially, it wasn't about ideology for me. It was about creating a space where I could act independently, address real issues, and bring about meaningful change. By April 15, 2015, I was elected as the first NSUI state president after Telangana's formation. Representing 10 districts, my role allowed me to work on a larger scale, connecting with students and addressing their concerns. My journey with NSUI spanned nearly a decade, marking a critical phase in my political career.

THE SHIFT TO NATIONAL SECRETARY

In 2018, I was 'promoted' to the position of NSUI national secretary -- a move I initially saw as a demotion. Certain political dynamics in Telangana led to my transfer to Delhi. Some leaders believed my presence in Telangana might disrupt their plans; so, I was strategically moved. While I accepted the position, I remained determined to serve my state. After taking up the role, I had the opportunity to meet Rahul Gandhi. During our interaction, I expressed my



YOUNGEST MLC

I've always believed that until the age of 30 or 35, we can fight on the field with full energy and aggression. Beyond that, the role transitions to guiding and strategizing. With this mindset, I aspired to work at the national level to help the Congress party form a government in Delhi. I was one of the top three contenders for the position of NSUI national president and even had an interview with Rahul Gandhi for the role. However, Rahulji said they were seeking someone under 30, and I had just crossed that mark by two months. During this time, I expressed my desire to be placed where I could continue fighting against the ruling party. I rejected suggestions of roles like chairman positions in corporations, as I felt they lacked meaningful work. I wanted to enter the legislature and work in the Assembly, but many senior leaders were vying for MLC roles, and my aspirations seemed far-fetched. Despite this, Rahul Gandhi, KC Venugopal, and other leaders recognized my efforts and nominated me as an MLC, making me the youngest MLC in Indian political history at 30 years and 10 months. It was a proud moment, especially since the youngest MLC in Gujarat was 33. Walking into the Legislative Council for the first time was daunting. I felt the weight of responsibility, knowing any mistake could lead to criticism of my maturity or capability. In my first session, I remained quiet, observing and learning the proceedings. Learning quickly is one of my strengths, and I soon grasped how to question policies effectively and what issues could or couldn't be raised. Senior leaders like Jeevan Reddy were instrumental in guiding me through this process.



CONTESTING FOR YOUTH CONGRESS PRESIDENT POST

I had contested the Youth Congress elections with a clear vision of strengthening the party at the grassroots level. Over the past decade as NSUI state president, I have built strong connections with the youth of the party, identifying and nurturing loyalists who shared my commitment to the Congress. I believed that as Youth Congress president, I could place these dedicated individuals in positions that would benefit the party, such as securing local body polls' tickets and nominations. During the process, I emphasized to the national leadership, including Rahul Gandhi, that my intention was not personal ambition but to strengthen the party's structure. While others view positions like Youth Congress president as stepping stones to becoming an MLA or MLC, I saw it as a platform to ensure Congress' longevity and stability. I pointed out that if I were focused on personal gains, I would have confined myself to one constituency, like some of my colleagues. Despite facing conspiracies and even opposition from within the party, I remained committed to ensuring the party's progress. With 88 cases spread across 16 districts, I endured challenges that few others in my position faced. Ultimately, I conveyed my intentions to KC Venugopal, Rahul Gandhi, and senior leaders like Bhatti Vikramarka, reaffirming my readiness to work in any capacity for the party's growth. Regardless of the outcome, my priority has always been Congress and its future.

desire to return to Telangana, feeling that my work in my home state was far from complete. Rahul Gandhi's guidance and support reaffirmed my commitment to the Congress party's vision. Eventually, I resigned as NSUI national secretary to refocus on my responsibilities in Telangana. In fact, they had made NSUI state presidents of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh and me from Telangana as national secretary. Those of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh also resigned just like me. While states like Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh avoided elections by directly appointing state presidents, Telangana held a full-scale election because of Captain Utam Kumar Reddy and his obligations. I contested for the presidency across 33 districts and emerged victorious in 29 of them. My panel secured a resounding



victory, with the highest margin in the country—3,400 votes against my opponent's 1,200. Despite this success, my journey wasn't without hurdles. My results were initially put on hold due to allegations that I wasn't a regular medical student. This claim led to 4-5 months of scrutiny and cross-verification, delaying the official declaration. However, truth prevailed and my dedication to the role was recognized.

FIGHTING FOR STUDENTS' ISSUES

From the beginning of my political career in NSUI, I have felt the pressure of being a new entrant and the weight of expectations. This was especially evident during my first tenure as NSUI state president. The work I accomplished during that period was immense—I conducted *Padayatras*, *Bus Yatras*, and *Campus Chalo Yatras*, travelling across the state four times within my first four years. I visited every Assembly constituency, raising student and youth issues and addressing grassroots concerns. However, the COVID-19 pandemic brought significant challenges. While most people stayed indoors, I took the initiative to fight for students' and youth rights through digital platforms. I conducted YouTube live sessions, filed legal petitions, and used social media to amplify critical issues. To date, I have filed 54 writ petitions and PILs in the High Court, highlighting my commitment to advocacy even during unprecedented times.



THE NINE-YEAR MBBS JOURNEY

Balancing my responsibilities in NSUI with my education was no easy task. Completing my MBBS degree, supposed to take six years, ended up being a nine-year journey. By 2016, I should have graduated, but my involvement in politics often took precedence over academics. I missed exams frequently, postponing them to the following year. Despite the delays, I persisted, finally completing my course in 2018. Even after finishing the academic portion of my MBBS, I couldn't declare myself a doctor immediately, as I hadn't completed my mandatory internship. During the by-election, this became a point of contention. I couldn't include my MBBS qualification in my affidavit and had to list my highest completed qualification as Intermediate. It wasn't until 2020, after attending college three days a week to meet the biometric requirements, that I finished my internship and officially became a doctor. I fulfilled my mother's long-

cherished dream. While I have no plans to pursue a super-specialty degree, I carry the satisfaction of honouring her wishes and balancing the demands of both my political and academic journeys.

HIGHEST NUMBER OF CASES IN THE STATE

I believe I hold the record for the highest number of cases in the state. My first FIR was registered on August 22, 2015, during a national call for a farmers' protest. Danam Nagender, the then-Congress in-charge, tasked me with blocking buses, specifically at the Secunderabad Bus Depot, one of the largest in the state. That day, I was new to large-scale agitations and didn't know how to handle the chaos that followed. While organizing the boycott, the situation escalated. Some people began pelting stones at buses, and all those actions were attributed to me as I was leading the protest. On that single day, eight FIRs were registered against me. It was a daunting experience, and I didn't know how to navigate such legal battles. Initially, the idea of even one FIR was terrifying. However, as the cases piled up, I gradually grew accustomed to the legal challenges. This became so frequent that my meetings and discussions would sometimes take place at the police station itself. My supporters and visitors knew that finding me at the police station was as likely as meeting me anywhere else. Till date, I have faced 84 cases, with some still pending resolution. Slowly but surely, the fear turned into a sense of purpose. My first arrest and remand came after the first wave of COVID-19. On social media, I openly challenged (former chief minister K Chandrababai Reddy) KCR and declared that I would come to Pragati Bhavan, climb the gates, and protest against the government's inaction. True to my word, I jumped the gates of Pragati Bhavan during an agitation, leading to my arrest along with 36 others. We were remanded and spent two days in jail during the pandemic. By that time, I already had around 20 cases against me and had come to terms with the fact that fighting for change requires resilience and courage.



INFLUENCE OF CONGRESS IDEOLOGY

My entry into politics was driven purely by passion. Initially, I was deeply interested in student politics, but my perspective broadened after an unforgettable interaction with Rahul Gandhi in 2018. What was supposed to be a brief 15-minute meeting turned into a 4-hour-long conversation. It was during this interaction that I began to understand the larger vision of the Congress party and the depth of its ideology. Adding to this influence was my familial connection to T Purushotham Rao, a stalwart of the Congress party and a key figure in the Telangana agitation of 1962. A three-time MLA from Telangana Praja Samithi, he was married to my grandmother's first cousin. He explained how the party works. Growing up in Hyderabad, I was largely unaware of caste divisions or regional differences. However, my grandfather helped me understand how Congress embodies this very spirit of inclusivity and unity. He explained that while Hyderabad thrives on these ideals, rural areas and districts often grapple with caste-based distinctions. Coming from the Velama community, which is largely associated with the BRS (formerly TRS), I have faced suspicion from colleagues and peers. In meetings, people would look at me with skepticism, wondering if I aligned more with my community and gave information to BRS than the party. This perception often left me feeling isolated, and during sensitive or closed-door discussions, I would voluntarily excuse myself to avoid any misunderstandings. I've often thought about how different my journey might have been if I had belonged to a politically influential caste like the Reddys or BCs.



CONTESTING THE HUZURABAD BY-ELECTION

In 2021, I contested the Huzurabad by-election, a decision that raised many eyebrows. At just 28 years old, I stepped into an election that garnered national attention. Contesting the Huzurabad by-election was a pivotal moment to prove my loyalty to the Congress party amidst doubts about my dedication. Despite the high stakes, and with seasoned leaders avoiding the contest, I stepped forward at the age of 28, driven by the need to show my commitment. Winning wasn't my priority; it was about demonstrating that I could campaign effectively and represent the party with courage. Post-election, I worked tirelessly to strengthen the Congress in Huzurabad by enrolling 34,000 members, forming mandal committees, and building grassroots support. However, I realized that focusing solely on one constituency wouldn't help the party's revival. My efforts extended statewide, mobilizing youth and ensuring that the Congress' survival in Telangana became a long-term reality. Revanth Reddy said in front of media after I lost in the Huzurabad by election: "Venkat will become leader for party and state"—a word given in front of state.



RAPID FIRE

A glimpse into my world

Hobbies: I play cricket and am a movie buff

Favourite colour: White **Favourite actor:** Pawan Kalyan

Favourite movie: *Leader and Jagadam*

Song you listen often: *Ye Mera Jahan* from *Khushi*

Favourite politician: Rahul Gandhi

Favourite food: Biryani

Favourite quote: George Reddy's quotation "Jeena Hai toh marna seekho; kadam kadam par ladna seekho"

Happiest moment: Completing my medical degree

Saddest moment: Youth Congress election struggles

Favourite sports star: Virat Kohli

Dream destination: Tadoba wild life sanctuary