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**'New DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence'**



**FIGHT AGAINST ECONOMIC OFFENDERS WILL CONTINUE: FM**



**Comedy is my home ground, I won't leave it: NARESH**



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
The pioneer

**Is there democracy in the state? The Speaker rejected our adjournment motion regarding the assurances of the Congress. It is nothing but suppressing the Opposition's voice. We demand that the congress Government should reveal when it will enact a law on the six-guarantees**



- A. Maheshwar Reddy, TG BJP leader P4

**DON'T MISS...**

**20 hurt as bus rams bulldozer**

As many as 20 passengers were injured when an APSRTC bus were travelling in collided with a bulldozer at Gollapalli in Tirupati rural mandal on Tuesday. According to the police, the APSRTC express bus was travelling from Chittoor to Tirupati. The incident occurred when the bus collided with a bulldozer from the rear end on the Naidupet-Puthalapattu highway at Gollapalli. The bus, belonging to the Chittoor-2 depot, was carrying 30 passengers at the time of the mishap. The Tirupati rural police immediately reached the accident site and shifted the ...

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**Jamili poll will lead to economic growth**

Once the 'One nation one poll' proposal by the Centre becomes functional, it will galvanise the election process and will also help in the economic growth of the country, former President Ram Nath Kovind said here on Tuesday. Kovind was the chairman of the high-level committee on simultaneous elections that was constituted by the Centre in September 2023. Speaking at a programme of a tribal organisation here, Kovind said voters are tired of meeting candidates of political parties seeking votes every year and probably do ...

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**Investors' wealth down Rs 4.92 lakh cr**

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 4.92 lakh crore on Tuesday amid a sharp sell-off in the equity market where the Sensex tanked 1,064 points. Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,064.12 points or 1.30 per cent to settle at 80,684.45. During the day, it slumped 1,136.37 points or 1.39 per cent to 80,612.20. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 4,92,644.06 crore to Rs 4,55,13,913.24 crore (USD 5.36 trillion). "The Indian stock markets witnessed a sharp decline on Tuesday, with ...

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**New Zealand beat England by 423 runs**

Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day of the third cricket Test. Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory. New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win over Sri Lanka in 2018 and prevented England from completing a series whitewash. England had ...

-SPORTS

With more women in medical profession...

**India becoming a truly developed society**



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

President Droupadi Murmu said on Tuesday that the rising participation of women in the medical profession and their significant contributions demonstrate that India is becoming a truly developed society.

Addressing the first convocation of AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) at Mangalagiri near here, she said the relentless promotion of holistic health and ensuring health for all should be the guiding principle of every medical professional at this institute.

"The rising participation of women in the medical profession and their significant contributions demonstrate that we are becoming a truly developed society. This also highlighted the fact that given opportunity, our daughters excel in every field," the President said.

The government has taken up several schemes, including Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme and made treatment accessible for those facing difficulties in accessing treatment, she said.

Along with the government, it is also the responsibility of a conscious society to ensure that no one should be left out of medical services due to financial or other reasons, Murmu stressed.

The President said Indian doctors, based on their talent and hard work, are at the forefront in the developed nations.

She said people from other countries come to India to avail healthcare services.

India is developing into an important centre in affordable medical tourism on the world map, she said, adding doctors of the country play an important role in this regard.

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AIIMS MANGALAGIRI FIRST CONVOCATION

**CM assures 10 more acres for institute's development**

Says medical science evolved into MedTech and exhorts students to master deep tech

Naidu stresses need to restructure medical field with tech advancements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has emphasised that remarkable achievements in healthcare could be made by leveraging technology in medical science, enabling direct delivery of healthcare services to patients. He stated that medical science has now evolved into "MedTech" and urged medical students to master emerging technologies like deep tech. He highlighted the need to restructure the medical field with technological advancements to ensure treatments are accessible to patients even in critical situations, without necessarily requiring hospital visits.

The Chief Minister was addressing the first convocation of AIIMS Mangalagiri on Tuesday. Expressing happiness at being part of the event, he congratulated all the medical students present.

CM Chandrababu lauded the inspiring journey of President Droupadi Murmu, who rose from a tribal family in a remote village in Odisha to become the President of India. He recalled her progression from being a teacher to holding various prestigious positions such as professor, junior assistant, counsellor, chairperson, MLA, state minister, and Governor. The Chief Minister said her journey proves that with determination and hard work, anyone can achieve the highest positions in the country. The Chief Minister spoke



**The State government ensured essential infrastructure, including approach roads, national highways, electricity, and water supply to AIIMS. The Chief Minister assured continued government support in the future.**

**Gold medals for 4 AIIMS students | P2**

about the government's contribution to AIIMS Mangalagiri, noting that the state had allocated 183 acres of land in a prime location—a support unmatched by any other AIIMS in the country. Responding to the AIIMS authorities' recent request for additional land for future expansion,

the Chief Minister assured that another 10 acres would be allocated soon. He recalled that the foundation stone for AIIMS was laid during his tenure in 2018, with an investment of Rs 1,618 crore to establish a 960-bed facility.

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**Centre tables ONOE Bill amid fiery debate**

Says it won't tamper with states' powers

Oppn terms it dictatorial

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two bills that lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections were introduced in the Lok Sabha after a fiery debate on Tuesday, with the opposition terming the move "dictatorial" and Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal asserting that the legislation would not tamper with the powers enjoyed by states.

The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by Meghwal after a nearly 90-minute debate, followed by a division of votes. As many as 269 members voted in favour of the Bill and 198 against it.

Meghwal also introduced The Union Territories Amendment Bill, which seeks to align elections in the Union territories of Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir with the Lok Sabha polls.

He said the proposed bills did not attack the "basic structure doctrine, as claimed by the opposition".

Principles such as judicial review, federal character of the Constitution, separation of powers, secular character, supremacy of the Constitution had not changed, Meghwal said, adding that the objections to the Bill were political in nature.

Continued on Page 2

**Broadband connectivity to all panchayats in AP by March 2025**

Works being carried out under BharatNet-2 Project: AP FiberNet MD

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Managing Director of Andhra Pradesh FiberNet, K Dinesh Kumar, announced that broadband services will be extended to all Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the state by March 2025. A review meeting on the progress of the BharatNet-2 project, funded by Digital Bharat Nidhi, was held on Tuesday at the BSNL main office in Vijayawada.

During the meeting, Dinesh Kumar highlighted the progress of the BharatNet project in the state. He stated that the government aims to provide broadband services to all GPs in Andhra Pradesh by March 2025, with the work being carried out at an accelerated pace. He noted that over 15,000 subscribers have already been connected under the BharatNet scheme through FiberNet. By March next year, broadband connectivity will be extended to an additional 11,254 panchayats.

Dinesh Kumar also pointed out



that Andhra Pradesh is the only state in the country providing broadband services to all panchayats under the BharatNet-2 project. He emphasised that the state government is taking swift steps to create digital panchayats.

The central government expressed satisfaction with the implementation of the BharatNet

project in Andhra Pradesh. Sanjay Kumar Varshne, Deputy Director General of the Digital Bharat Nidhi, acknowledged the steady progress of BharatNet-2 in the state and assured full cooperation to achieve the project's targets.

The meeting was attended by Digital Bharat Nidhi Director Harikrishnan and other officials.

**CBI arrests CGST Inspector for bribery**

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Tuesday arrested a CGST Inspector from the Tirupati GST Commissionerate along with a representative of a Chittoor-based private firm for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 3.2 lakh.

The CBI registered a case on Tuesday, against four persons, including an Assistant Commissioner, a Superintendent, and the Inspector from the Tirupati GST office, along with a private firm representative. The case pertains to demand for bribes by public servants in exchange for providing undue favours to companies. The accused officials had allegedly conducted inspections of various establishments under the guise of official inquiries and later summoned business owners to the CGST office, demanding bribes to settle purported irregularities. On November 5, 2024, they demanded Rs 10 lakh from the firm's representative. Acting on this, the CBI set a trap and intercepted the accused during the bribe transaction. Both the Inspector and the firm representative have been arrested and will be presented in Kurnool court on December 18.

**1,320 tons of PDS rice found at Kakinada Port**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Kakinada District Collector Shan Mohan has revealed alarming details regarding the discovery of 1,320 tons of PDS rice on the Stella L Panama vessel at Kakinada Port. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, the Collector explained that a team of officials from five departments conducted a thorough 12-hour inspection of the ship's five compartments, collecting 12 samples. The vessel, which was carrying nearly 4,000 tons of rice, was found to have 1,320 tons of PDS rice. The investigation indicated that Satyam Balaji Rice Industries was involved in the export of the rice. Authorities are currently investigating the source and storage locations of the rice.

The Collector assured that the 1,320 tons of PDS rice would be immediately offloaded and seized. Additionally, there are still 12,000 tons of rice to be loaded at Kakinada Port, but loading will only proceed once it is confirmed that none of it is PDS rice. New checkpoints have been set up at both the Kakinada

**Govt won't spare Perni Nani in rice scam: Kollu**

VIJAYAWADA: Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise, Kollu Ravindra, has reiterated the State government's resolve to take stringent action against former minister Perni Venkatramaiah, alias Nani, for his alleged involvement in the ration rice scam in Machilipatnam. He accused Nani and several YSRCP leaders of misusing their power during the previous government to loot rice meant for the poor. Speaking to the media at the TDP Central Office in Mangalagiri on Tuesday, Minister Ravindra made it clear that the government would not spare Nani or others responsible for the irregularities over the past five years.

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Anchorage Port and Kakinada Deep Water Port. The Collector emphasised that strict action would be taken to prevent any PDS rice from leaving the country.

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**Amaravati to be first capital city with piped gas supply**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Officials of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) have proposed making Amaravati the first capital city in the country to be supplied with piped gas. A team led by A Raman Kumar, a member of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB), met with the State government's Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad on Tuesday to discuss gas pipeline projects and related developments.

The IOC officials presented the idea of transforming Amaravati into India's first fully piped gas capital city. Drawing a comparison with the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT) in Gandhinagar, where utilities such as gas, electricity, and telecom cables are all under-



ground, they proposed to supply piped gas to residences, business complexes, and institutions in Amaravati, mirroring the setup in GIFT City. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad expressed his support for the proposal and assured that the state government would offer full cooperation.

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**Scribe gives new lease of life to 4 persons**

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a heart-wrenching yet inspiring turn of events, the family of journalist Murali Krishna, who tragically passed away in a road accident, has donated his organs, saving the lives of four individuals. Murali Krishna (52), a seasoned journalist who worked for several newspapers in the Simhachalam area, lost control of his two-wheeler on December 14 after slipping on a speed breaker near the steel plant. Despite medical efforts, he was declared brain-dead on Tuesday.

The hospital's medical team approached his grieving family, sensitising them about organ donation and its life-saving impact. Moved by the opportunity to help others, the family, including his wife, daughter, and son, gave their consent for organ donation. "It was a



State Jeevan Daan Coordinator Dr. K Rambabu facilitated the process, granting the required permissions. The medical team successfully harvested Murali Krishna's kidneys, liver, and heart, which were allocated to recipients based on the Jeevan Daan seniority list. "The family's decision to donate his organs is an incredible act of humanity. It is an inspiring example for society," said Dr. K Rambabu.

difficult decision, but we realised that by donating his organs, we could give hope and a new life to others," said Murali Krishna's son. State Jeevan Daan Coordinator Dr. K Rambabu facilitated the process, granting the required permissions. The medical team successfully harvested Murali Krishna's kidneys, liver, and heart, which were allocated to recipients based on

the Jeevan Daan seniority list. "The family's decision to donate his organs is an incredible act of humanity. It is an inspiring example for society," said Dr. K Rambabu. Visakhapatnam RDO, along with Dr. Rambabu, paid homage to Murali Krishna's body on behalf of the state government and presented the family with a certificate of appreciation and Rs 10,000 for

funeral expenses. "We are proud that my father's sacrifice has brightened the lives of others. This is what he would have wanted," added Murali Krishna's daughter. Murali Krishna's legacy extends beyond his journalistic contributions. His selfless act of organ donation has touched the lives of many and will continue to inspire the community for years to come.



**Lokesh promises action on land scam charge against Vijayasai**

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a shocking development, Madan Mohan, an assistant director at the Indian Institute of Packaging (IIP), has lodged a complaint alleging a massive land scam worth approximately Rs 1,500 crore in Visakhapatnam. The complaint names YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) MP V Vijayasai Reddy, accusing him of an illicit affair with Mohan's wife, Kalingiri Shanthi, an assistant commissioner in the Endowments Department.

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# Weakened by desertions, YSRCP faces an uphill task

Naturally, any opposition party which suffers a massive defeat would be immobilised for a few months. It may continue for some more time in the absence of a conducive atmosphere to build up an adversarial mood among the public against the ruling dispensation. If the humiliating defeat continues to linger on the party, the plan to expose the ruling party's failures may not take off. This can make the party directionless.



**PINPOINT**

take on the ruling NDA as both the public and the opposition felt that the time had not come for that. Any government needs a minimum time to leave its imprint on the administration after getting a chance to rule. In the same way, the opposition has to wait for a suitable time to go on the offensive against the rulers till the 'honeymoon' is over. Generally, political parties focus on the promises made by rulers during campaigning. If governance slips from the right track, then it's time for the opposition to expose the rulers.

If one looks at the YSRCP it is clear that the party leadership is still not able to draw up a plan of action to take on the NDA comprising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP. This lack of aggressiveness is confusing YSRCP cadres.

But instead of planning moves against the government, the YSRCP appears to be in disarray. Desertions are said to be the main reason for its lack of preparedness. Actually, the YSRCP can be considered the principal oppo-

**If one looks at the YSRCP it is clear that the party leadership is still not able to draw up a plan of action to take on the NDA comprising the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP. This lack of aggressiveness is confusing YSRCP cadres**

sition in AP despite its inability to secure enough numbers in the Assembly. As per rules securing 10% (17) of seats (175) in the House is necessary to get the main opposition tag. Although the YSRCP couldn't secure the required numbers in the Assembly, it has a strong presence all over Andhra Pradesh. The YSRCP was defeated due to anti-incumbency although it effectively implemented social welfare

schemes which benefitted crores below the poverty line. But welfare measures sans development proved costly for the YSRCP and it could win only 11 seats against its earlier tally of 151 out of 175 seats in the House.

Desertions are worrying the YSRCP leadership. The YSRCP's Rajya Sabha Members Mopidevi Venkata Ramana Rao, Beeda Mastan Rao and R. Krishnaiah left and



**M D RATNA KUMAR**  
Senior Journalist

joined the TDP and the BJP. Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu had picked Krishnaiah for the BC Welfare Association President post and had fielded him in the 2014 TG Assembly polls by projecting him as CM if the TDP is voted to power. As the TDP was margin-

alised in TG by the BRS no one in TG expected the TDP to win. It is believed that the TDP announced Krishnaiah as its CM candidate knowing this. But he could win his Assembly seat. Then he joined the YSRCP and became an RS Member. Later, Krishnaiah joined the BJP to continue as an RS Member. The BJP sought Chandrababu's help to ensure his victory. In fact, it is against CBN's policy to help somebody who had left the TDP to win the RS election. But he had to obey the BJP's orders.

Prime Minister Modi has been fielding people from disadvantaged groups. Krishnaiah was taken into the BJP as per this strategy. Madiga leaders are also believed to be under BJP watch. Recently, Modi attended the rally of an organisation which demands reservations for Madigas.

The YSRCP has accused the TDP of forcing its RS Members to join it. The YSRCP's RS Member, V. Vijayasai Reddy, raised the issue in Parliament to 'expose' the TDP. Continuous desertions have become a concern for the YSRCP now. Recently, former minister Muttamsetti (Avanti) Srinivas resigned from the party and criticised the leadership for launching protests against the NDA when there was no public support for that. This incident left YSRCP cadres more confused. They think that the time will come soon for dragging the government to the streets. Former MLA Grandhi Sreenivas also left the party. Sreenivas hit the headlines during the 2019 elections when he defeated JSP President Pawan Kalyan. But he didn't get a cabinet berth due to the views Jagan Mohan

Reddy's views about Pawan. He thought that making Sreenivas a minister may boost Pawan's image.

Recently, some YSRCP district presidents kept away from the party decision to stage dharnas at collectorates. Some senior YSRCP leaders are still analysing their defeat in the LS elections. Surprisingly some seniors patented themselves as they had lost only by small margins. This is quite funny as the party is facing a precarious situation. Many YSRCP candidates who lost their seats are believed to be thinking of 'saving' their future by contesting on the tickets of other parties.

The only option now before the YSRCP is to launch public movements against the rulers. But that looks like an uphill task as the NDA Government is on a strong wicket and as there is no anti-incumbency.

## Gold medals for 4 AIIMS students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Four MBBS students from the first graduating batch of AIIMS Mangalagiri were presented with gold medals. A total of 49 students received their MBBS degrees, with Liya Aji, Dasari Divyamsu, Suprabha Sinha, and Athira VK being honoured with gold medals by the President of India.

The traditional attire worn by the faculty and students captured the attention of the gathering. The entire AIIMS faculty, including Director Madabanand Kar, and all the



students chose traditional Indian attire, symbolising national pride and reflecting

the country's cultural heritage. These garments, with their elegant draping, exuded

grace and dignity. The AIIMS media team mentioned that Mangalagiri

cotton and silk fabrics were selected to showcase the region's rich textile heritage. The ancient art of Kalamkari, which involves hand drawing or block printing with natural dyes, was also featured, as it originated in the state.

The colour palette of the ensembles, along with the Kalamkari design in green, was chosen to reflect the colours and elements of the institution's logo. The yellow and green tones, complemented by earthy hues, created a striking contrast against the vibrant red of the auditorium.

## Govt trying to weaken cases against Naidu: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Accusing the coalition government of attempting to dilute the cases against Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has demanded that the trials be conducted outside Andhra Pradesh, citing large-scale scams involving public money.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy alleged that the government is using its influence to tamper with evidence in multi-core scams, including the Skill Development project, FiberNet, inner ring road alignment, assigned lands in the capital region, and the Margadarsi issue.

He claimed that Chandrababu Naidu was violating his bail conditions by influencing witnesses and manipulating records. "By placing his loyalists in key positions, he is systematically weakening and watering down

the cases. Simultaneously, those who exposed the corruption, backed by evidence and documents, are being harassed," Reddy said. He reiterated that justice could only be ensured if the trials were shifted outside the state.

Reddy further accused the government of being vindictive towards officers involved in investigating these cases. He cited the suspension of DGP PSR Anjaneyulu, CID Chief Sunil Kumar, and Ramakrishna, who probed the Margadarsi case, as evidence of political interference. "Chandrababu has anchored his people in key departments linked to the cases—Skill Development, FiberNet, and CRDA—to manipulate the evidence. A lawyer from Delhi has also been brought in to give expert advice on weakening these cases," he alleged.

He pointed out delays in submitting supporting documents to the courts and claimed that the Supreme Court case seeking to cancel

Chandrababu's bail is being prolonged due to the state government's non-cooperation. Reddy also alleged that Chandrababu's assistant, who was implicated in the Skill Development scam and fled to the US, has returned and was reinstated, which he described as a violation of bail conditions.

Displaying clippings of evidence, Reddy highlighted alleged irregularities such as routing public money through shell companies in the Skill Development scam, awarding tenders in the FiberNet project out of turn, and the inner ring road alignment to benefit associates. He also referred to corruption in the assigned lands case and irregularities in the Margadarsi issue. "Despite clear evidence of blatant corruption, efforts are being made to tamper with the records," he alleged.

Reddy concluded by reiterating that fair trials could only be ensured if the cases are heard outside the state.

## Amaravati to be...

Continued from Page 1

K Dinesh Kumar, Director of the Andhra Pradesh Gas Development Corporation, shared that the goal is to provide piped gas connections to 80 lakh people across the state shortly. Following the meeting with the Chief Secretary, the PNGRB representatives visited the RTGS and held discussions with officials from the AP Gas Development Corporation. The progress of the natural gas pipeline construction and city gas distribution work was reviewed. Dinesh Kumar requested cooperation from the PNGRB officials to help achieve this target and assured full support in overcoming any field-level challenges related to the gas pipeline construction.

## Lokesh promises ...

Continued from Page 1

Mohan submitted his grievances during the Praja Darbar session on Tuesday, where he met Minister for HRD, IT, Electronics, and RTGS, Nara Lokesh. In his complaint, Mohan claimed that MP Vijayasai Reddy coerced him into accepting a transfer to the United States in 2022-2023 and allegedly maintained a secret relationship with his wife. He further alleged that this relationship resulted in the birth of a male child, asserting that Reddy is the biological father, as Mohan was away during the child's birth.

The allegations have stirred political and public interest, with Minister Lokesh assuring necessary action after verifying the claims.

## Frequent turtle deaths highlight rising coastal pollution crisis

Local fishermen, environmental activists, and experts call for urgent action to protect marine life and livelihoods

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The discovery of two dead turtles on the Ratnayyampeta seashore on Monday, following a similar incident at Pudimadaka on Sunday, has raised serious environmental concerns among local fishermen and activists. Local fishermen expressed deep worry about the deteriorating marine ecosystem. "Pollution has been steadily destroying marine life here," stated a fisherman from Ratnayyampeta. "Fish are becoming increasingly scarce near the shore, forcing us to travel farther offshore, which is both risky and expensive."

The recurring turtle deaths, coupled with a perceived decline in marine life, have drawn attention to the untreated discharge of chemical waste and effluents from shrimp hatcheries along the coast. "Three turtles washed ashore in just two days. This is a clear sign of serious environmental degradation," emphasized another fisherman. "The untreated waste from industries is



not only killing turtles but also affecting fisheries, threatening our livelihoods." Environmental activists echoed these concerns, demanding immediate action. "Turtles are a keystone species in marine ecosystems, and their deaths signal a broader environmental issue," explained R. Anuradha, a member of an environmental advocacy group. "The untreated discharge from industries is

not only affecting marine life but also threatening biodiversity and human health. Stricter enforcement of environmental regulations and independent monitoring mechanisms are crucial."

Marine biologists highlighted the potential long-term consequences of industrial pollution on marine ecosystems. "Turtles play a vital role in maintaining the balance of marine ecosystems," stated Dr.

Ravi Kumar, a marine biologist. "Their deaths could disrupt these ecosystems, leading to cascading effects that will eventually impact fisheries and coastal communities."

Local fishermen are urging authorities to take immediate action against polluting industries and implement stricter measures to prevent untreated waste from entering coastal waters. "If no action is taken, both the environment and our livelihoods will suffer irreparable damage," they warned. Activists are advocating for sustainable practices in industrial operations and shrimp farming, and are also pushing for greater community participation in environmental conservation efforts.

The recent discoveries of the turtle carcasses have sparked urgent calls for intervention to prevent further degradation of the coastal environment. Both local communities and experts agree that decisive action is now essential to protect marine life and the livelihoods of those who depend on it.

## India becoming...

Continued from Page 1

She called upon young doctors to give priority to providing medical care and services to people living in rural, tribal and remote areas.

Yogasan and Pranayam have also been accepted from the modern point of view in the context of holistic health care, she noted.

Andhra Pradesh Governor S Abdul Nazeer, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Union Minister of State for Ayush (Independent Charge) Prataprao Jadhav, Andhra Health Minister Satya Kumar Yadav and other dignitaries were present.

The foundation for AIIMS-Mangalagiri was laid in 2015 and the first batch of MBBS students were inducted on August 30, 2018, which passed out today.

## CM assures 10 more...

Continued from Page 1

He expressed satisfaction at the recognition the institution has achieved in just nine years.

The State government ensured essential infrastructure, including approach roads, national highways, electricity, and water supply to AIIMS. The Chief Minister assured continued government support in the future. He congratulated AIIMS Mangalagiri for providing medical services to patients at an affordable cost of Rs 10 and expressed his aspiration for the institution to rank first in the country, as it is currently ranked 8th.

CM Chandrababu expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the central government's support in establishing premier educational institutions in the state, including AIIMS, IIT, IIM, Tribal University, and Central University. He also mentioned plans to develop Amaravati city over the next three years with an investment of Rs 50,000 crore, aiming to make it a world-class city.

Before attending the AIIMS convocation, CM Chandrababu Naidu, along with Deputy CM K Pawan Kalyan, welcomed President Droupadi Murmu at Gannavaram Airport, where she arrived to attend the ceremony.

## 1,320 tons of PDS rice found at Kakinada ...

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A decision regarding the release of the ship will be made soon. He also reassured legitimate rice traders that they would not face any issues from the government and there was no need for fear among traders or workers.

District SP Vikrant Patil reported that cases have been filed against 13 organisations in connection with the illegal PDS rice issue.

Investigations are ongoing, and inspections have been conducted at rice mills in East and West Godavari districts, where 89 mills were found to be supplying rice to the Public Distribution System.

## Govt won't ...

Continued from Page 1

"The state government will act firmly against those involved in the Machilipatnam ration rice scam," Ravindra stated.

He alleged that 187 tonnes of ration rice, valued at Rs 1 crore, had been illegally stored in godowns linked to Perni Nani and later looted by a "ration rice mafia." Ravindra questioned why Nani had remained silent and absconded for a week, only to reappear and write a letter offering to repay the amount for the rice.

Further, Ravindra stated that Nani's offer to pay for the rice indirectly amounted to an admission of guilt. He accused Nani of constructing private godowns within a year of assuming office as a minister, turning politics into a business opportunity.

## Centre tables ONOE Bill amid...

Continued from Page 1

Congress member Manish Tewari opposed the introduction of the bills and termed the move an assault on the basic structure doctrine that stipulates certain features of the Constitution are beyond the amending power of Parliament.

"One of the essential features is federalism and the structure of our democracy. The bills assault the basic structure of the Constitution and exceed the legislative competence of this House," Tewari, a former Union minister, said.

Samajwadi Party member Dharmendra Yadav said the measure to introduce "one nation, one election" by the BJP was an attempt to bring dictatorship in the country.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had favoured referring the bills to a joint committee of Parliament for wider deliberations at every level.

"Detailed discussions can take place in the JPC. The report of the JPC will be approved by the Cabinet. Then again, there will be a discussion on this (bills) in

the House," Shah said.

Meghal said he would move a resolution referring the Bills to a joint committee of Parliament.

Earlier, Trinamool Congress member Kalyan Banerjee said the bills linked the tenure of state assemblies to that of the Lok Sabha, thus undermining the mandate of the people.

"The state government is not subordinate to the central government or Parliament. The bills take away the autonomy of the state assembly. It is not an election reform but just the fulfilment of one gentleman's desire and dream," he said.

DMK member TR Baalu said, "The electors have the right to elect the government for five years and this right cannot be curtailed with simultaneous elections."

The opposition members also objected to Speaker Om Birla's move to call the treasury benches to speak on the bills, leading to a heated debate.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the speaker had given a ruling to allow floor leaders of all parties to speak on the introduction of the bills.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH PRISONS DEPARTMENT ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that the sealed tenders will be received by the Superintendents of the following Jails and District Sub-Jails officers on the dates noted against each institution for supply of dietary articles, raw materials & miscellaneous articles from 01-04-2025 to 31-03-2026. The main items of dietary articles, i.e., dry chilis, coriander, mutton, chicken vegetables etc., Major items of Raw materials for manufacturing section required in Central Prisons for manufacture of steel furniture etc.

**Name of the institution and last date of Receipt of Tenders:** 1) Central Jail, Nellore: 6-1-2025. 2) District Sub-Jails officer, Nellore: 7-1-2025. 3) District Jail, Ongole: 17-1-2025. 4) District Sub-Jails officer, Ongole: 18-1-2025. 5) District Jail, Guntur 8-1-2025. 6) District Sub-Jails officer, Guntur 9-1-2025. 7) District Jail, Vijayawada 10-1-2025. 8) District Sub-Jails officer, Vijayawada 16-1-2025. 9) District Jail, Eluru 20-1-2025. 10) District Sub-Jails officer, Eluru 21-1-2025.

Any clarification in this regard please contact to the Administrative Officer phone No. 8008229604. Sd/- Deputy Inspector General of Prisons, Guntur Range: Guntur

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CPI general secretary D Raja, along with State secretary K Ramakrishna, addressing the media at Dasari Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday

# D Raja condemns 'ONOE' proposal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Communist Party of India (CPI) general secretary D Raja has strongly criticised the 'One Nation, One Election (ONOE)' proposal, stating that it violates the spirit of federalism and could potentially pave the way for dictatorship in the future. He argued that simultaneous elections are impractical in a country as diverse and complex as India, and stated that the CPI firmly opposes ONOE.

Raja visited Vijayawada to participate in the party's State committee meeting and addressed the media at Dasari Bhavan on Tuesday. He slammed the BJP-led NDA government for pushing the ONOE agenda. Raja pointed out that many political parties and the public oppose the idea of simultaneous elections. Criticising the BJP's argument that frequent elections lead to huge public expenditure, Raja questioned the ruling party regarding the controversy surrounding the Electoral Bonds scheme. He urged the BJP to focus on addressing such critical issues instead of promoting ONOE.

Raja further stated that the Election Commission of India (ECI) has a permanent structure

- It violates spirit of federalism and could pave the way for dictatorship
- CPI's national conference in Chandigarh from next September 21-25

and must operate strictly within constitutional guidelines. He expressed doubts about ONOE's feasibility, considering the different environments across the country.

"The CPI," he said, "is actively fighting against the ONOE proposal both inside and outside Parliament." The party has also submitted its objections and a detailed report to the Law Commission and the Ramnath Kovind Committee examining the proposal.

Raja announced that the CPI's national conferences will take place in Chandigarh from September 21 to 25, next year. Additionally, the CPI's centenary celebrations will begin in Kanpur on December 26

this year. These celebrations will be held nationwide for a year, culminating with a closing ceremony in Khammam, Telangana.

Emphasising the principles of secularism and democracy, Raja said that Dr BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, envisioned a nation that upholds these values. He warned that the ONOE proposal undermines the spirit of the Constitution and the ideals laid down by Dr Ambedkar.

Taking direct allegations at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Raja accused his support of corporate giants like Adani of looting the country's assets. He also raised the long-pending issue of Special Category Status (SCS) for Andhra Pradesh, which the BJP had promised during its general election campaigns. Raja demanded that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu provide clear answers to the people of Andhra Pradesh regarding the State's Special Category Status.

CPI State secretary K Ramakrishna, assistant secretaries Muppala Nageswara Rao, JV Satyanarayana Murthy, -National Council members Ravula Venkaiah, Akkineni Vanaja and others were present.

# Tourism sector set for major growth in AP: Durgesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State's tourism sector is poised for substantial growth, with the government focusing on a comprehensive tourism policy aimed at transforming Andhra Pradesh into a premier tourist destination over the next five years, said Kandula Durgesh, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Cinematography.

Speaking at the Tourism Investors' Conference held in Vijayawada on Tuesday, supported by CII and AP Chambers, the minister unveiled the new Tourism Policy for 2024-2029. The conference saw over 200 investors explore opportunities in the tourism sector.

Minister Durgesh assured investors that there would be no hindrances or uncertainties regarding investments in the tourism sector in the state. He stressed that, unlike in previous years when political instability hindered the growth of the tourism industry, the current government is committed to offering strong support and creating a favourable environment for investments. He also emphasised the government's special focus on tourism, expressing confidence that



Andhra Pradesh would soon emerge as the top tourist destination in India.

The Minister outlined the government's vision of attracting Rs 25,000 crores in tourism investments, with an emphasis on sustainable development, environmental protection, and job creation for the youth. He mentioned that the policy includes various initiatives such as eco-tourism, temple tourism, wellness tourism, village tourism, and adventure tourism, among others. The goal is to increase the number of hotel rooms to 50,000, establish thematic circuits, create anchor hubs, and improve infra-

structure to make the state a preferred tourist destination.

Key highlights of the new Tourism Policy include the creation of 3 eco-tourism circuits, 10 temple circuits, 2 Buddhist circuits, 5 beach circuits, 4 river tourism circuits, 2 cruise circuits, and 7 anchor hubs. The policy also focuses on financial growth, sustainable tourism, safety, and employment generation for youth. New incentive schemes for investors have been introduced, and both domestic and international tourism will be promoted by improving infrastructure and offering unique experiences to tourists, encouraging longer stays. The state

aims to become one of the top 10 tourist destinations in India and attract the highest number of international tourists. The policy also targets increasing the state's share of tourism-related employment from 12% to 15% and boosting the sector's contribution to the Gross Value Added (GVA) from 4.6% to 28%.

The state government has already secured funding for key tourism projects, including the Akhanda Godavari and Gandikota development initiatives, through the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme. Minister Durgesh reaffirmed the government's commitment to reviving the tourism industry, which faced challenges in the past five years, by attracting new investments and creating a sustainable growth model.

During the event, Tourism Secretary V Vinay Chand and Managing Director Amrapali Kata provided a detailed presentation on the new policy, outlining its provisions, incentives, and opportunities for tourism development in the state. They explained the new measures aimed at attracting both national and international investors.

## SRM-AP opens free tuition centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A free tuition centre was established in the village of Neerukonda under the auspices of SRM University-AP. Vice-Chancellor Prof Manoj K Arora and the Executive Director of Guntur Apex Solutions, S Narendra Kumar, jointly inaugurated the centre aimed at providing educational support to students hailing from the rural regions of Andhra Pradesh. Speaking on occasion, Prof. Manoj Arora remarked that the Chennai-based Putiya Talai Murai Foundation came forward to set up a free tuition centre at Neerukonda with the primary objective of providing educational support to the school students, further enhancing the level of scholarship in the ground roots of the country. Prof Arora also opined that the university will ensure the necessary support to manage the tuition centre.



## 'Focus on streamlining land survey'

- Re-survey to be continued by simplifying complex processes and considering people's opinions

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

State Revenue Minister Anagani Satya Prasad emphasised the government's commitment to streamlining land survey procedures and prioritising public involvement, during the Regional Revenue Officers Conference held on Tuesday. He reaffirmed that the ongoing re-survey process will continue with a focus on efficiency, accessibility, and public participation. "We will continue the re-survey by simplifying the complex processes and considering the opinions of the people. Our aim is to make the system more efficient and people-friendly," stated the Minister.

Satya Prasad said the government will ensure that re-survey costs will be decided with the welfare of farmers in mind, addressing concerns raised by landowners and farming communities. "We are

committed to making a decision that is favourable to farmers regarding re-survey costs. Their interests are a priority for us," he affirmed.

The Minister also outlined several initiatives to make land records more accessible to the public. "We will ensure that detailed records of various lands and the corresponding maps are available in every village secretariat for easy access by the public," he said. The government also plans to notify villagers in advance about upcoming re-surveys, offering three available dates for each slot to ensure full participation. "The re-survey will be communicated to the public through SMS and phone calls, ensuring no one is left unaware," he added.

Addressing concerns over complaints related to the re-survey process, the Minister assured that grievances will be resolved before proceeding. "Before moving for-

ward with any re-survey, we will address and resolve every complaint raised by the people. We are committed to a transparent process," he said.

The Minister also touched on the digitisation of revenue records, stating that linking them with the Registration Department will enhance transparency and efficiency. "A record will be maintained in each village based on survey numbers, making land details readily accessible at the local level," he explained. Looking ahead, Minister Satya Prasad announced that a follow-up Regional Revenue Conference will be held in Visakhapatnam in February, to further address land record issues and improve the system.

Special Chief Secretary (Revenue) RP Sisodia, CCLA G. Jayalakshmi, Home Minister Vangalapati Anitha, along with several MLAs, were present.

## AP HC EXAMINES RICE SHIPMENT PERMITS AT KAKINADA PORT

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The matter concerning the Stella vessel at Kakinada Port has been brought before the Andhra Pradesh High Court. Several petitioners have approached the court seeking directions to the authorities to grant permission for loading parboiled rice onto the Stella vessel at the port.

During the hearing, the court asked the state government to submit detailed information regarding the case. The High Court raised questions about whether the necessary permits for transporting rice were in place and sought clarification on the government's authority to prevent the loading of rice onto the vessel.

The petitioners, including Bhaskar Reddy, Gangireddy, and Vishwanath Reddy, owners of Chitra, Agri Exports, Padmashree Rice Mill, and Suryashree Rice Mill, argued that their rice shipments were being obstructed from being loaded onto the ship.

The Additional Advocate General requested more time to provide the required details to the court. Considering this request, the court postponed the next hearing to December 19.



## 20 passengers injured as RTC bus collides with bulldozer

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

As many as 20 passengers were injured when an APSRTC bus they were travelling in collided with a bulldozer at Gollapalli in Tirupati rural mandal on Tuesday.

According to the police, the APSRTC express bus was travelling from Chittoor to Tirupati. The incident occurred when the bus collided

with a bulldozer from the rear end on the Naidupet-Puthalapattu highway at Gollapalli. The bus, belonging to the Chittoor-2 depot, was carrying 30 passengers at the time of the mishap. The Tirupati rural police immediately reached the accident site and shifted the injured passengers to nearby hospitals in ambulances.

Minister for Transport

Ramprasad Reddy spoke with RTC and police officials to inquire about the accident. He directed the RTC authorities to ensure that the injured passengers were taken to the hospital and provided all necessary assistance. Passengers onboard the bus alleged that the driver had been driving recklessly at high speed, which led to the collision.

## Aziz elected chairman of AP State Waqf Board

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sheikh Abdul Aziz, a Telugu Desam Party (TDP) leader from Nellore, has been elected as the new Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Waqf Board (APSWB). The election took place during the APSWB meeting held at the Waqf Board office in Vijayawada. Prakasam District Collector Tamim Ansariya, a board member, presided over the programme and oversaw the election process. Aziz was unanimously elected as the chairman.

Speaking after his election,

Abdul Aziz expressed gratitude towards Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for revitalising the Waqf Board, which safeguards religious assets. He said that the board would not only protect Waqf assets but also work towards generating revenue for the benefit of society. Aziz emphasised that the responsibility of safeguarding Waqf assets rests with the government, government officials, and the board, and they are committed to ensuring the protection of these assets.

Aziz also lamented the stagnation of the board, which had led to delays in decision-making.

## 'No to Drugs, Yes to Life': Andhra Loyola College hosts awareness programme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a collective effort to combat the growing menace of drug abuse, Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, hosted an awareness programme titled "Voices for Change: No to Drugs, Yes to Life?". The event was organised by the college's MAGIC and AICUF units along with the Women's Cell, in collaboration with Taruni Tarangalu as a part of the Drugfree 365 campaign. The programme took place in the Multipurpose Hall, bringing together students, faculty, and prominent dignitaries who stressed the urgency of addressing drug abuse and fostering a healthier future for youth.

The programme received enthusiastic participation from students, faculty, and community representatives. Thought-provoking discussions, personal anecdotes, and interactive segments ensured that the audience left with a renewed sense of responsibility toward building a healthier society. The students and faculty took a collective pledge to say "No to Drugs and Yes to Life."

NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu attended the programme as the chief guest. He addressed attention to alarming statistics. He said: "India is witnessing a surge in substance abuse cases, with over 11 million youth affected nationwide. Early intervention through awareness programmes like this is vital. Law enforcement alone cannot solve this problem—community involvement is the key."

## First Gir female calf born via embryo insemination in Vizianagaram

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a landmark achievement for livestock breeding, a healthy Gir female calf has been born in Jagannadhapuram village, Vizianagaram district, through the innovative technique of embryo insemination. This is the first successful birth of a female calf in the district using this advanced reproductive method, which is set to revolutionise livestock farming in the region. "This is a major milestone for our district," said Dr YV Ramana, District Joint Director of the Animal Husbandry Department. "The birth of this calf signifies the first successful use of embryo insemination in livestock and opens up new possibilities for enhancing livestock breeding in Vizianagaram and the



broader North Andhra region. We are extremely proud of this achievement."

The birth is part of the National

Kamdhenu Project, an initiative spearheaded by the Animal Husbandry Department and State Livestock Development



Corporation. The project utilises in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and other scientific methods to develop and preserve embryos in liquid nitrogen,

which are then implanted in cows for breeding.

"This technique has tremendous potential," Dr Ramana explained.

"Typically, a cow produces only eight to 10 calves in its lifetime. Through embryo transfer and IVF, we can collect up to 150 embryos from a single cow, leading to the birth of 50 to 60 calves. This breakthrough will have a profound impact on livestock farming in the region." The initiative aims to improve the quality and productivity of local cattle, enhancing the genetics of the region's livestock. As part of this programme, two veterinarians in the district have received specialised training to further advance the project's reach and effectiveness.

"As we continue with this initiative, we are dedicated to breeding superior cattle, which will bolster the dairy industry and support farmers in our region," Dr. Ramana emphasised.





# Power subsidy for aqua farmers on the anvil

■ Agriculture Minister Atchannaidu asks officials to prepare plans

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries K Atchannaidu has instructed officials to prepare plans for providing electricity subsidies to all aqua farmers, fulfilling the TDP-led NDA government's election manifesto, irrespective of designated aqua zones. Atchannaidu held a review meeting with officials from the Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Departments at his chamber in the Secretariat on Tuesday. He stressed the immediate distribution of fish seeds and directed officials to involve public representatives to ensure the completion of the process across all districts by January 2025.

he Minister announced the sanction of Rs 6.67 crore for the immediate release of fuel subsidies to fishermen. He directed officials to release funds for fuel subsidies for fishermen's boats in advance every year. Atchannaidu also revealed plans to introduce marine fuel, which is expected to save fishermen approximately Rs 10 per litre. To boost fisheries production, the Minister highlighted the government's initiative to develop 54 state-owned fish seed ponds. He also noted that Andhra Pradesh is collaborating with the Kerala government to set up artificial reefs along the coast, aimed at enhancing marine resources and improving the livelihoods of coastal fishermen. Addressing long-pending issues, Atchannaidu instructed officials to hold elections for fisheries cooperative societies in Srikakulam and

West Godavari districts, where polls have been stalled. On the Animal Husbandry front, the Minister emphasised the need to fill vacant posts and directed officials to submit proposals for the construction and repair of veterinary hospital buildings across the State. He also urged officials to implement Embryo Transfer Technology (ETT) to breed superior, disease-resistant livestock. Vaccinations and deworming medicines for cattle, sheep, and goats must be provided across the State by January 2025, he added. The review meeting was attended by Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Principal Secretary MM Nayak, Animal Husbandry Director Dr Damodar Nayak, Fisheries Commissioner Dola Shankar, and other senior officials.

# Minister Kolusu clarifies stand on Nuzvid row to CM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Housing and I&PR, Kolusu Parthasarathy, met Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday to explain his presence at a controversial event in Nuzvid. The event sparked criticism due to the participation of former minister and YSR Congress leader Jogi Ramesh, who is accused of involvement in the attack on Naidu's residence.

Parthasarathy and Palasa MLA Gauthu Sirisha had attended the unveiling ceremony of the Goutu Lachanna statue in Nuzvid, which became contentious because of the presence of Ramesh and other YSRC leaders. This led to backlash from TDP cadres, prompting both Parthasarathy and Sirisha to offer clarifications and apologies for unintentionally offending party workers. Parthasarathy explained, "I met CM Naidu to address concerns over the Nuzvid incident. TDP workers were upset because of Ramesh's involvement. The event, organized by the Gowda community, did not include his name in the invitation. I attended to honour Lachanna, a disciple of NG Ranga, and Ramesh's presence was unanticipated. I spoke briefly and left after the ceremony." He assured the CM, "I will take necessary steps to prevent such incidents in the future. Though I joined the party recently, TDP workers have supported me. I had no role in Ramesh's presence, and I will ensure such mistakes do not recur."



# Engineers directed to speed up Polavaram project: Nimmala

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Management Nimmala Ramanaidu has directed engineers and officials to expedite the works of the Polavaram project and ensure its completion by October 2026. The Minister laid the foundation stone, performed 'bhoomipooja', and unveiled plaques for various development works at Neredumilli, Penumuru, Kadupalem, Gumparru, and Shiragarapalli villages in Yelamanchili mandal of West Godavari district on Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, Ramanaidu reiterated that the Polavaram project is the lifeline of Andhra Pradesh, crucial for making the State drought-free and

boosting financial resources. He stated that the civil works of the project must be completed by June 2026, and water impoundment should begin in the same season. "The works to construct a new diaphragm wall, replacing the damaged one, will commence on January 2, 2025. The engineering officials have assured completion by March 2026, but the Government has set a stricter deadline of December 2025," the Minister said. He further revealed that while engineers proposed completing the ECRF Gap-1 work by February 2026 and Gap-2 by December 2027, the Government has instructed officials to fast-track these works for completion by July 2026. Highlighting the delays under

the previous regime, Ramanaidu claimed that 72 per cent of the Polavaram works had been completed by 2019. However, during the five-year YSRC tenure, only 3.84 per cent progress was made. He alleged that Rs 2,400 crore was wasted due to the negligence of the previous government, which also burdened the State with debts amounting to Rs 14 lakh crore. Promising to put the State back on the path of development, the Minister underlined key achievements of the current government, such as enhancing social security pensions to Rs 4,000, announcing the mega DSC, reopening of 'Anna canteens', and implementing the free gas cylinder scheme. Several officials and local leaders were present at the event.

# AP POLICE SEIZE 155 RED SANDERS LOGS IN GUJARAT

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Andhra Pradesh police have seized 155 red sanders logs in Gujarat and brought them to Tirupati. Superintendent of Police Subba Rayudu informed the media on Tuesday that three red sander smugglers were arrested in the Annamayya district a few days ago. The arrested smugglers provided crucial information to the police, leading them to red sander logs hoarded in Gujarat. A team of police officers from Tirupati, with the assistance of the Gujarat police, seized 155 red sander logs, weighing a total of 5 tonnes and valued at Rs 3 crore, in Patan district. The Andhra Pradesh police also arrested three smugglers in Gujarat. The SP stated that the Preventive Detention (PD) Act would be invoked against the arrested red sander smugglers.



# SEIL Energy bags UBS Forums' award

PNS ■ NELLORE

SEIL Energy India Limited, one of India's largest independent power producers (IPP), announced on Tuesday that it has received the prestigious UBS Forums' 'Best Social Welfare Initiative of the Year' Award for its innovative health programme. The recognition honours SEIL Energy's impactful health initiatives, which have transformed the lives of thousands in rural communities. The award was presented at the 12th edition of the Corporate Social Responsibility Summit and Awards 2024 held in Bengaluru. Mr Albert David Peter, Head of CSR, SEIL Energy India Limited, accepted the award on behalf of the company. Mr Raghav Trivedi, CEO of SEIL Energy India Limited, congratulated the CSR team for the achievement. He said, "We are deeply committed to empowering

communities through initiatives that address their most pressing needs. Our health programmes aim to make a tangible difference in the lives of the unserved and underserved, and we are delighted to receive this recognition." SEIL Energy's health initiatives have positively impacted over 5,000 households across eight panchayats and their hamlets in Muthukur and TP Gudur mandals. The company's comprehensive programmes include establishing two Health and Wellness Centres at MV Palem in Muthukur mandal and Salipeta in TP Gudur mandal, doorstep free medical check-ups and medicine distribution through a Mobile Medical Unit (MMU), distribution of hearing aids (audiometry devices), free eye check-ups and spectacles distribution, and providing medical equipment to government public health centres.

# Land disputes being resolved at 'Revenue Sadassulu': Minister Dola

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy has vowed to resolve land disputes through the ongoing 'Revenue Sadassulu' being held at various locations across the state. These meetings are taking place from December 6 to January 8, 2025. The Minister attended a revenue sadassu meeting at Valluru village in Tanguturu mandal on Tuesday, where he received petitions from the public and listened to their concerns regarding land disputes. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister emphasised the government's commitment to resolving land issues through these meetings, which are specifically aimed at addressing such disputes. He pointed out that most petitions received were related to land disputes.



"There were flaws in the land resurvey process undertaken by the previous YSRC government. Farmers suffered due to these errors. Steps have been taken to

resolve land disputes within 45 days of receiving a petition," the Minister said. Recalling that the Land Titling Act had been revoked as per an ear-

lier assurance, the Minister added that officials have been working to resolve land-related issues by reaching out directly to petitioners in their villages. "The temple lands and forest lands are being examined by revenue officials as part of the ongoing efforts to resolve land disputes. Complaints have been received about freehold registration in 18,240 acres in Prakasam district, where irregularities were found," Minister Bala Veeranjanya Swamy stated. He urged the public to make use of this opportunity to address their land issues through the 'Revenue Sadassulu'. Later, the Minister inspected the petitions register, revenue records counter, and secretariat records, RDO Lakshmi Prasanna, MDO Lakshmi Naik, and other officials were present during the revenue sadassu.

# Stress on job creation for VDVK members

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Director of Tribal Welfare Department, S Bhargavi, has emphasised the importance of increasing employment opportunities for Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK) members to ensure their economic uplift. "Strengthening VDVKs is vital for the sustainable growth of tribal communities. We must focus on adding value to forest products and enhancing branding efforts,"

Bhargavi said, while addressing officials at a review meeting held at the Rushikonda Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute. The meeting discussed VDVK management, training programmes, infrastructure development, and the procurement of essential machinery and equipment. Bhargavi examined plates crafted from Bauhinia leaves and reviewed their pricing. "We must take necessary steps to market products like

Vastara-based items to temples such as Simhachalam and TTD, ensuring better economic returns for VDVK members," she added. Paderu ITDA Project Officer V Abhishek provided a progress update, stating that there are 106 VDVKs in the Paderu ITDA region. "A total of Rs 3.1 crore has been released for VDVKs. This has enabled us to supply machinery, equipment, and training to the members," he said.



# 2 RED SANDERS SMUGGLERS SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS' IN JAIL

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Two red sanders smugglers were sentenced to five years imprisonment and fined Rs 6 lakh each by the RSS ADJ court in connection with an illegal transportation case. Judge Narasimha Murthy pronounced the verdict, convicting the accused who were apprehended while illegally transporting red sanders logs by the Task Force police. Following the sentencing, the smugglers were sent to Nellore Central Prison. Superintendent of Police (SP) L Subba Rayudu warned that red sanders smugglers would face strict punishment. He stated that measures have been taken to ensure convictions through a trial monitoring system. The SP further noted that several red sanders smugglers had already been convicted in similar cases and are currently serving jail terms. He affirmed that red sanders smuggling is being dealt with firmly and commended the police officials and public prosecutors for successfully proving the case.

# Reveal when you will enact law on 6-guarantees: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) asked the state government to reveal when it will make a law on its Six-Guarantees. BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy asked the government to reveal when it will implement the Six-Guarantees as one year has gone by after announcing them and how long the people should wait for them. Speaking at the Assembly Media Centre on Tuesday, Maheshwar said that the government is now saying that it has no funds to implement the Six-Guarantees. He said the Congress wilfully gave false assurances even though it knew that it could not

be implemented just to grab power. He also demanded that all the Congress MLAs should apologise to the people for coming to power after deceiving the public. The BJP leader demanded that a cheating case should be filed against Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka for not implementing the six-guarantees even a year after coming to power. "The Speaker rejected our adjournment motion on the Congress's assurances. It is nothing but suppressing the voice of the opposition. Is there democracy in the state?" Maheshwar said.



# 3.5 KG OF CANNABIS SEIZED, 9 PEDDLERS ARRESTED

PNS ■ NELLORE

Despite heightened vigilance and stringent measures to curb the ganja menace, the sale and consumption of cannabis remain widespread in the district. In a recent operation, the police seized 3.5 kg of ganja and arrested nine peddlers in Atmakur town. DSP Venugopal, speaking to the media in Atmakur on Tuesday, revealed that the arrested peddlers had smuggled a large quantity of ganja from the Odisha border and were selling it in retail within the area. Acting on a tip-off, the police conducted a raid and apprehended the nine individuals, including the masterminds of the ganja racket, Sheik Meeravali and D Parabrahmachari. Along with the cannabis, two motorcycles were also seized. The DSP issued a stern warning, stating that strict action would be taken against anyone found involved in the sale or consumption of ganja in the division.

# Kotamreddy Srinivasula Reddy sworn in as NUDA Chairman

PNS ■ NELLORE

Kotamreddy Srinivasula Reddy was sworn in as the Chairman of the Nellore Urban Development Authority (NUDA) on Tuesday. The event was attended by Minister for Minorities Welfare MD Farooq, Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister P Narayana, and Endowment Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy, among others. A grand rally, led by the Ministers, Kotamreddy Sridhar Reddy, MLAs, and leaders, commenced from the Nartaki Centre and proceeded to the NUDA office. The Municipal Commissioner and Vice-Chairman, Surya Teja, administered the oath to Kotamreddy Srinivasula Reddy as NUDA Chairman. In his address, Minister Farooq recalled his involvement in the development of Hyderabad city under the leadership of N Chandrababu Naidu during the united Andhra Pradesh days. He urged Kotamreddy Srinivasula Reddy to work diligently towards the development of Nellore city as NUDA Chairman. Endowment Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy highlighted the significant development taking place in Nellore city and advised the NUDA Chairman to ensure its comprehensive development in line with the master plan. He also encouraged public participation in the city's development.



Municipal Administration Minister Narayana noted that the State has 21 urban authorities and 123 municipalities. With the growing population, town planning permissions would be streamlined and liberalized. He pledged to transform Nellore city into a model city with all essential amenities. NUDA Chairman Srinivasula Reddy, in his speech, vowed to work towards maintaining clean roads and making Nellore a beautiful city. Hindupur MLA N Balakrishna sent his best wishes to the NUDA Chairman over the phone during the programme. Deputy Mayor Roop Kumar, RTC Zonal Chairman Suresh Reddy, MLAs Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, Kakarla Suresh, and Daggubati Venkata Krishna Reddy, former Union Minister Panabaka Lakshmi, and former MLA Divi Shivaram were also present at the event.



ACROSS THE STATES



ASI begins repair work of temple's 'Ratna Bhandar'

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Tuesday commenced repair work of 'Ratna Bhandar' of the Jagannath temple in Odisha's Puri, a state minister said. The work started around 1 pm and will continue till 6 pm. Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan said. "The ASI has assured us a three-month timeline, but we have requested them to expedite the process," he told reporters in Bhubaneswar. Harichandan said the repair work will be carried out without affecting the daily rituals of deities inside the 12th century shrine, and the timings for devotees. ASI Superintending Archaeologist D B Garmayak said: "We will set up scaffolding first before removing plasters from the walls of the Ratna Bhandar (temple treasury). The entire structure will then be cleaned, and the repair of old iron beams and cracked stones will be undertaken." Both the inner and outer chambers will undergo repair. The renovation of the Ratna Bhandar will not be carried out on Saturdays and Sundays, and other holidays, keeping in view the crowd of devotees, the ASI official said.



'UP govt recruited over 1.60L in education sector'

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted the government's achievements in the education sector on the second day of the state assembly's Winter Session on Tuesday. "Our government has successfully carried out more than 1.60 lakh recruitment in the education sector," Adityanath said. Addressing the concerns raised by SP MLAs Manoj Kumar Paras, Pooja, and Pankaj Patel, the chief minister acknowledged the importance and sensitivity of their issues but urged members to present facts while maintaining the decorum of the House. The chief minister said that a new selection board, the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission, has been formed to streamline recruitment in the education sector, including basic, secondary, higher, technical, vocational, and medical education.



Willing to resign as Maha Congress chief: Patole

Maharashtra Congress chief Nana Patole on Tuesday said that he has expressed his willingness to resign from the post, and now the party high command will decide on it. Talking to reporters on Vidhan Bhavan premises, Patole said the Congress's group leader in the state legislature will be chosen today. Following the party's worst-ever defeat in the assembly elections in Maharashtra, party sources had earlier claimed that the senior Congress leader had requested the central leadership to relieve him of the responsibility of the organisational post. Patole, however, had clarified last week that he had not tendered resignation and rumours were being spread. Patole said the Congress's Maharashtra in-charge will arrive in the city on Tuesday evening, and the party's group leader in the state legislature will be elected. He said discussions about the state chief's post would also take place. Queried whether he has tendered his resignation from the state chief's post, Patole said, "I have expressed my willingness."

Rajya Sabha: NDA, Congress wrangle on Sengol's significance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sengol, a symbol of transfer of power from the British that has been installed in Parliament, was at the centre of a BJP-Congress verbal duel in Rajya Sabha on Tuesday as the Congress claimed that an untrue story was told about its significance and the government countered it.



Constitution of India" in the Upper House. Yadav said that when the Sengol was given during the transfer of power at the time of independence, it was treated as a "walking stick" of Jawaharlal Nehru instead of a symbol of justice.

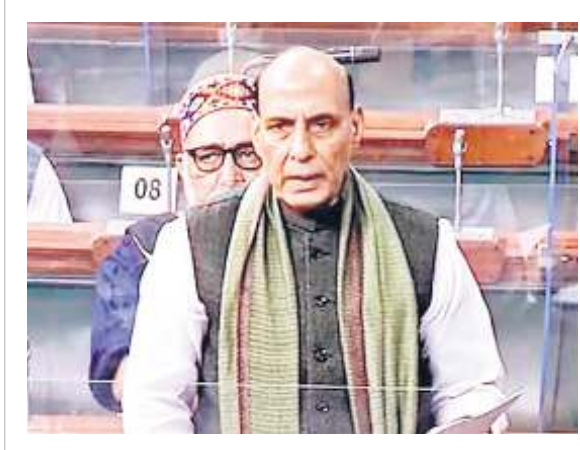
Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, however, objected to the remarks, saying that it was not given to anyone.

'New DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' in defence'

Singh made the remarks at a meeting of the Consultative Committee for the defence ministry. "Our new DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) in the field of defence production," he said

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday exuded confidence that the new defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) will set new dimensions in quality, turnover and profitability. Singh made the remarks at a meeting of the Consultative



Committee for the defence ministry. "Our new DPSUs will make India 'Aatmanirbhar' (self-reliant) in the field of defence production," he said.

The government set up seven state-run defence companies which were carved out of the erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) in 2021.

The main objective of the restructuring was to transform ordnance factories into productive, and profitable assets, improve expertise in the product range and increase competitiveness. The roles and functions of the new DPSUs, which were created post corporatisation of erstwhile Ordnance Factory Board,

were deliberated upon at the meeting. The committee was apprised of the financial figures, modernisation, capital expenditure, exports and new products developed by the DPSUs.

In his remarks, Singh appreciated the efforts taken by the new DPSUs in indigenisation of critical products, modernisation of manufacturing facilities and promotion of MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises). He appreciated the fact that post corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board, the new DPSUs have shown improvement in productivity and quality, according to the defence ministry.

There has been good progress in the sales and profit of these DPSUs in a very short span of time, he added. Singh exuded confidence that the new DPSUs will carry forward modernisation and indigenisation, and will set new dimensions in quality, turnover, profitability and other financial parameters by incorporating world class technologies.



'Synopsis can't run into 128 pages'

SC tells registry to take note

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A synopsis cannot run into 128 pages, the Supreme Court on Tuesday said and asked its registrar (judicial) to take note, particularly in cases where litigants were allowed to appear in person.

While hearing a plea challenging an order of the Allahabad High Court, a bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah said the appellant, who was appearing in person, had filed a synopsis running into 128 pages, loaded with details, most of which were not relevant.

"We understand that the appellant is not a trained lawyer, but it is for the registry to have asked the appellant to trim down the synopsis. A synopsis cannot run into 128 pages," said the bench. The top court went on to add, "Let the registrar (judicial) take note of this, particularly

the cases where litigants are allowed to appear in person." The bench was hearing an issue pertaining to a matrimonial case when it noted the appellant woman was married to the respondent in 2006 and she got a decree of divorce on the ground of cruelty in 2016.

The bench noted that the high court, in its order passed in December, 2019, restored the Section 125 CrPC petition of the appellant and directed the family court to decide the case in accordance with law. Section 125 of CrPC deals with order for maintenance of wives, children and parents. The bench said the high court had directed the said petition was required to be decided on merits by the additional principal judge, Family Court, Agra. "We see absolutely no reason as to why we should interfere with the aforesaid impugned order.

North India continues to feel the chill

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Cold weather conditions persisted in many parts of north and east India on Tuesday, with minimum temperature in parts of Kashmir dropping several notches below freezing point, and Kanke in Jharkhand recording a low of 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Srinagar recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.3 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, down from minus 3.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, with water supply lines in many parts of the city and elsewhere in the Valley getting frozen due to the cold, officials said. Gulmarg recorded a low of minus 4 degrees

Celsius, the same as the previous night, while Pahalgam recorded a low of minus 6.8 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 5 degrees Celsius.

Konibal on the outskirts of Pampore was the coldest in the Valley at minus 8.5 degrees Celsius, officials said.



Cong considered Constitution 'private fiefdom' of one family: Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday attacked the Congress in the Rajya Sabha, saying the party treated the Constitution as the "private fiefdom" of one family and "played fraud" with Parliament.

Concluding a two-day debate on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah ripped into the Congress for its appeasement politics and claimed that the party wanted to breach the 50 per cent quota limit to provide reservation to Muslims.

He also asked the Congress if it supported the Muslim personal law and alleged that the party never worked for the welfare of the backward classes. Shah asserted that the BJP has already brought in a common civil code (Uniform Civil Code) in Uttarakhand and will implement it in all states.

He attacked the Congress for being a "sore loser" as it blamed EVMs for its defeat in the assembly polls in Maharashtra and Haryana, saying the party should give up its canard against EVMs and shed its appeasement and dynastic politics as well as corruption to return to power.

"In the last 75 years, the Congress played fraud in the name of the Constitution... They (Nehru-Gandhi family)



Concluding a two-day debate on the "Glorious Journey of 75 Years of the Constitution of India", Shah ripped into the Congress for its appeasement politics and claimed that the party wanted to breach the 50 per cent quota limit to provide reservation to Muslims

considered not just the party as their private property, but also treated the Constitution as their 'private fiefdom'," Shah alleged, referring to the insertion of Article 35A without parliamentary assent. Criticising the Congress for

bringing in reservation on the basis of religion in two states ruled by it, Shah termed it "unconstitutional". "It is clearly stated in the Constitution that no reservation will be based on religion... They (Congress) do not want any welfare of OBCs, they want to give reservations to Muslims by increasing the limit of 50 per cent. "But today, once again I say with responsibility in this House that as long as the BJP has even one MP, we will not allow reservation on the basis of religion," the home minister asserted.

He said that in 1955, the Kaka Kalelkar Commission was formed to provide reservations to OBCs but the report was nowhere to be found.

Jamili poll will lead to economic growth: Kovind

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Once the 'One nation one poll' proposal by the Centre becomes functional, it will galvanise the election process and will also help in the economic growth of the country, former President Ram Nath Kovind said here on Tuesday. Kovind was the chairman of the high-level committee on simultaneous elections that was constituted by the Centre in September 2023.

Speaking at a programme of a tribal organisation here, Kovind said voters are tired of meeting candidates of political parties seeking votes every year and probably do not want to face them so frequently.

"Once the proposal becomes fully functional in 2029-2030, or say at a later date, as it might take 5-10 years to have simultaneous polls, voters won't have to head to polling stations every year for one poll or another. This will also lead to economic growth as the GDP growth of the country will rise by 1.5 per cent from 7.23 per cent at present," he said.

"Think about that if 1.5 points are added to the existing GDP it won't take long to reach the 10 per cent (GDP) figure. Then our country will be among the top 3-4 economic superpowers in the world," he said. Kovind claimed that



"Think about that if 1.5 points are added to the existing GDP it won't take long to reach the 10 per cent (GDP) figure. Then our country will be among the top 3-4 economic superpowers in the world," he said

the 'one nation one poll' will galvanise the election process.

"If candidates have to ask for votes from people every year, they will have to reply why this development promise has not been implemented. Yearly elections make people averse to going to booths at times," he said. He said the 18,000-page report of the committee is in public domain and will streamline economic governance.

"If you sit in one place, you can see it with the click of a mouse or mobile and there is no need to visit different libraries. A voluminous compilation of different parliamentary committee reports have been put in one place," he said recalling his stint as chairman of the high-powered committee on 'one nation one poll' proposal when he met delegations of different parties and Election Commission officials and others. Turning to the gathering of 'poor, Dalits and backward castes', Kovind said, "They are holding the country. They represent the beautiful mosaic of culture and play a dominant role in projecting the dignity of Bharat by preserving their indigenous culture."

"We need to make them feel as stakeholders in nation-building. We need to have them inside this auditorium to listen to the proceedings and our speeches and not just present their cultural programmes in the open space before the building as the dignitaries enter," he said. When this inclusivity becomes a reality, the nation will truly progress. It is already progressing in that direction with proposals like 'one nation one poll', Kovind said. He called upon the members of tribal, backward-class communities to aim high and never back out from their resolve for better education.

'Too early to make Aadhaar based system mandatory for MGNREGS payments'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A Parliamentary Panel has recommended that the Rural Development Ministry's Aadhaar Based Payment Bridge System (ABPS) for making payments under MGNREGS should not be made compulsory.

In a report tabled in Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the Standing Committee on Rural Development and Panchayati Raj also said alternative mechanism should always operate to ensure that the primary goal of the scheme to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology.

The Committee pulled up the government on low wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and recommended a better inflation linked index for



payment of wages to the workers. The Committee noted that the APBS has been made mandatory since January 1, 2024. "While accepting the gains of APBS, the Committee is of the view that it is too early to make it mandatory as the problems relating to Aadhaar

seeding still have not been resolved leading to exclusion of lakhs of workers," the panel said. "The Committee, therefore, reiterates their earlier recommendation that APBS should not be made mandatory and alternative mechanisms should always operate side by side to ensure

that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology," it said.

The panel also said observing the rate of wages paid under MGNREGS since 2008, it found the amount inadequate



and not in consonance with the rising cost of living.

"Taking up works under MGNREGA is a sort of last resort for many of the poor rural masses who do not have any other option of livelihood or job option to utilise but wages of such nominal nature sometime with delayed payment only discourage them and propel them to migrate and seek work in areas giving better remuneration," the panel said. The Committee said even as MGNREGS is a demand driven scheme where the workers move out in search of better opportunities, the figures are

"The Committee, therefore, reiterates their earlier recommendation that APBS should not be made mandatory and alternative mechanisms should always operate side by side to ensure that the primary goal of MGNREGA to provide wages does not get defeated due to lack of proper implementation of technology," it said

abysmally low and it "definitely points towards low wage rates as one of the major reasons for the workers to opt out of MGNREGA, thereby hampering the percentage of work completed under MGNREGA". It said the panel has time and again urged the Department of Rural Development (DoRD) to increase the wage rates under MGNREGS by linking it to an index commensurate with national inflation, but the wage rates continue to remain stagnant on account.





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A timely assurance

Sri Lanka assures New Delhi that it will not permit anybody to use its territory to threaten India's security

In what must come as music to the ears of the Indian government, the Sri Lankan President has said that his country will not allow anyone to use its territory to threaten India's security. This assurance comes at a time when China is aggressively pursuing 'Mission Indian Ocean' - which targets India. In a joint statement issued, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake made Colombo's position clear during his dialogue with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. This assurance is seen as a critical development in India-Sri Lanka relations, especially given China's use of Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port for docking its naval surveillance and spy ships, including the ballistic missile tracking ship Yuan Wang 5. China's growing footprint in the Indian Ocean has raised red flags for New Delhi. The Hambantota Port, now under a 99-year lease to China following Sri Lanka's inability to service its debt, has become a hub for Chinese naval operations. Over the past two years, Beijing has stationed the Yuan Wang



5, a 25,000-tonne satellite and missile tracking ship, at Hambantota multiple times. This vessel, equipped with advanced tracking and communication systems, has been closely monitoring satellite and missile activities in the region, creating strategic challenges for India. In 2022, Sri Lanka briefly delayed the docking of Yuan Wang 5 following Indian concerns but eventually allowed the vessel to dock under the guise of 'replenishment.' Since then, Chinese surveillance ships have regularly patrolled the Indian Ocean, adding to India's apprehensions about Beijing's strategic intentions in the region. The agreement between India and Sri Lanka ensures that Sri Lankan territory, including its waters,

will not be used in any manner that could harm India's security or regional peace. This is a welcome relief for New Delhi, which views such commitments as crucial for maintaining stability in the Indian Ocean Region. This of course hasn't happened overnight. India's steadfast support for Sri Lanka during its economic crisis in 2022 has further solidified the bond between the two nations. President Dissanayake expressed gratitude for India's timely assistance, which was instrumental in stabilising Sri Lanka's economy during one of its most challenging periods. As far as China is concerned it has been courting Sri Lanka for the sole purpose of encircling India and getting a foothold in Indian Ocean. China's influence in Sri Lanka has grown significantly, particularly after Colombo defaulted on its \$1.7 billion loan for the Hambantota Port project. India has consistently raised concerns about the strategic implications of Chinese investments and activities in Sri Lanka. In this background the assurance of Sri Lankan president signals Sri Lanka's intent to balance its ties with both regional powers while safeguarding regional stability. The agreement also underscores Colombo's recognition of the importance of India's security and regional stability and paves the way for a stronger, more strategic India-Sri Lanka alliance in the years to come.

### PICTALK



Tourists enjoy paragliding, in Manali

# Nepal embraces China's BRI

## Nepal's deepening ties with China through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) have set alarm bells ringing in New Delhi



PARUL CHANDRA

India has cause for extreme worry. In yet another indicator of China's growing sway over Nepal, the two are moving forward to implement Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Himalayan nation. India is not only opposed to this in principle on grounds of sovereignty but also fears it will enable China to increase its already considerable inroads into Nepal.

If 2017 marked Nepal's initial step to coming on board the BRI with an MoU, the year 2024 marks a giant leap for the Himalayan nation in that direction. A framework agreement for cooperation on the BRI was signed during Nepalese PM K P Sharma Oli's visit to China in early December, apart from nine other pacts. With the strategically located Himalayan nation having become a hub for Great Powers contestation, the US too would be uneasy with the latest Beijing-Kathmandu tango. While the US had managed to get Nepal on board its own Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Compact to fund Kathmandu's power and transport infrastructure, the BRI seems far broader. Kathmandu is trying to play down the framework as just a continuation of the 2017 MoU. The framework, however, underlines Kathmandu and Beijing's renewed push for the BRI, an initiative on which New Delhi harbours deep suspicions for what it perceives as China's hegemonic ambitions through debt-trap diplomacy. Sovereignty is another major concern, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), another project under BRI, passing through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

India is certainly worried about PM Oli-led Nepal once again moving into China's sphere of influence. The CPN-UML leader is widely seen as being pro-China, and bilateral ties with India were prickly during his previous stints as the PM. India has yet to host Oli since he took charge as PM in July



this year for the fourth time, with him first heading for Beijing, in a break from the tradition of visiting New Delhi. Also, showing scant regard for New Delhi's sensitivities, the Oli government recently allowed 220 Buddhist monks from China to travel to Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam Buddha even as the Nanhai Buddhism Shenzhen round-table was being held in Kathmandu. Oli delivered the inaugural address at this roundtable. There were also reports the China-appointed Panchen Lama would travel to Lumbini, though it did not eventually happen. The Oli government's encouragement of Beijing's concerted moves to claim Buddhism as a shared heritage will not go down well with New Delhi, which has been making its efforts to build on its shared Buddhist heritage with Nepal. Kathmandu's thrust on greater economic cooperation with Beijing - the BRI is part of this endeavour - would also whittle down India's influence over Nepal. The BRI framework agreement, incidentally, also envisages the opening of branches of Chinese banks and financial institutions in



WITH THE STRATEGICALLY LOCATED HIMALAYAN NATION HAVING BECOME A HUB FOR GREAT POWERS CONTESTATION, THE US TOO WOULD BE UNEASY WITH THE LATEST BEIJING-KATHMANDU TANGO

Nepal. India has traditionally had deep economic linkages with Nepal, nurtured in no small measure due to reasons of geography - the two neighbours share a long and porous 1,751-km-long border.

This, along with the landlocked nature of Nepal, has helped India become its largest trading partner. During the 2022-23 fiscal, bilateral trade was pegged at \$8.85 billion. This included \$8 billion of exports from India to Nepal, with \$840 million of exports in the reverse direction. As per the Nepal Rastra Bank, India's share in Nepal's trade accounted for 64.1% in 2022-23. PM Oli sees cooperation on BRI as a means to forge closer economic ties with China, with the framework agreement resolving to deepen the economic partnership by "injecting new momentum to trade, infrastructure and connectivity cooperation".

Not a single project under the BRI rubric has been executed in Nepal since the 2017 MoU. Nepal would be hoping that the 10 initial projects, including those meant to boost regional connectivity, will now see the light of day. India has its work cut out and should

ensure it does not come across as overbearing. India's approach in the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura border dispute, where New Delhi ignored Kathmandu's request for foreign secretary-level talks, is a case in point.

It led Oli, in his earlier stint as the PM, to cock a snook at New Delhi by changing his country's map showing the disputed territories as part of Nepal. Neither did New Delhi show respect due to a close neighbour when it decided to give a quiet burial to the joint 2018 Eminent Persons Group (EPG) report, which suggested that the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship be replaced with a new one?

Nepal has also been unhappy with India's refusal to give overflight rights for aircraft using the Chinese-built Gautam Buddha International Airport in Lumbini.

India would do well to remember that its domineering approach only serves to alienate a close neighbour further and push it into China's ever-willing embrace. India should not lose sight of its strategic imperatives.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### INDIA STRUGGLES IN BRISBANE TEST

Madam — While Travis Head hits a century again in the Brisbane test, it was a surprising and grave omission of the crafty and successful off-spinner Washington Sundar for the third test at Gabba. While Sundar has been among the wickets in recent tests and also did well with the bat, the head coach and the out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma couldn't realise the need for a quality off-spinner is a blunder at the moment. The need for the quality off-spinner is mandatory when the Aussies have two solid left-handers, Travis Head and Alex Carey. When Head is the consistent match winner for the Aussies, leaving Washington Sundar out will prove costly for India in this test.

Whenever there were solid left-hand batters, the formulae of the Indian team in the past from the era of Skipper Ajit Wadekar used to play Erapalli Prasanna and S Venkatraghavan proved to be of great success. After Rohit won the toss and put the Aussies to bat first, the Aussies had scored 445, and now the pressure will be on the Indian batters, who may succumb to pressure again, as proved by losing the 4 top order for a paltry 51. After having won the first test under the standby skipper Jasprit Bumrah, Rohit Sharma seems to have not yet learnt the lesson that the composition of the right combinations is important to be in the match. Missing a clever off-spinner can never be an easy task for the team to come back once they lose the grip in the first innings, which is what's happening at present in Brisbane. Bumrah alone can't take the match away from the opponents; this needs to be realised by head coach Gautam Gambhir. By dropping down in the order, Skipper Rohit is unbeaten on zero, and Rahul, with 33 against his name, has been the only consolation for the fans while rain stopped play. Rain God can be the only saviour as it looks for the team to have a sigh of relief. Rohit and Kohli must take a voluntary exit rather than bring the morale down of the team at this juncture.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

### Rural education needs reform



For a majority of Indian school children, especially from rural pockets, a feeling of uneasiness sets in when they hear something in English. They find it difficult to listen to and understand the English language. In a country like India, classes of mixed-ability

groups are a feature of every small village. While the teaching-learning process is done in the local language in rural villages, most of the competitive examinations are held in the English language. The rural atmosphere doesn't provide these students the opportunity to speak and learn English.

In fact, in many northern villages, English becomes the third language, with the local language and Hindi as the first and second languages, respectively. The policymakers have to bridge the urban-rural divide when it comes to English teaching. An English teacher, teaching in rural schools, has to come up with innovative strategies in the classrooms. Skilled and committed teachers need to be appointed at the primary level, and they should be upgraded and trained to meet the problems faced by the learners.

R Sivakumar | Gandhi Nagar

### HEALTHCARE REFORMS FOR PUBLIC

Madam — If the AAP government has done one good thing for society by making Mohalla clinics, the BJP has done another by making Jan Aushadi chemist shops. One can now get a free consultation from the AAP clinic and get medicines at nearly one-fifth the rate from a Jan Aushadi shop, thereby catering to the health aspect of a common man. The prominent good work visible on the ground needs to be applauded for both. The belief that a drug in a normal chemist shop is better than the generic drug being sold by a Jan Aushadi shop (popularly known as 'Modi ki Dukaan' in Patiala) is a myth that can be best removed by the doctors to their patients depending on the degree of moral courage they have to refuse obligations of pharmaceutical companies and give priority to generic rather than tradenamed medicines to their patients. The fleeing private pharmacies need to be brought down to their knees in the interest of the public for their overinflated rates of medicines.

RS Narula | Patiala

### PURCHASING POWER DECLINES

Madam — For the success of any economy, a vibrant market with sound and sustained demands is imperative, as production and market cannot flourish in a dry market. To vibrate the market, people's purchasing power should be increased by ensuring employment and a viable wage. The Indian economy is driven with an objective of enriching the rich, leaving the 81 crore poor in a lurch to manage sustaining life with 5 kgs of free rice per month. Even the small employed section is left without a reasonable increase in wage and faces the untamed inflation. The changes being pushed through in the name of labour reforms are going to pull down demands and create telling effects on the already volatile economy. Such a programme inevitably leads to dwindling demands. Course correction is inevitable to ensure bridging the gap between the poor and the affluent.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Why reading and writing matter more in the age of AI



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

As AI grows increasingly sophisticated, our commitment to these skills will determine whether we remain active participants in innovation—or passive consumers

In an era increasingly defined by technological innovation, reading and writing—cornerstones of human intellect—are facing a profound transformation. While artificial intelligence (AI) bots like OpenAI's ChatGPT and Google Bard redefine the boundaries of information generation, the necessity of cultivating human literacy has never been more crucial. The transition from Neanderthals to modern humans (Homo sapiens) involved significant cognitive and cultural advancements, but Neanderthals themselves did not read or write. Reading and writing developed after modern humans became the dominant hominin species. These are not merely communication tools but exercises that keep our cognitive faculties sharp and resilient. When we read, our brains decode symbols, conjuring vivid images, emotions, and concepts. This intricate process activates the left temporal cortex, which is responsible for language processing, and strengthens neural connectivity. Studies



underscore that reading enhances memory, concentration, and analytical thinking. Engaging with diverse genres deepens empathy and broadens perspectives, fostering a nuanced understanding of the world. Writing, on the other hand, is an intellectual partner to reading. Crafting words—whether in a journal, essay, or story—requires us to organise thoughts, synthesise ideas, and express them clearly. This process activates the prefrontal cortex, the brain's hub for decision-making and problem-solving. Writing is more than an intellectual task; it is therapeutic. Research shows that expressive writing can alleviate stress, enhance mood,

and even bolster the immune system. The tactile act of writing also strengthens memory, embedding information deeply within our minds. Reading and writing foster neuroplasticity, enabling the brain to adapt and form new connections. They are antidotes to cognitive decline and shields against neurodegenerative diseases like Alzheimer's. Regular engagement with these skills cultivates intellectual independence, creativity, and emotional depth—uniquely human attributes. Yet, as AI bots revolutionise the way we consume and produce information, there is an alarming decline in human literacy. Tools like Book AI, which transforms any book into a conversational chatbot, exemplify AI's capacity to digest and reproduce complex information effortlessly. AI lacks the intrinsic human qualities of creativity, empathy, and ethical judgment. As AI literacy surges, the stagnation of human literacy risks creating a dangerous imbalance. Over-reliance on AI can diminish critical think-

ing and communication skills, weakening the very attributes that distinguish humans from machines. While the fear of displacement is understandable, the answer lies in shifting our perspective. AI is not an adversary but a powerful partner that can amplify human capabilities and drive innovation. Individuals can leverage their unique strengths to complement AI capabilities by prioritising the development of reading and writing skills. In an environment controlled by artificial intelligence, these abilities are necessary to navigate complicated concepts, understandably articulate them, and affirm human importance. The development of artificial intelligence highlights the significance of human expertise rather than diminishing it. By committing to studying throughout our lives, we can ensure that technology will not replace our humanity but rather improve it. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)





## FIRST COLUMN REDISCOVER HAPPINESS

Happiness is a state of mind that transcends life's adversities



RAVI VALLURI

A couple first met in an estimable business school in India where they were conferred reputable degrees in management. The couple soon migrated to the land of El Dorado in search of greener pastures, seeking professional and economic security. They were a happy couple as the angels showered gargantuan benediction. Soon, a new dimension to their lives arrived in the form of angelic twins. When the twins turned six months old, it was time to visit the hometown of their parents. They were received by sentimental and misty-eyed grandparents.

The sojourn concluded the mother and twins were afloat on a flight back to their home. However, fate had other plans and a double whammy struck the family. The father never reached the airport as he was killed in a car crash on the way to the airport. The disconsolate woman became a mental wreck, her moments of happiness fastened only in her memory bank and the picture album. The alluring woman was transfigured into stone. A cousin empathised with her distraught mental state and robustly suggested that she undertake the Happiness Course of the Art of Living. After considerable blandishment and extensive persuasion, she enrolled for the course and deposited all her emotions and feelings while undergoing the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya. Life need not be tragic if only we realise that happiness is a state of mind that can



be achieved independent of material success.

As per ancient Japanese mythology, the light from Tsukuyomi, the Shinto God of the moon could induce illusions and delusions. Hecate, the Greek Goddess of the dark moon bestowed visions, but also caused humans to be afflicted with insanity. The human body is made up of seventy per cent of water elements. Full moon water recharges the body, mind and spirit and bestows harmony on our thought processes. Therefore, practising the Full Moon Meditation has a consequential and noteworthy influence on the mind, whereby one is suffused with efficacious thoughts and purges nugatory ones. It was a cathartic experience for the young single mother to emerge from her traumatic experience by unflinchingly practising this technique. It is an established fact that the Sakyan prince, Siddhartha, upon attaining enlightenment on the full moon day metamorphosed into the Compassionate One, Gautama Buddha and made a prescient statement, "Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared." How does one define an efficacious emotion called happiness? Happiness is a state of well-being, jollity, blitheness and primarily to be contented in life. The amphitheatre of the mind is a veritable nuclear reactor, where waves of thoughts and emotions arise and subside. These in turn determine our happiness quotient and consequentially the quality of our lives.

There once lived a farmer, who grew apples. He perpetually grumbled that there was not adequate produce to sustain the family. Providentially, there was a spurt in production and apples grew in plenitude. Still dissatisfied, the farmer cavilled that he was now laden with gruelling work, apples were rotting and prices now plunged! Sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras has postulated certain cardinal principles to live harmoniously, encompassed in happiness. These are non-violence, truthfulness, no regrets, not accepting invectives or salutations hurled by people, physical cleanliness of the body, inner contentment, forbearance or penance, self-study or examination of the mind and development and finally love and surrender to the supreme cosmic force.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

# Pesticides are poisoning the Punjab soil



AS MITTAL

Punjab's agriculture is facing a harrowing reality—its lifeblood, the soil, is being contaminated by toxic pesticide residues at alarmingly high levels



It's time to face the disturbing truth about Punjab's agriculture—and it's a nightmare. In districts like Bathinda, Mansa, and Ludhiana, up to 60 per cent of farm soil samples are infested with toxic pesticide residues—including the deadly chemicals endosulfan and carbofuran—at levels far beyond what's even remotely safe. This isn't just a warning; it's a full-blown crisis, a ticking time bomb, the result of irresponsible, reckless pesticide and fertiliser abuse running rampant in our fields.

On World Soil Day—December 5th—we're forced to confront the cold reality of a rapidly disintegrating agriculture system, while the world's been talking about "Caring for Soils: Measure, Monitor, and Manage"! The consequences of this madness are devastating. Our once fertile land is transforming into a barren wasteland, and that's only the beginning. These toxic chemicals aren't just staying in the soil. They're seeping into our food chain—contaminating every bite we take and slowly poisoning us all. But it doesn't stop there. These toxic residues are embedding themselves into our very DNA, passing down a legacy of genetic mutations to our children and grandchildren.

We are breeding a future full of compromised health and genetic decay. This is a catastrophe that will echo across generations. We're not just destroying our present health; we're condemning our children to inherit the consequences of our stupidity and greed. The survival of future generations is at risk, and the clock is ticking—every moment of inaction is a moment closer to irreversible genetic damage. It's time to wake up, stop burying our heads in the sand, and confront this crisis head-on before it's too late for the survival of future generations.

**The Pesticide Management Bill, 2020:** India's regulatory framework for pesticides, established in 1968, is woefully outdated and incapable of addressing the modern-day challenges posed by the rampant overuse of agrochemicals. Although efforts to amend this framework have been ongoing since 2008, significant gaps remain in safeguarding farmers, consumers, and the environment. The legislation—still governed by the Insecticides Act of 1968 and the Insecticides Rules of 1971—requires comprehensive reforms to address the multifaceted risks associated with pesticide overuse. The Pesticide



INDIA'S REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR PESTICIDES, ESTABLISHED IN 1968, IS WOEFULLY OUTDATED AND INCAPABLE OF ADDRESSING THE MODERN-DAY CHALLENGES POSED BY THE RAMPANT OVERUSE OF AGROCHEMICALS

Management Bill (PMB) 2020 was introduced to replace outdated legislation, but critical concerns must be addressed. While the bill outlines pesticide registration and licensing procedures, it must protect farmers more adequately from hazardous exposure. Statistics from Pesticide Action Network (PAN) International paint a grim picture: approximately 11,000 deaths globally are attributed to accidental pesticide poisoning annually, with India accounting for a staggering 6,600 fatalities. These numbers highlight critical deficiencies in pesticide usage protocols and safety measures.

Farmers and rural communities often bear the brunt of chemical exposures, especially in agriculturally intensive regions. For instance, Punjab, which heavily depends on rice and wheat cultivation, reports alarming pesticide consumption rates. With an average usage of 77 kg/hectare, significantly above the national average of 62 kg/hectare, Punjab ranks third in India after UP and Maharashtra for pesticide consumption. A study by the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI) revealed that 6.74 million hectares of land in India are affected by salinity, a condition exacerbated by the overuse of agrochemicals. Persistent pesticide application has been found to reduce microbial biomass by 30-50 per cent, compromising soil fertility and diminishing the land's ability to provide essential nutrients to crops.

A Call for Robust Regulation Pesticides—insecticides, fungicides, or herbicides—play a vital role in modern agriculture. However, their toxic nature necessitates stringent oversight throughout their lifecycle, from production to disposal. The current regulatory framework lacks provisions for periodic review of registered pesticides based on emerging toxicological data. This oversight exposes the public to significant health risks, particularly in a country where improper handling of pesticides is widespread.

**Training and Awareness:** A Neglected Imperative Over the past three decades, the indiscriminate use of pesticides has surged, often driven by aggressive marketing strategies that portray chemical inputs as indispensable for high crop yields.

The limited scale of training initiatives highlights the need for more current efforts. Between 1994-95 and 2021-22, the Plant Protection Department of Agriculture and Farming Welfare Ministry trained only 585,000 farmers in Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a dismal figure in a nation with over 150 million farmers. According to the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, governments and industry stakeholders must provide comprehensive training and information to farmers and retailers. Yet, the implementation of these guidelines still needs to be more robust. Retailers often serve as farmers' sole point of contact, and in many cases, they disseminate misleading or incomplete information. Data Collection: Bridging Critical Gaps The absence of robust data collection mechanisms further undermines India's regulatory ecosystem.

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) documents pesticide poisoning deaths only if they are registered as medico-legal cases, excluding countless instances of non-institutional exposure and chronic health effects. This data void impedes effective policymaking and perpetuates a lack of accountability among stakeholders. **Addressing Weak Grievance Mechanisms:** One of the most glaring deficiencies in India's pesticide regulation is the lack of accessible grievance redressal systems. Farmers and agricultural workers exposed to pesticides face prohibitive costs and lengthy procedures when seeking justice. Meanwhile, state governments can impose only temporary bans on hazardous pesticides, typically lasting 60 days, exposing vulnerable communities to ongoing risks.

**Personal Protective Equipment:** A

Forgotten Necessity The Pesticide Management Bill 2020 neglects the safety of small-scale farmers, who often lack access to affordable, climate-appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Farm workers face heightened health risks without mandatory provisions requiring them to supply adequate protective gear, especially in hot and humid agricultural regions. Labelling and Consumer Protection India's pesticide labelling standards fall short of both domestic and international norms. Safety information is frequently crammed into illegible leaflets, leaving farmers ill-informed about risks and proper usage.

Although the Consumer Protection Act theoretically covers farmers, legal recourse against manufacturers for misleading labels or substandard products is rarely pursued. The Way Forward India can no longer afford to ignore the human and environmental toll of unsafe pesticide practices.

Establishing a robust, farmer-centric legal framework aligned with international standards is the only way forward to ensure safe and sustainable agriculture. A gradual shift towards agro-ecological farming methods that emphasise non-chemical pest management is imperative. The government must phase out hazardous pesticides and promote environmentally friendly alternatives to safeguard farmers' health and ensure consumer food safety. Addressing the gaps in the Pesticide Management Bill 2020 and adopting proactive measures, such as mandatory training and the provision of accurate information on pesticide usage and risks, are critical steps towards securing safe and healthier future generations.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

# India@2024: A resilient economy on the fast track to growth

But challenges such as persistent inflation, a slowdown in the banking sector and environmental concerns continue to pose hurdles

India has firmly established itself as the fastest-growing economy among the G20 nations, with a projected GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent-7 per cent for the fiscal year 2024-25. This remarkable trajectory underscores the nation's economic resilience and immense potential despite global challenges. The year 2024 presents a vivid picture of India's economic landscape, marked by notable achievements and emerging challenges.



KAJLEEN KAUR

One of the most significant indicators of progress is the substantial improvement in employment. The unemployment rate has decreased from 6 per cent in 2017 to an impressive 3.2 per cent in 2024, reflecting robust job creation across sectors. Foreign

direct investment (FDI) has also shown a dramatic surge, rising 45 per cent year-on-year to USD 29.79 billion in the first half of 2024-25, with key inflows in services, telecom, and pharmaceuticals. Complementing this momentum, India's foreign exchange reserves swelled to \$704.89 bil-

lion, driven by an \$87.6 billion increase this year alone. This growth includes a \$10.468 billion boost in foreign currency assets and a \$2 billion rise in gold reserves, which now stand at \$65.7 billion. India's fintech sector continues to shine on the global stage, ranking as the third-largest fintech economy after the USA and the UK. The country also boasts the fourth-largest stock market in the world, with a market capitalisation of \$4.33 trillion, surpassing Hong Kong. A significant milestone in digital payments was achieved with the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which saw transaction values soar to an astounding Rs 200 trillion in 2024, compared to Rs 139 trillion in the previous year. India even showcased its

UPI prowess on a global stage, introducing the system at the Eiffel Tower in Paris as part of a digital payments agreement with France. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue collection also reached unprecedented levels, hitting Rs 21.10 lakh crore—a substantial 12.4 per cent increase from the previous year. This growth was driven by a robust 13.4 per cent rise in domestic transactions and an 8.3 per cent increase in imports, showcasing the strength of India's tax infrastructure. Amid these promising figures, certain challenges continue to loom. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), remains persistently high, exceeding 5 per cent. The banking sector has



witnessed a slowdown, with credit growth declining to 11 per cent in November 2024 from 20.6 per cent the previous year. Deposit growth also moderated, with banks adding Rs 13.8 lakh crore in deposits between April and November, compared to Rs 16.1 lakh crore during the same period

last year. In response, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reduced the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 50 basis points to 4 per cent in December to improve liquidity and stimulate credit growth. Qualitative indicators present a mixed picture. India climbed 14 ranks on the UNDP

Gender Inequality Index, highlighting significant strides in bridging the gender gap. It also improved its position on the Global Innovation Index, rising from 40th to 39th among 133 global economies, driven by entrepreneurial activity, vibrant startups, and successful public-private partnerships. The Human Development Report 2023-24 placed India at 134th among 193 countries, reflecting gains in life expectancy, education, and Gross National Income. However, no progress was seen in the Happiness Index, where India remains at 126th, largely due to dissatisfaction among older citizens, perceived discrimination, and poor health metrics. Moreover, India continues to struggle in environmental performance,

ranking 176th out of 180 countries. Challenges such as air quality, biodiversity loss, and greenhouse gas emissions demand urgent attention. As India navigates these complexities, it is also undergoing key transitions. The US economy has entered a new phase, and India sees a shift in RBI leadership, with Sanjay Malhotra taking over as the 26th Governor after Shaktikanta Das's tenure. While the final assessment of FY2024-25 remains pending, India's growth story offers optimism for a brighter future and a strong foundation for the vision of "Viksit Bharat@2047". (The writer is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi. Views expressed are personal)



IN BRIEF



**ITC Hotels demerger to be effective from January 1**

ITC on Tuesday said all conditions for the demerger of its hotel business are "fulfilled" and the scheme would be effective from January 1, 2025. The multi-conglomerate has already received regulatory approvals, including from the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on October 4, sanctioning the scheme between ITC and ITC Hotels. "ITC Ltd and ITC Hotels Ltd have mutually acknowledged that all the conditions specified in Clause 28 of the Scheme have been fulfilled and satisfied, including filing of the aforesaid order with the Registrar of Companies, West Bengal, and accordingly, the appointed date and the effective date of the scheme shall be the first day of the following month i.e., January 1, 2025," it said. The shareholders of ITC had already approved the demerger of ITC Hotels into a separate entity. This will create a new wholly-owned subsidiary, ITC Hotels Ltd, to handle its hotels and hospitality business.



**Skoda Auto India hikes vehicle prices**

Skoda Auto India on Tuesday announced a price hike of up to 3 per cent across its range of cars, effective January 1. This adjustment is necessitated by rising input and operational costs, ensuring the company continues to deliver premium vehicles and services to its customers, Skoda Auto India said in a statement. The company is a subsidiary of European carmaker Skoda Auto. The price increase will apply to the company's entire portfolio, including the Kushaq, Slavia, Superb, and Kodiaq. "The recently launched Kylaq will remain unaffected by this adjustment until it reaches the milestone of 33,333 bookings, which are fast-filling," the company said.



**Bihar to host 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of investor meet**

Bihar Business Connect 2024 - the second edition of the global investor summit that looks at boosting industrial and entrepreneurial growth in the state, will be held on December 19-20, it was announced Tuesday. The prestigious event, curated by the state's Department of Industries, seeks to showcase Bihar as a vibrant investment destination. "The inaugural edition in 2023 witnessed participation from over 600 entrepreneurs from India and abroad. Bihar Business Connect 2023 was a landmark initiative. During the two-day summit held last year, a total of 278 investment proposals amounting to Rs 50,530 crore were signed as MOUs, out of which 244 projects worth Rs 38,000 crore have already been implemented on the ground," an official statement said. This investment has significantly accelerated industrial development in the state and created numerous employment opportunities. "Considering the success of last year's Bihar Business Connect, the Department of Industries, Government of Bihar, is once again organising this event," it said.

**Investors' wealth down Rs 4.92 lakh cr as mkts slump**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 4.92 lakh crore on Tuesday amid a sharp sell-off in the equity market where the Sensex tanked 1,064 points.

Falling for the second day in a row, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,064.12 points or 1.30 per cent to settle at 80,684.45. During the day, it slumped 1,136.37 points or 1.39 per cent to 80,612.20.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 4,92,644.06 crore to Rs 4,55,13,913.24 crore (USD 5.36 trillion).

The Indian stock markets witnessed a sharp decline on Tuesday, with the benchmark BSE Sensex sinking 1,064 points or 1.30 per cent to 80,684.45.

Investor sentiment remained cautious ahead of the US Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting, scheduled for Wednesday. While markets have priced in a 25 basis points rate cut, much of

the focus is on Fed Chair Jerome Powell's commentary regarding future rate moves," Vikram Kasat, Head - Advisory, PL Capital - Prabhudas Lilladher, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, all firms ended in the red. Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Asian Paints, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank were the biggest laggards from the Sensex pack.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

European markets were mostly trading in negative territory. Wall Street ended mostly higher on Monday.

"Widespread pessimism prevails across all sectors ahead of key policy decisions from the US Fed, BoJ (Bank of Japan), and BoE (Bank of England). While the market has already factored in a 25 bps cut from the US Fed, it remains vigilant for any hawkish signals.

**Fight against economic offenders will continue: FM**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the Enforcement Directorate has restored properties worth Rs 22,280 crore to the victims or rightful claimants and asserted that the fight against economic offenders will continue unabated.

Replying to a debate on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants in the Lok Sabha, she said Rs 14,131.6 crore worth properties belonging to fugitive Vijay Malya have been restored to public sector banks.

As regards the Nirav Modi case, properties to the tune of Rs 1,052.58 crore have been restored to PSBs and private banks.

In the Mehul Choksi case, properties worth Rs 2,565.90 crore have been attached and will be auctioned.

In the National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL) case, Rs 17.47 crore worth properties were restored to the gen-



uine investors who were defrauded.

"On the PMLA, ED has successfully restored properties valued at least Rs 22,280 crore from major cases... We have not left anyone, even if they fled the country, we've gone after them. ED has collected this money and given back to the banks.

"...So it is important to recognize that we have not left anybody (committing) economic offences. We are after them. We will be making sure that money, which has got to go back to banks, will go

back," Sitharaman said.

With regard to foreign black money, the minister said the Black Money Act of 2015 is actually having a deterrent effect on a lot of taxpayers and they come forward on their own to disclose their foreign assets.

She said the number of taxpayers disclosing foreign assets has gone up to 2 lakh in 2024-25, from 60,467 in 2021-22.

Under the Act, as of June 2024, demand of more than Rs 17,520 crore has been raised in 697 cases. Total 163 prosecutions have been launched

**'Economy to improve in coming quarters'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said the lower-than-expected GDP growth of 5.4 per cent in the second quarter was a "temporary blip" and the economy will see healthy growth in the coming quarters.

Replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha on the first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants, she said India has seen "steady and sustained" growth and its GDP growth rate has averaged 8.3 per cent in the last three years. India continues to be the fastest-growing major economy in the world, Sitharaman added.

The second quarter growth is only a "temporary blip" and the economy will see healthy growth in the coming quarters, Sitharaman said.

**'Use Made in India machinery to reduce infra project cost'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday urged the infrastructure industry stakeholders to adopt 'Made in India' machinery that would help reduce project cost.

The Minister for Road, Transport and Highways made the remarks at Assocham's 'Annual Infrastructure Conference: CEOs Roundtable Discussion and Achiever Awards' event in the national capital.

There are many under-construction tunnel projects in India.

"We should have...good technology. But at the same time, we have to reduce the cost.

And for that reason, my request to all of you is that how it is possible for us, to have Made in India machinery, which is our dream and which is the mission for all of us," Gadkari said.

The minister also said a project cost should be reduced without compromising quality, as bridge and tunnel projects are very crucial.

Gadkari further said 55 per cent work on the Zojila tunnel project is complete.

**Jindal Saw to acquire 31.20 pc stake in ReNew Green Energy**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Jindal Saw on Tuesday said it has inked a pact to acquire 31.20 per cent equity in ReNew Green Energy.

However, the company did not divulge the financial details of this equity acquisition. In a filing, Jindal Saw said, "It has entered into a share purchase agreement with ReNew Green Energy Solutions Private Limited (RGES) to acquire shareholding up to 31.20 per cent equity share capital in ReNew Green MHH One Private

Limited (RGMHH), which resulted RGMHH as an associate of the company".

The acquisition is with an objective to procure electricity at a concessional rate, the company said.

Jindal Saw further said it aims to complete the acquisition by May 31, 2025, or any other date as may be mutually decided between the parties.

It is a manufacturer and supplier of steel pipe products, fittings and accessories with manufacturing facilities in India, the US, Europe and the UAE.

**CGTMSE achieves milestone of approving 1 crore guarantee to MSMEs**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) on Tuesday said it has achieved a milestone of approving 1 crore guarantees to MSE beneficiaries.

CGTMSE was set up by the central government and SIDBI in August 2000 to provide credit guarantees to micro and small enterprises, enabling them to access credit without the need for collateral and third-party guarantees.

To mark the occasion, an event was organised, and attended by CGTMSE chairman Manoj Mittal and CEO Manish Sinha and representatives of various banks, including State Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Union Bank, and MSMEs.

During the occasion, three Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) borrowers and three prominent Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) were felicitated which have played a significant role in this achievement, CGTMSE said in a statement.

Speaking at the event, Mittal emphasised the transformative impact of credit guarantees on the MSE ecosystem, enabling busi-



CGTMSE was set up by the central government and SIDBI in August 2000 to provide credit guarantees to micro and small enterprises, enabling them to access credit without the need for collateral and third-party guarantees

nesses to access funding without collateral, third-party guarantee and achieve sustainable growth. Credit guarantees worth Rs 4 lakh crore were extended in the last two years via the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for

Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).

The government aims to ramp up credit guarantees extended to MSMEs through the CGTMSE scheme by another Rs 5 lakh crore in the next two years.

**'Value of Indian Rupee market-driven with no target'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The value of the Indian Rupee (INR) is market-determined, with no target or specific level or band, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

"Various domestic and global factors influence the exchange rate of INR, such as the movement of the Dollar Index, trend in capital flows, level of interest rates, movement in crude prices, current account deficit etc," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha.

The RBI monitors key developments across the globe which may have an impact on USD-INR exchange rate, he said.

Among others, monetary



policy actions of major central banks, major economic data releases across the globe and their impact, OPEC+ meeting decisions, tracking, and analysing geopolitical events, daily movements in G-10 and EME currencies etc, are key in determining the exchange rate, he said.

designing their products which include regulatory prescriptions, actuarial analysis and accordingly decide on rate of premium, rate of bonus and commission payable within prescribed limits.

Insurance companies being regulated commercial entities have flexibility to decide on all these matters, in alignment with regulatory guidelines issued by IRDAI and their board-approved policy on commission structure, he said.

Insurance sector regulator, IRDAI has issued Expenses of Management Regulations, 2024 dated January 22, 2024 and Master Circular dated May 15, 2024 stipulating specified limits for commission payable on life insurance products.

Replying to another question, Chaudhary said insurance companies including LIC follow various principles in

**India to become world's renewable energy capital: Joshi**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Renewable energy capacity addition in the country almost doubled to 15 GW during the April-November period of this fiscal year, compared to a year ago, and the country is all set to become the renewable energy capital of the world, Union New & Renewable Energy

Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Tuesday. Addressing at CII International Energy Conference & Exhibition 2024 here, Joshi said, "in fact, over the past decade,

under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has charted an extraordinary path in the renewable energy sector. Today, India is one of the world's most promising nations in the clean energy space."

The minister noted that India is not only witnessing an energy revolution but is also becoming the renewable energy capital of the world.

Between April-November of the current financial year, India added almost 15 GW of renewable energy capacity, nearly double the 7.54 GW added during the same period last

year, he said. At present, India's total installed capacity of the non-fossil fuel sector has touched 214 GW, over 14 per cent increase compared to the same month last year.

The government is transforming the entire energy sector as this transformation is driven by a strong belief that a

Viksit Bharat by 2047, is closely linked to sustainable and green growth, he said, adding that the roadmap for this transition is ambitious but achievable.

India is firmly committed to achieving the goal of 500 GW of non-fossil fuel-based generation capacity by 2030, he said.

He informed that in just last month alone, 2.3 GW of new capacity was added, which means a 4-fold increase from the 566.06 MW added in November 2023. "So yes, this transformation is not just a dream, it is happening today," he stressed.

In the last three financial years alone, he informed that India has attracted USD 6.1 billion in FDI into the renewable energy sector.

**Surging gold imports threaten India's trade balance: GTRI**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's gold imports have surged alarmingly, posing a potential threat to its trade balance and economic stability, and the government should take action to address this issue, think tank GTRI said on Tuesday.

The country's gold imports in November reached a record high of USD 14.86 billion, registering a four-fold increase, mainly on account of festival and wedding demands, according to commerce ministry data. Gold imports stood at USD 3.44 billion in November 2023.

The GTRI said that the imports are driven by multiple factors, including growing investment demand, tariff reductions, and loopholes in trade agreements.

This surge has raised significant economic concerns, distorting the trade balance, weakening the rupee, and widening the current account deficit, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) added.

Gold imports in November accounted for 21.2 per cent of India's total merchandise imports of USD 70 billion. For the first time, gold surpassed crude petroleum as the



country's largest single import item.

"This sharp increase pushed India's monthly trade deficit to its highest level, exerting pressure on the rupee, which has

depreciated against the US dollar.

A weaker rupee raises import costs further, worsening the current account deficit," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava

**Gold prices bounce back**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices bounced back on Tuesday, rising Rs 950 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams in the national capital, as jewellers made fresh buying at prevailing levels to meet the wedding season demand, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Besides, the US Federal Reserve, which starts its two-day monetary policy meeting on Tuesday, is expected to announce its interest rate decision, which could have an impact on the overall gold performance next year.

He said that most gold enters India as bars and rods with 99.99 per cent purity, but traders are also using other tariff-free or concessional cate-

gories to bypass import duties.

The "surging gold imports threaten India's trade balance and economic stability, and urgent action is needed" to address this, he said.



## Women, equality & conversations in Indian cinema

In an industry where narratives are often stitched together from tradition, power dynamics and an unconscious tilt toward gendered hierarchies, it takes courage to push back. The fourth edition of O Womaniya! 2024 brought together voices—actors, directors, producers and writers—who not only questioned these norms but provided an evocative roadmap for change. From Ananya Panday and Parvathy Thiruvothu to Ishita Moitra, Richa Chadha, Nikhil Advani and Shakun Batra, the conversations revealed a shared resolve: to create not just stories of women, but spaces that truly belong to them.

Ananya Panday recalls an extraordinary moment while filming *Gehraiyaan*, a story that hinged on intimacy, relationships and vulnerability. "At the get-go, Shakun (Batra) said, 'I am willing to sit here with you and Deepika to understand what does a girl need on set and I will make sure it is the most comfortable environment for you.'" It was a rare and refreshing stance—one that dismantled the entrenched resistance to accommodating women on sets. "We can't start replacing people on jobs but it's about just having a conversation. To ask a woman what it is that she wants, instead of

claiming 'we can't have a girl on sets because it will be too much work,'" Panday explains. Parvathy Thiruvothu further speaks to the arduous path women must tread for accountability. Reflecting on the Hema Committee Report, which investigated workplace abuse within the Malayalam film industry, she asserts, "We need a team now to find the solutions to all the problems that have been highlighted."

Parvathy's frustration is palpable when she notes the film industry's transactional mindset, where employment is often viewed as a chance, not a right. "There is no dignity of work or humanising of genders. That education needs to happen through constant conversation." For years, Parvathy and her peers—through collectives like the Women in Cinema Collective—have been labelled "troublemakers" and "drama queens," battling patriarchal gatekeeping in an industry slow to evolve. Yet she remains optimistic: "The media is now recognising that what we are saying is actually right and accountability is slowly creeping in."

As a writer, Ishita Moitra plays with nuance. Her lens doesn't just scrutinise the protagonist; it envelops the entire frame. "What I want to do is



relook at not just the roles of the protagonists but also all other characters. How meaty are the roles for women, especially those over the age of 40?" But Moitra also disrupts a narrow definition of gender equality. "For me, it isn't just about having a women's writer-room. The gaze is more important. Eventually, we are people and it has to be an equal world." Her vision? An action film, a war drama—genres synonymous with masculine bravado—created with a different gaze. "I don't just want to work on women-centric films. I want to create films that might be completely male-oriented but approach them differently. That's the dream."

For Richa Chadha, inclusion is hands-on. In her debut production *Girls Will Be Girls*, teenage themes and female vulnerability demanded sensitivity—something an all-male crew couldn't guarantee. "We were trying to get a majority female crew, which was very difficult. There was only one woman gaffer, whose father was also a gaffer." The realisation sparked action. "We decided to train women. We applied for a grant and trained ten girls to be gaffers and light women through a program called Undercurrent,

supported by Light N Light." Chadha's initiative challenges systemic barriers—roles that have always been occupied by men are now open to women, not out of tokenism but competence. Richa's initiative resonated deeply with producer-director Nikhil Advani, who called for a systemic overhaul. "Why is it that there are not enough light women, carpenters, or spot didis? Women are called to clean and cook, but not assigned the work of a spot person." His solution? Mandatory vocational training for women across production crews. "This is something we as producers can enforce immediately."

Director Shakun Batra's anecdote exposes a quieter but equally pervasive bias—one where stories are weighed down by fragile masculinity. "I was told recently that the title of my script leaned more towards the woman. I believe a film should be read for its story, not the title. But there are actors who see this as a disadvantage." It's an indictment of the system, where scripts must constantly "pacify the men" as the center of the narrative. Batra's experience shines a light on an unspoken rule: a woman's voice, even in fiction, must not threaten the male ego.

### Wamiqa Gabbi reflects on her powerful action debut with *Baby John*



With its release just around the corner, *Baby John* has fans buzzing with excitement. Directed by Atlee, the film promises a perfect mix of fast-paced action, gripping storytelling, and larger-than-life moments. For Wamiqa Gabbi, who plays a key role in the film, *Baby John* has been a transformative experience. The project not only gave her the chance to work with Atlee but also marked her debut in action-packed roles. Reflecting on her first impression of the film, Wamiqa shared, "When I first heard the script of *Baby John*, my reaction was 'Full Masssss!' I knew it was Atlee sir and this is exactly what he's known for—fun, fast-paced and highly entertaining films. The story had me hooked from the start; you

just can't take your eyes off the screen." While the story captivated her, stepping into action was a whole new challenge. "This was my first time doing action and I honestly didn't know what to expect," she said. Wamiqa prepared for the high-intensity sequences with a couple of days of rehearsals, but the scale of the stunts left her unsure about how it would go. "The team had set aside 7-8 hours for one scene because it was hardcore action. But somehow, we wrapped it up in just 2 hours! It felt magical, like when the stars align and everything just falls into place," she said, her excitement still fresh. For Wamiqa, the experience was more than just filming—it was about growth and discovering a new side of herself. "That moment was overwhelming. I'm so grateful to have been part of something so exhilarating and perfectly executed," she said.

### Sonakshi Sinha's graceful response to Mukesh Khanna's dig at father Shatrughan Sinha

Actress Sonakshi Sinha has always been very vocal with her thoughts and opinions and once again she chose to respond with wisdom and grace towards an unfortunate incident. After the actress was questioned about her upbringing and fingers were pointed at her father Shatrughan Sinha by senior actor Mukesh Khanna about her 'lack of knowledge about Ramayana', Sonakshi chose to give a befitting reply. The actress took to social media and wrote a strong note pointing out that it was a genuine error on a reality show she had appeared years ago. In her note, she even referred to the mythological chapter giving her piece of mind to Mukesh Khanna. Sonakshi wrote on Instagram, "Dear Sir, Mukesh Khanna ji ... I recently read a statement you made saying that it's my father's fault I did not answer a question about the Ramayana correctly on a show I attended many, many years back. Firstly, let me remind you there were two women on the hot seat that day who did not know the answer to the same question, but you choose to keep

taking my name and only my name, for reasons which are quite obvious. Yes, I may have blanked out that day, a human tendency and forgotten who the sanjeevani booti was brought for, but clearly you have also forgotten some of the lessons of forgive and forget taught by Lord Ram himself... if Lord Ram can forgive Manthara, if he can forgive Kaikeyi... if he can even forgive Ravana after the great battle was done, surely you can let go of this extremely small thing in comparison... not that I need your forgiveness. But yes, I definitely need you to forget and stop bringing up the same incident time and again to be back in the news at the expense of me and my family." It concluded by saying, "And lastly, the next time you decide to say anything about the values my father has instilled in me... please remember it's because of those values that I have only said what I said, very respectfully, after you decided to make some distasteful statements about my upbringing. I wish you well, thanks and regards, Sonakshi Sinha!"



### Zayn Marie Khan onboards *Cubicles Season 4*

Only LV's *Cubicles* is returning with its fourth season and is set to introduce an exciting new character that's sure to shake things up! This season will delve deeper into the quirky and complex world of mergers and acquisitions, bringing fresh energy and intriguing twists to the storyline. Joining the talented cast for its upcoming season is Zayn Marie Khan portraying Dhvani Mehra, a bold new addition who brings a dynamic spark to the office environment. In her late 20s, Dhvani is an accomplished professional known for her unwavering dedication and high standards. As a natural leader, she not only inspires her colleagues but also embodies the challenges faced by today's young professionals. Reflecting on her role, Zayn Marie Khan shared, "It



feels like stepping into a family. The characters are so real, and the storylines capture the true essence of today's workplace. I'm thrilled to bring something new to this journey. Each episode explores not just the challenges we face in our careers but also the relationships we develop at work. It's going to be an amazing season for viewers."

Season 4 also features Abhishek Chauhan (Piyush Prajapati), Ayushi Gupta (Sunaina Chauhan), Niketan Sharma (Naveen Shetty), Ketaki Kulkarni (Meha Kelkar) and Nimit Kapoor (Vikram Malhotra). Under the direction of Chaitanya Kumbhakonum and produced by TVF, *Cubicles 4* promises to explore the complexities of leadership, career aspirations and the delightful chaos of corporate life.

### Infrastructure issues force Diljit Dosanjh to say 'no more concerts' in India



Punjabi artist Diljit Dosanjh declared at his Chandigarh concert that he will stop performing in India until the live show infrastructure in the country is enhanced. The announcement, circulated extensively via viral videos, arrives as Dosanjh approaches the conclusion of his immensely successful 'Dil-Luminati Tour', which has attracted large crowds throughout North America, Europe and India. Videos spreading on the internet

display Dosanjh openly addressing the crowd in Punjabi during song interludes. He said, "We don't have the proper infrastructure for live shows here. This is a significant source of revenue and many people rely on it for work. Until the infrastructure improves, I won't be doing shows in India again." He also suggested stages encircled by the audience on all sides in upcoming performances to enhance the immersive experience.

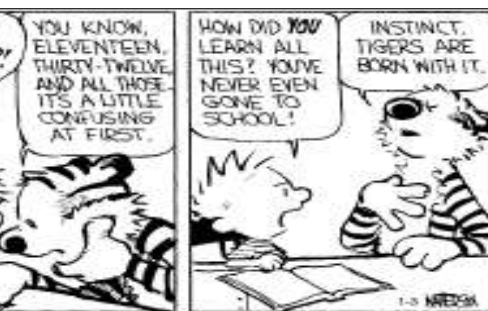
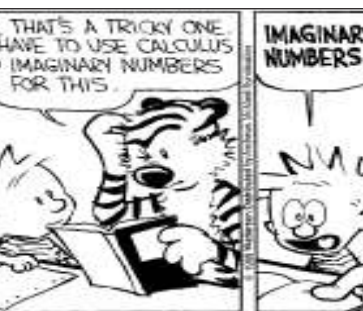
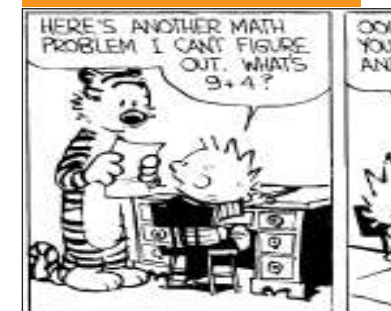
Diljit's 'Dil-Luminati Tour', which commenced on April 27, 2024, in Vancouver, Canada, represents a significant milestone for Punjabi music. He headlined Vancouver's BC Place Stadium, attracting more than 54,000 spectators—the biggest crowd for a Punjabi show outside India. The tour progressed through key North American cities, such as Edmonton, Dallas and Toronto, concluding this leg at Rogers Centre on July 13.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



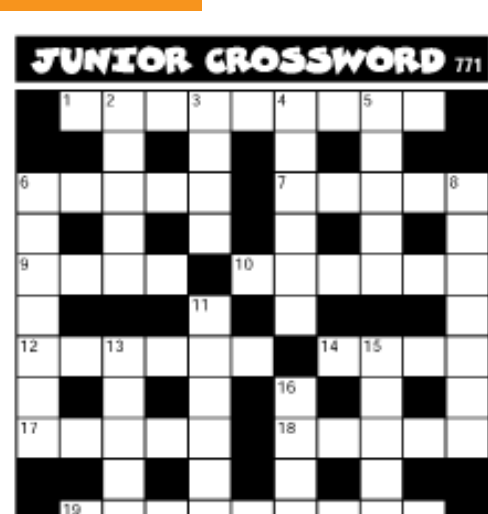
### REALITY CHECK



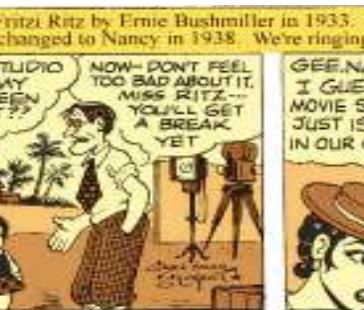
### SPEED BUMP



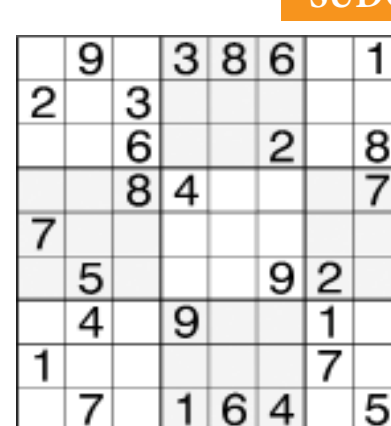
### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU



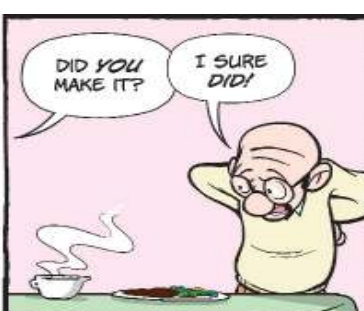
**Yesterday's solution**

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

**Rules**

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

### GINGER MEGGS



**ACROSS**

- Not remembered
- A brass musical instrument blown in the army
- Time of darkness
- Very small
- This is made from cream
- A symbol on playing cards
- Wear this on a foot
- Lift up
- A word of greeting
- Allowed
- Seller of meat
- A kind of long bomb fired under the sea to sink ships
- A small river
- Similar
- Cut exactly into two pieces
- Injured by a gun

**DOWN**

- A keyboard instrument
- Leaves
- Poke this out at someone you don't like
- Two times six minus four

**SOLUTION 770**

T	R	O	U	S	E	R	S
M	I	X	O	A	S		
A	N	G	R	E	D		
G	A	R	D	E	N	R	O
A	N	O					
R	I	G	E	B	A	N	E
I	A	S	S	O	I		
N	O	R	T	H	S	E	V
E	G	O	E	R			
C	O	M	P	O	S	E	R



## Modern custodian of Kuchipudi keeping up the eternal rhythms & grace

In a world increasingly captivated by fleeting digital moments, Yamini Reddy is quietly—and resolutely—keeping the timeless tradition of Kuchipudi alive. As a distinguished Kuchipudi dancer, teacher, choreographer and director of Natya Tarangini, her artistry and vision are reshaping how this classical Indian dance form is taught, performed and preserved.

When Yamini Reddy moved to Hyderabad in 2007 after her marriage, her dreams for the city and the art form she devoted her life to were modest. She envisioned merely a small branch of her parents' established institute in Delhi, where she had honed her craft. "I started with just three to four students. I didn't advertise; it was just a passion project. I was performing a lot at the time, and I thought, why not teach?" she recounts. The result was an organic growth that exceeded all expectations. Today, Natya Tarangini's Hyderabad branch trains over a hundred students, a testament to Yamini's deep commitment to nurturing the next generation of Kuchipudi dancers.

Her teaching method, Yamini explains, is rooted in the personal and the profound. "We believe in personal training. From the youngest to the senior-most students, we take great care in their growth," she says. Her father, legendary Kuchipudi exponent Raja Reddy, developed a style of choreography and instruction that Yamini and her sister Bhavana have carried forward. "It's a little different from other Kuchipudi styles—people find it refreshing, from the creativity to the teaching techniques. That's why I think word-of-mouth worked so well for us."

But beyond technique and rigor lies something even more fundamental: her emotional connection to the dance form and its birthplace. "Kuchipudi is native to us Telugu people. When I came back from Delhi, I was so happy to return to the roots—to set up an institute in the birthplace of the dance form itself." Yet, even as she celebrates this cultural legacy, Yamini is candid about the challenges of performing in a world enamored with cinema and digital entertainment.

### Cultural landscape in flux

In Hyderabad, where the glamour of Tollywood often eclipses traditional arts, cultivating an audience for Kuchipudi has become an uphill battle. "The culture here is rich and many parents are eager to teach their children classical dance for the discipline and balance it brings to the mind and body. But as audiences, people are not as engaged as they used to be. They'll flock to anything cinema-related, but standalone classical arts? Not so much," she laments.

Yamini believes that consistent performances are crucial for nurturing a cultural ecosystem. "It's not about doing one or two concerts. It has to be a continuous effort. In places like Delhi or New York, you know there's always something happening. There's a monthly calendar for theater, dance, or music performances. In Hyderabad, we don't have that. We need two or three cultural hubs that regularly host programs to grow audiences."

This lack of infrastructure, she argues, reflects a deeper need for government and private patron-

**As Natya Tarangini's Hyderabad branch celebrates 17 years, Yamini Reddy reflects on reviving Kuchipudi, building a cultural ecosystem and why Indian classical arts deserve the spotlight now.**



age. "If you invest in something over five years, you'll see a remarkable change. But you need that initial push," she says, adding that such long-term efforts could eventually create a self-sustaining cultural ecosystem in the city.

While many art forms are now experimenting with storytelling formats to capture the attention of modern audiences, Kuchipudi has always been rooted in narrative traditions. "It's natural to the art form, which originates from theater and classical arts. We've been storytelling for ages," Yamini explains.

### Reclaiming Hyderabad

Reflecting on her deep connection to Hyderabad, she shared her vision for the future: "I haven't done a full-fledged show in a long time, so of course that is on my agenda for 2025—definitely to bring some new productions to Hyderabad audiences," she states with a determined smile. Beyond performances, her aspirations stretch into community-building. "Maybe, God willing, I'll set up centers where Hyderabadis can enjoy art in a space dedicated to it."

That's a long-term goal," she adds. For her, Hyderabad is not just a performance venue but a fertile ground to nurture her dual passions as an artist and teacher.

"Performances are my life," she declares. "I look forward to traveling, performing and taking my work not only in India but abroad as well."

At the heart of her choreography is a profound engagement with philosophy. While classical Indian dance is often steeped in religious themes, she emphasizes the philosophical undercurrents that unite diverse traditions.

"For me, more than Indian religion, it is Indian philosophy that has a great impact on my work," she explains. "Religion is intricately involved in the art, but I try to connect it with philosophy. This way, I can weave in influences from biblical or Islamic traditions too. For me, it's the values and the goodness we are trying to impart that are the ultimate takeaway from any presentation."

This ethos was most evident in her celebrated piece, 'My Heart is a Temple', choreographed by her father. A blend of biblical verses and classical Indian aesthetics, it stands as a testament to her ability to seamlessly marry diverse cultural narratives while retaining the integrity of the art form. The journey forward is brimming with possibilities. She is currently working on two to three new choreographies and is eager to present these on stage soon. But her goals extend far beyond personal accomplishments. With a visionary eye, she dreams of creating platforms that bring artists and audiences together in ways that foster cultural exchange and appreciation.

In her words, "It's not just about performing—it's about building something meaningful that lasts. It's about ensuring that the art continues to inspire, educate and evolve."

**KUCHIPUDI IS NATIVE TO US TELUGU PEOPLE. WHEN I CAME BACK FROM DELHI, I WAS SO HAPPY TO RETURN TO THE ROOTS—TO SET UP AN INSTITUTE IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE DANCE FORM ITSELF**



## BEYOND OPINION, SUPPORTING BREASTFEEDING

Malnutrition is rapidly becoming a global crisis, putting the health and future of millions of young children at severe risk. In these challenging circumstances, breastfeeding is more vital than ever—it's one of the most powerful ways to ensure babies receive the essential nutrients they need for a healthy start. However, over half the world's population still lacks access to basic health services, so countless women are left routing this journey alone. This means there is still a lack of compassionate and respectful health counseling for mothers, which hinders them from providing their children with a strong foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

### Taking actions: Grasping the physical and psychological power of breastfeeding

First and foremost, there needs to be knowledge of the incredible health advantages that breastfeeding brings. From birth, breast milk provides all the energy and nutrients an infant needs, meeting up to half or more of a child's nutritional requirements well into the second half of the first year. One of its important roles is strengthening the baby's immune system. Indeed, the constant concentration of antibodies is contained in the first milk—the colostrum—that protects the newborn baby from pathogens. As breastfeeding extends, the infants also receive additional antibodies that will keep developing immunity against disease now and in the future. Additionally, breast milk provides white blood cells, including macrophages and lymphocytes, which play a role in combating infection by consuming or neutralising the pathogenic germs and viruses that help the baby maintain his immunity as he grows.

Regarding long-term benefits, breast milk is critical in establishing a healthy gut microbiota in infants. During the early stages of life, the gut microbiome is still developing and the first exposure to beneficial bacteria is largely influenced by breastfeeding. This early gut microbiome development helps regulate digestion and reduces the risk of infections. It also contributes to developing healthy metabolic processes, which can help prevent conditions like obesity and diabetes later in life. Breast milk is not only essential for a child's physical health but also for the psychological well-being of both mother and child.

Over the past 12 years, the global rate of exclusive breastfeeding for infants under six months has increased by more than 10%, reflecting its growing recognition. For mothers, it is an intrinsic part of motherhood that fosters a strong sense of accomplishment and empowerment. By intimately nourishing their child, mothers

strengthen their emotional bond with their babies and gain confidence in their ability to provide. Another psychological benefit is the release of oxytocin—a "bonding hormone." This neurochemical, released during breastfeeding, deepens the connection between mother and baby, fostering feelings of love, attachment and emotional closeness. Simultaneously, it gives mothers a sense of competence and capability as they meet the challenges of perfecting latch techniques or ensuring an adequate milk supply.

### Myths and facts: Ongoing discussion

Misconceptions about breastfeeding can create additional challenges for mothers already managing the physical and emotional demands of new motherhood. A common myth is that mothers must avoid all medications; however, many are safe to take and timing or dosage adjustments can be made when needed. It's vital to inform healthcare providers about any medications being used to ensure the safety of both mother and baby.

Another widespread belief is that a strict or restrictive diet is required. There's no specific "breastfeeding diet" or list of foods to avoid—most women can continue their regular diets without affecting milk quality. While a nutritious, balanced diet supports a mother's overall health, there's no need to eliminate particular foods. Embracing this flexibility allows mothers to focus on their well-being and enjoy a less stressful nursing experience.

### Evidence-based perspectives matter

Studies have always indicated that the benefits of breastfeeding are enhanced immune development, cognitive growth and overall health in children, which greatly reduce the likelihood of developing chronic diseases. Additionally, breastfeeding cuts down the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) by up to 64% and reduces the risk of total infant mortality by as much as 40%. For mothers, beneficial effects include postpartum recovery and lower risks for certain cancers and other diseases. These outcomes, however, rely on a strong support network, accurate facts, healthcare guidance and social support. The most effective way to foster informed, supportive environments that allow more families to experience these life-changing health benefits is by building a healthier, more resilient society for future generations.

*(The author, Sonal Babbar Bhardwaj, is the Co-Founder of Viraa Care.)*

## GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS

# Captivating drama of love, control & liberation

TEJAL SINHA  
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

### PLOT

Set in the 1990s at a strict boarding school in the Himalayan foothills, *Girls Will Be Girls* delves into the stifling effects of patriarchal norms on women's lives and desires. The story centers on Mira (Preeti Panigrahi), a disciplined and high-achieving student whose orderly world is disrupted by the arrival of Sri (Kesav Binoy Kiron), a charming and mischievous new transfer student. As Mira navigates her growing attraction to Sri, the narrative takes an unexpected turn when her mother, Anila (Kani Kusruti), becomes part of the story. Living nearby to oversee Mira's academic progress, Anila struggles with her own social and romantic frustrations, leading her to compete for Sri's attention. This layered dynamic reveals not only the personal consequences of repressive societal rules but also how these structures influence women's relationships and self-perception across generations.

### HIGHLIGHTS

*Girls Will Be Girls* is a poignant psychological drama that delves deep into the layered complexities of a mother-daughter relationship in a patriarchal society. One of

the most striking aspects of the film is its ability to capture the subtleties of repression and rebellion. Mira's internal journey, as she explores her suppressed desires, is intricately juxtaposed with her mother Anila's struggles with her own unresolved frustrations. The film's setting—a boarding school in the serene yet isolating Himalayan foothills—serves as a metaphor for the emotional suffocation the characters experience.

### DRAWBACKS

While the film excels in its emotional depth and thematic focus, its pacing might prove to be a challenge for some viewers. The narrative adopts a deliberate, slow-burn approach, which, while effective in building tension and introspection, occasionally drags in the second half. Certain moments feel overly extended, testing the patience of those accustomed to a faster narrative rhythm. Additionally, the film's heavy focus on Mira and Anila's dynamic leaves little room for supporting characters to develop. While this tight lens strengthens the main story, it also limits the scope of the narrative, leaving other potentially interesting subplots underexplored. These minor shortcomings, however, do not take away from the film's overall impact.

### PERFORMANCES

The performances in *Girls Will Be Girls* are its beating heart. Preeti Panigrahi delivers a magnetic performance as Mira,



**REVIEW**  
 DIRECTED BY: Shuchi Talati  
 PRODUCED BY: Pushing Buttons Studio, Dolce Vita Films, Crawling Angle Films by Richa Chadha, Claire Chassagne and Shuchi Talati with Ali Fazal as the executive producer.  
 CAST: Preeti Panigrahi, Kesav Binoy Kiron, Anand Kani Kusruti  
 STREAMING ON: Prime Video  
 RATING: 4/5

masterfully portraying the journey of a young woman torn between societal expectations and her awakening individuality. She captures every nuance of Mira's character, from her moments of quiet rebellion to her raw vulnerability, making her both relatable

and compelling. Kani Kusruti is equally captivating as Anila, Mira's mother. Her portrayal is layered, oscillating between control and yearning, as she struggles with her own unfulfilled desires while attempting to shape Mira's life. Kani's performance brings

a level of gravitas to the role, making Anila both a product of societal repression and a perpetrator of it. Kesav Binoy Kiron as Sri, the sly and charming transfer student, adds depth and charisma to his role, becoming the catalyst for both Mira's and Anila's self-discovery. The chemistry between the actors is natural and contributes significantly to the emotional resonance of the story.

### TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Shuchi Talati's direction shines in its ability to blend the personal and the political, giving equal weight to the characters' individual struggles and the societal structures that shape their lives. The film bravely tackles the themes of female sexuality and generational trauma, making the audience reflect on how societal expectations influence women's autonomy and relationships. The film's technical brilliance enhances its narrative depth. Cinematographer Jih-E Peng's stunning visuals beautifully capture the contrasting elements of the story. The vast Himalayan landscapes serve as a metaphor for freedom and longing, while the claustrophobic interiors of the boarding school and Anila's home reflect the confinement of the characters' lives.

The production design authentically recreates the 1990s setting, with every detail, from the uniforms to the decor, immersing the audience in the time period. The musical score by Pierre Oberkampf and Sneha Khanwalkar is another standout

aspect, subtly underscoring the emotional highs and lows of the characters' journeys without ever overwhelming the narrative.

However, the editing could have been slightly tighter in certain parts of the film, especially in the middle section, where the pacing issues become more evident. Despite this, the technical aspects overall contribute significantly to the film's immersive experience.

### VERDICT

*Girls Will Be Girls* is a thought-provoking and emotionally charged exploration of how patriarchal norms stifle women's sexuality and autonomy. With its searing examination of generational trauma and repression, the film offers a unique perspective on themes often overlooked in mainstream cinema. Shuchi Talati's directorial debut is marked by a sharp focus on emotional authenticity, supported by powerful performances from Preeti Panigrahi and Kani Kusruti. The film's ability to intertwine personal struggles with broader societal commentary makes it a significant addition to contemporary Indian cinema.

While its pacing may not appeal to all viewers, the film's psychological depth, stunning visuals, and atmospheric storytelling make it a rewarding experience. *Girls Will Be Girls* is a must-watch for those seeking a nuanced and courageous portrayal of women's lives and desires in a repressive world.



# Rahul, Jadeja fifties help India avoid follow-on in Brisbane Test

PTI ■ BRISBANE

KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja were determination personified as their fighting fifties helped India avoid the follow-on on the fourth day of the weather-hit third Test against a menacing Australia that seems meandering towards a draw. Jadeja (77, 123b, 7x4, 1x6) and Rahul (84, 139, 8x4) were the heavy-lifters in India's 252 for nine when bad light forced an early close to the day. Jasprit Bumrah (10) and Akash Deep (27), who showed appreciable gumption, are holding the fort for India. The visitors trail Aussies by 193 runs. But they wouldn't mind that one bit as Australia will now have to bat again and forcing a result in three sessions looks an improbable target, considering the Brisbane weather pattern. The city is bracing up for rain and a thunderstorm or two on Wednesday. A quick word of appreciation is also required for No. 10 Bumrah

and No. 11 Akash Deep for knocking down the 33 runs required to go past the follow-on mark of 246. The much-awaited moment came when Akash crunched Pat Cummins over gully for a boundary. When these two joined forces, India were reeling at 213 for 9 after Jadeja was dismissed off a Cummins' snorter. But while resuming from a wafer-thin overnight score of 51 for four, India needed someone to offer fight, and Rahul, India's standout batter in this series so far, did precisely that. Rahul displayed admirable technical nous to withstand the stern test posed by the Australian bowlers to take the game deep into the day. A nine toes down Rahul and an equally feisty Jadeja added 67 runs for the sixth wicket, and it was the first sign of India's fight. There was a moment of massive fortune too for Rahul when Smith spilled a regulation catch at second slip off the first ball of the



day from Cummins. Rahul was on 33 then. A quick look upwards and a silent prayer showed how much he valued that



reprieve, which he exploited to the hilt, notching his 17th Test fifty. Once he woke up from a bit of morning haziness, Rahul looked a class apart from the rest of his colleagues. The Aussies employed three slips and a gully, leaving the vast

expanse of the ground to play his favourite shot -- drive through the cover or in front of the point. It was a dangerous proposition as there was enough movement and bounce for the Aussie pacers. But Rahul was prudent enough to see through that ruse. He did not bring out that shot until the bowlers pitched the ball well up in his driving arc. The Bengaluru man's sagacity shone in how he defended too -- all soft hands and playing close to the body. Cummins tested him with that fifth stump line outside off, but Rahul either left the ball wisely or merely tucked his bat behind his pads. However, a remarkable redemption catch by Smith at slip off Nathan Lyon ended his stay. But Jadeja carried on and he added 53 runs for the seventh wicket with Nitish Reddy to keep India afloat. The 36-year-old scored a good chunk of runs either down the ground or square of the wicket, enabling him to collect runs

without the risk of getting caught behind or in the cordon. Jadeja brought up his 22nd fifty in Test cricket off 89 balls and the innings was also dotted with sweep shots that he effectively employed against off-spinner Lyon. Nitish should also be patted for giving some solid company to Jadeja as batting for time was more important than the volume of runs considering the weather situation in this Test. However, a slice of misfortune ended Nitish's stay as he dragged Cummins' climbing delivery back onto his stumps. Jadeja also soon departed while trying to farm the strike with Bumrah. He looked to smash Cummins' rising delivery out of the ground but Mitchell Marsh settled nicely under the ball to give a heap of frayed nerves to Indian fans. But Bumrah and Akash added 39 runs to put the smiles back on their faces, as Aussies dearly missed the metronomical Josh Hazlewood, who was ruled out of the series with a calf injury.



## New Zealand beat England by 423 runs in the 3rd test

AP ■ HAMILTON

Captain Ben Stokes was unable to bat because of a hamstring injury on Tuesday as England slumped to a 423-run loss to New Zealand before tea on the fourth day on the third cricket Test. Stokes strained his left hamstring while bowling on the third day and could not take the field as England was bowled out for 234 as it chased an impossible target of 658 for victory. New Zealand's winning margin matched its largest test win by runs of a 423-run win over Sri Lanka in 2018 and prevented England from completing a series whitewash. England had an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series after winning the first test by eight wickets and the second by 323 runs. "You can't fault any of the energies or efforts we put into this game, particularly in the field," Stokes said. "It's obviously not ideal to end the tour on this note but we've come here against a New Zealand team which is very strong and full of confidence after beating India in India 3-0. So to come here and lift that trophy at the end proves we played some very good

cricket." England resumed its second innings Tuesday at 18-2 after losing the wickets of Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley late on day three after New Zealand, leading by 204 on the first innings, was dismissed for 453. Joe Root made 54 and Jacob Bethell 76 in a 104-run partnership for the third wicket which briefly fanned England's hopes that it might somehow endure for two full days to draw the match. But dogged perseverance is not a feature of England cricket in the "Bazball" quick-scoring era and instead it maintained a policy of all-out attack before the final wicket fell midway through the second session. After lunch Gus Atkinson blasted 43 from 41 balls with seven fours and a six and Ollie Pope made 17 but wickets fell steadily and the result became inevitable. "I think anytime you finish a series with a win when you've been behind is pleasing," New Zealand captain Tom Latham said. "We weren't at our best in those first two games but the way we came here on a wicket that was slightly different to the first couple and we adapted was very

pleasing." New Zealand's win owed a great deal to the contribution of Mitchell Santner in the first innings who made 76 batting at No. 8 and worked with Matt Henry, Tim Southee and Will O'Rourke to add 116 runs for New Zealand's three wickets. That allowed New Zealand to reach 347 after losing the toss and being sent in. Santner's last-wicket stand with O'Rourke which lasted 77 minutes at the end of the first day and the start of the second was a display of resilience which had been missing from New Zealand's performances in the first two tests. Santner then took 3-7 while New Zealand's presumptive new-ball pairing of Henry and O'Rourke shared seven wickets as England was bowled out for 143 in a session and a half in its first innings. Southee has been the spearhead of New Zealand's attack for many years, mostly in combination with Trent Boult. But this was his 107th and final test before his retirement from international cricket and Boult no longer is contracted by New Zealand Cricket.

## Mandhana moves to top three in both ODI and T20I rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India's vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has surged three places to second in the latest ICC Women's ODI rankings while climbing one spot to third among T20I batters, following her stellar displays against Australia and the West Indies. The left-hander struck 105 in the final match of the series against Australia in Perth and 54 in the first game of the ongoing T20I rubber against the West Indies in Mumbai to headline the latest rankings update released here on Tuesday. Mandhana is the lone Indian batter in the top 10 as her skipper Harmanpreet Kaur moved down two spots to 13th while Jemimah Rodrigues climbed six places to 15th and Harleen Deol moved up nine rungs to 64th. Among bowlers, Deepti Sharma has slipped two spots



to five. India seam bowler Arundhati Reddy has shot up 48 places to 51st after a haul of four for 26 while Renuka Thakur has moved up from 28th to joint 26th. England opener Tammy Beaumont advanced two places to 11th after an unbeaten 65 helped clinch the South Africa series 2-1. Ashleigh Gardner has moved up one place to 16th with a 50 in Perth, Tahlia McGrath has progressed from 32nd to 24th

with an unbeaten 56, and Annabell Sutherland is up 15 places to 29th after a match-winning 110. Gardner is also up two places to a career-best-equaling third position in the bowling rankings with a haul of five for 30 and has moved up from fourth to second in the all-rounders' list. Sutherland is in the top 20 of the bowling rankings. Others to move up in this list include South Africa's Marizanne Kapp, who has gained two slots to reach fourth position after a haul of three for 24, and the England trio of Charlie Dean (up two places to seventh), Nat Sciver Brunt (up one place to 16th) and Lauren Bell (up four places to 21st). Kaur moves back into top 10. In the T20I rankings, Kaur is in the top 10 and Rodrigues has gained six slots to reach 15th position after a fine 73 against the West Indies. In the bowling rankings, Deepti has moved up two places to take the second position in the bowling rankings and Titas Sadhu is up to 52nd. For the West Indies, all-rounder Deandra Dottin has advanced 21 places to 59th after a half-century while Qiana Joseph (up 22 places to 65th among batters) and Karishma Ramharack (up six places to 20th among bowlers) are other notable gainers.

## Vettori admits Indian tailenders partnership foils Australia's plans

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia assistant coach Daniel Vettori admitted that a resilient partnership between Indian tailenders Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep foiled their plans to enforce a follow-on, while also defending the decision not to declare the home team's first innings in the third Test which seems heading towards a draw. With the Indian batters, barring KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja, failing once again, it was the obstinate 39-run unbeaten partnership between Bumrah and Akash Deep that saved India the blushes as the tourists avoided a follow on a rain marred day four on Tuesday. "I think the only way to force the game was to force the follow-on," Vettori said at the post-day press conference. "There was a desperation to get that final wicket. We thought we had a really good chance when Jadeja was dismissed, but it was a real fighting partnership from Bumrah and Deep. Unfortunately, just the amount of time that's been lost from the game has made it difficult," he added. Akash Deep, making his debut in Australia, walked in to bat at 213 for 9, with India still needing 33 runs to avoid the follow-on that could have cost them the game. Alongside pace spearhead Bumrah, he guided India to 252 for 9, frustrating the home team. Australia had ended day three on 405 for 7 but chose to bat, consuming a considerable amount of game time on a rain affected day four rather than declare their innings.

## Josh Hazlewood likely to miss Test series against India due to calf injury

PTI ■ BRISBANE

Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood is likely to miss the remainder of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India due to a right calf strain that he sustained during the ongoing third Test at the Gabba, Cricket Australia said on Tuesday. The niggles have also ruled Hazlewood out of the Brisbane Test, weakening Australia's bowling attack. "Josh Hazlewood has sustained a right side calf strain which will prevent him from playing any further part in the Test match against India in Brisbane," Cricket



Australia said in an official statement. "He is likely to miss the remainder of the Test series." On Tuesday, the New South Wales player bowled just one over before walking out of the field following a discussion with captain Pat Cummins, senior cricketer

Steven Smith and team physio Nick Jones. Hazlewood later underwent scans to ascertain the severity of the injury. The 33-year-old had nicked off star India batter Virat Kohli on Monday, the third day of the match, with a fine delivery outside the off-stump. Hazlewood made his return to the side for the third Test after missing the Pink Ball Test at Adelaide due to a side strain. He had replaced fellow pacer Scot Boland, who played in the day-night Adelaide Test, in the Australia eleven for the ongoing Brisbane Test.

## Can 'Guru' Gambhir and Nayar offer cogent solutions to technical flaws in batters?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli are reaping maximum criticism for being walking wickets during the ongoing Test series against Australia but even Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant haven't shown the patience needed to survive Down Under, indicating a larger problem. Patience is a virtue that one develops over time and Kohli had once showed how it's done during his golden phase between 2014 and 2019. KL Rahul, blessed with sound technique, has displayed that during the current series with scores of 77 and 84 in Perth and Brisbane. In case of Jaiswal, save his second innings knock of 161 at Perth, a shuffle across the crease is making him a candidate for leg-before. Gill loves to play on the rise outside the off-stump and away from his body and could be impatient when one bowls the stump and even for Pant, a compulsive stroke player, the ball that leaves him from five metre length with adequate bounce, is creating issues. So, will head coach Gautam Gambhir and his deputy Abhishek Nayar, who is highly regarded in Mumbai cricket circuit for being a

"Mind Coach and Life Coach rolled into one", do anything about it? A former India great, who didn't wish to be named, offered his perspective. "Not all great players or players of repute happen to be great coaches. They might have done some incredible things as players and knew what to do and how to react during a particular situation," the veteran of 100-plus Tests said. "But coaching is science and not many can tell why certain things need to be done. Even Gautam used to play with hard hands and dab towards slips in Australia and England. "You can still work with younger guys but difficult to mould the older ones who don't get enough time to work on their game in a packed calendar," he added. Watching the dismissals of especially Kohli in Australia, which seemed like a replay of previous ones, has led to growing concerns. Everyone understands the technical flaw, but can anyone provide the corrective measures to break the rut? Rohit, barring the England tour in 2021, he does not really have a track record in SENA countries in Tests. But with Kohli, the problem of reaching for deliveries on and



outside the off-stump has resurfaced once again and has been a persistent issue for quite some time. Sanjay Manjrekar's tweet is worth taking note of. "I guess the time has come to

scrutinise the role of a batting coach in the Indian team. Why major technical issues have remained unresolved for so long with certain Indian batters?" he asked. Manjrekar's view raises questions

on the role of Sanjay Bangar, Vikram Rathour, and now Nayar. Their official designation might be assistant coach, but they essentially are batting coaches. Devang Gandhi, who was a touring selector between 2016-17 to 2020-

21, had a more nuanced take compared to the veteran India star. "It would be very easy to target Nayar as a low hanging fruit or for that matter Gautam," Gandhi, who has coached the Delhi Ranji team and Bengal U-19, told PTI during a conversation. "But they have just come into system. To discuss or nudge a player, first you need to be around for some time and once there is some kind of mutual trust between the two, you can offer him solutions. But at this level, it is more about the experienced player's own mental make-up." So what is Kohli's problem? Gandhi, a former Test opener and an NCA Level-2 coach, believes it's all about his mental approach. "If you watch his training videos that are available for public, I find him doing all the right things. During training he is playing close to his body. But the moment it is the match situation, the hands are moving towards those channel deliveries like conditioned reflex or muscle memory," he explained. Gandhi then blamed it on the rising T20 engagements. "The moment his bat is away from the body, the bat-face will open up towards cover. Now this is a white ball problem of hitting through the

line. In India the ball will hit the bottom of the bat but in Australia, it will towards the upper part. "What solution can Gambhir or Nayar possibly give, apart from telling him to not play those deliveries?" "After 30 Test hundreds, Virat doesn't need to be told that but at 36, does he have that patience to accept that now if he scores a hundred, it will be off 200 balls and not 140 like earlier times? Can he bide those extra 60 balls?," Gandhi questioned. Sachin Tendulkar's epic 241 in the 2004 New Year's Test in Sydney is often cited as a prime example of patience. He didn't hit a single cover drive until he scored his double hundred. "It's about controlling the mind. You can be a sounding board for players like Tendulkar and Kohli but at this stage, you can't coach them. Coaching happens at junior level," Gandhi added. But can a Gambhir or Nayar help Kohli find a solution? "Of course, at some point, honest conversations are necessary. But first, they should ask him what his corrective options are and then offer their own if they have something different to contribute," Gandhi concluded.



# Comedy is my home ground, I won't leave it: Naresh

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Allari Naresh is known for his comedy films, but in recent years, he has been attempting to do more serious films like *Naandhi*, *Ugram* and *Itlu Mareduvilli Prajaneeekam*. Now, he is set to release another serious film, *Bachchalamalli*, in which he plays a raw and rustic character. Subbu Mangadevi is the director.

"Two years ago, director Subbu approached me and narrated this story. Generally, I didn't ask the director which genre the story was based on, because many approached me with those kinds of subjects. But Subbu came with a different story, and when he narrated it to me, I felt that this film was definitely something I wanted to do, because the character has all emotions. As an actor, this will definitely get me a good name," said Allari Naresh about this film and how it started.

The actor felt that audiences were also now watching content-based films, so he agreed to do this one. "He approached me when I was shooting for *Mareduvilli*, so the same producer, Razesh Danda, inquired about this story, and I asked Subbu to narrate the story to him as well," said Allari Naresh.

**AHEAD OF THE RELEASE OF HIS FILM BACHCHALAMALLI, ALLARI NARESH TALKS ABOUT HIS UPCOMING FILM, CHALLENGES, ABOUT COMEDY FILMS, HIS FATHER AND MORE**

Razesh also liked the story and told Naresh that he would produce the film. The actor said that he did *Ganyam* a long time ago, and people still remember his role as Gali Seenu from the film. "Now, I am confident that people will remember this *Bachchalamalli* role for a longer time," said Naresh.

He added that he came out of his comfort zone and did this film. "I tried something different and new. This film is not an autobiography. But there is a person called 'Bachchalamalli' and the director has taken a few incidents from his life as inspiration and made a complete fiction story," said the actor. Interestingly, the actor also met the real-life 'Bachchalamalli' while shooting this film at Tuni. "My makeup man showed me that it was

'Bachchalamalli'. But I imagined him differently - strong, very tall and with a different face. But he is completely opposite to my thoughts - skinny, with average height, but his voice is very strong. He is now a bit aged, so I met him," said Naresh. He added that he was surprised after seeing him. "When I saw his personality, I doubted that this person would quarrel with everyone? But he is the real Bachchalamalli," said Allari Naresh.

The challenging part about this film is doing something new. "The director wants the stupidity in my face when I walk, asking me to cry something new, which is my challenge. When I do something, the director compares it with my old films, so he asked me to do something new," said Naresh.

He added that he put his hard work into this film. "After five minutes of the start of the film, you will definitely be immersed in the *Bachchalamalli* world," said the actor. For the look also, they tried different looks. "It's another big challenge, because the story happened in the 90s in a rural area. The character is not that neat, so we have tried different looks, and finally come to this one," he said.

He added that in this film, every scene comes out realistic. "Even the action scenes were designed more in a realistic way. I beat up goons and they too beat me; it's not like the regular commercial film where the protagonist hits a goon, and he goes to a distance and hits a lorry. Those kinds of action scenes are not in this film," said Naresh.

For another question, he said he had doubts when he did *Naandhi* about whether people would believe him or not. "I used to be known more for comedy roles and suddenly if I hit goons, I had doubts about whether the audience would believe it or not. But luckily, I started with a couple of action scenes in *Naandhi* and then a few more in *Ugram* and slowly I started doing action scenes because people liked it," he said. He added that these days, many films forcefully put action scenes to appeal to the North (Hindi) audience. "In this film, we didn't put any extra action scenes, as those come as part of the story," he said.

The actor is now confident to do serious films and also action films. "Slowly I am coming out of my comfort zone to do these kinds of films. But at the same time, I won't leave comedy, because it is my home ground, and I am comfortable doing it," said Naresh.

He added that when he is doing comedy, people ask him to do serious films and vice versa, they are asking for comedy films.



## Shruti Haasan out; Mrunal Thakur in for *Dacoit*



Adivi Sesh is having a tough time as the shoot for his film *Dacoit* started with Shruti Haasan and the team even released some promotional videos featuring her. However, it seems that the unit had some problems with Shruti Haasan, leading them to replace her with another actress, Mrunal Thakur.

The makers have now released new posters featuring Adivi Sesh and Mrunal Thakur for *Dacoit*. The actor is making this film a pan-India action drama. Directed by Shaneli Deo, who marks his directorial debut, this ambitious project is produced by Supriya Yarlagaadda and co-produced by Suniel Narang. The film is being shot simultaneously in Hindi and Telugu and features a story and screenplay jointly crafted by Adivi Sesh and Shaneli Deo.

The film is currently being shot in Hyderabad, followed by an extensive schedule in Maharashtra. On his birthday on Tuesday, Adivi Sesh announced his new leading lady, welcoming Mrunal Thakur to the project. The stunning actress joins the film as the female lead.

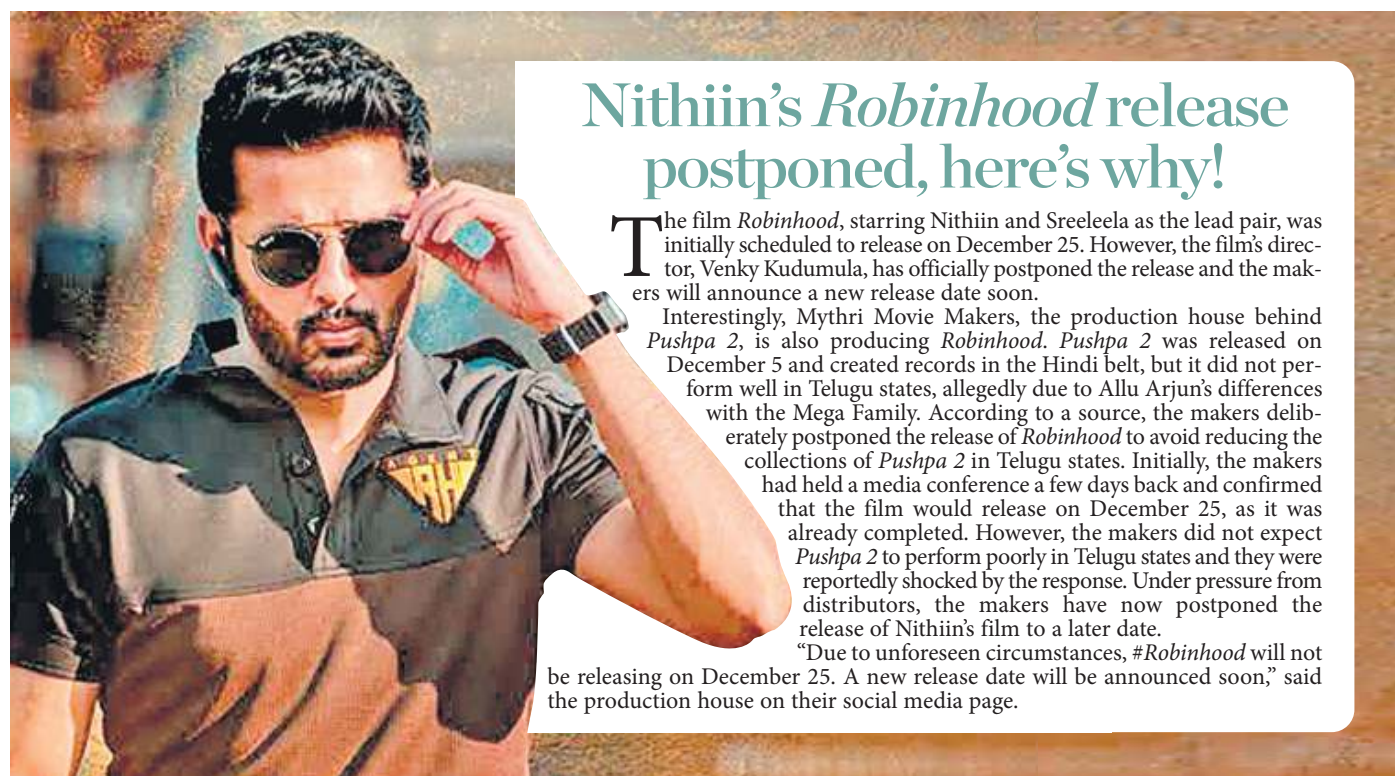
According to a source from the unit, the team couldn't handle Shruti Haasan's attitude at some point, leaving them with no option but to replace her with another actress.

*Dacoit* tells the story of an angry convict seeking vengeance on his ex-girlfriend who betrayed him. He devises a dangerous plan to trap her, setting the stage for an intense action drama driven by elemental forces -- love, betrayal, and revenge.

**"The team couldn't handle Shruti Haasan's attitude at some point, leaving them with no option," revealed a source**

"It's an action film with a touching love story. Mrunal has brought some of the finest characters to life on the big screen, bringing a unique panache to each role," said Adivi Sesh. He added that they are thrilled to welcome Mrunal into this project.

"The story of *Dacoit* is true in its essence, a great mixture of rustic storytelling that is elevated with the stylised vision of both Adivi Sesh and Shaneli Deo. The character I'm set to depict in the film will allow me to explore shades of playing an on-screen character that I haven't explored before as an actor," said Mrunal about her role.



## Nithiin's *Robinhood* release postponed, here's why!

The film *Robinhood*, starring Nithiin and Sreeleela as the lead pair, was initially scheduled to release on December 25. However, the film's director, Venky Kudumula, has officially postponed the release and the makers will announce a new release date soon.

Interestingly, Mythri Movie Makers, the production house behind *Pushpa 2*, is also producing *Robinhood*. *Pushpa 2* was released on December 5 and created records in the Hindi belt, but it did not perform well in Telugu states, allegedly due to Allu Arjun's differences with the Mega Family. According to a source, the makers deliberately postponed the release of *Robinhood* to avoid reducing the collections of *Pushpa 2* in Telugu states. Initially, the makers had held a media conference a few days back and confirmed that the film would release on December 25, as it was already completed. However, the makers did not expect *Pushpa 2* to perform poorly in Telugu states and they were reportedly shocked by the response. Under pressure from distributors, the makers have now postponed the release of Nithiin's film to a later date.

"Due to unforeseen circumstances, #Robinhood will not be releasing on December 25. A new release date will be announced soon," said the production house on their social media page.

## Twist in Manchu saga; Nirmala enters the fray

The Manchu family saga continues to unfold with more twists and turns. The main protagonist, Mohan Babu, left Hyderabad for Tirupati and surrendered his gun at the Chandragiri police station. Meanwhile, Manchu Manoj, the younger son of Mohan Babu, filed a complaint against his brother Vishnu at the Pahaadi Shareef police station on Sunday. Manoj alleged that Vishnu had harmed him and his family, and also claimed that Vishnu had poured sugar into the generator, causing a power outage at his house.

However, in a surprising twist, Mohan Babu's wife and Manoj's mother, Nirmala, sent a letter to the Pahaadi Shareef

police station, refuting Manoj's allegations. In her letter, Nirmala stated that on December 14, her elder son Vishnu had brought a cake to her Jalpally residence to celebrate her birthday. Nirmala claimed that Manoj had taken a video footage of the celebration and was using it to make false allegations against Vishnu. "On

December 14, my elder son Vishnu brought a cake to my Jalpally residence and celebrated my birthday. My younger son took this video footage and said that Vishnu did a fight and also made false allegations on him," said Nirmala.

Nirmala further stated that both her sons, Vishnu and Manoj, have equal rights to stay in their family home. She also clarified that Vishnu had not come to the house with any people, nor had he engaged in any physical altercation or forced entry. According to Nirmala, Vishnu had simply come to celebrate her birthday and collect some belongings from his room. "He came and celebrated my birthday and took some belongings from his room," said Nirmala in her letter.

With Nirmala's entry into the family dispute, the Manchu saga has taken a new turn.

Meanwhile, the police have decided to wait until December 24 to question Mohan Babu before taking further action.



## RAMANA GOGULA BREAKS HIS HIATUS WITH SANKRANTHIKI VASTUNNAMU

Popular music director and playback singer Ramana Gogula is back in the spotlight. He is well-known for his work on films like *Thammudu*, *Premante Idera*, *Bhadri*, *Yogi*, *Yuvaraju*, and many others as a music composer and singer. Now, Ramana has sung a song in the upcoming film *Sankranthiki Vastunnamu*, starring Venkatesh. After a long hiatus, Ramana Gogula has sung the song *Godaru Gattu*, which has received an overwhelming response on YouTube, with over 27 million views and counting.

Talking about the song, Ramana Gogula revealed that music director Bheems Ceciroleo had asked him to sing this particular song. "I was in the USA when Bheems called and asked me to sing this song. I told him to send the lyrics, which I liked. There's a lot of creative freedom when I sing this song," said Ramana Gogula about the song. He also praised the other singer, Madhupriya, who sang along with him very well. "This is the first time I've sung a song for another music composer. Venkatesh is my good friend and director Anil, music director Bheems are lovely people. My first film as music director was with Venkatesh's *Premante Idera*. So, with all these combinations, I decided to sing this song," said Ramana Gogula.

Regarding his hiatus, Ramana explained that he had been working in the USA for several years. His last film as music director was *1000 Abaddalu*. "I worked for a multi-national company in the USA and I'm interested in technology, so I worked on Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics projects for that company," said Ramana. The music composer expressed his eagerness to work again and is waiting for the right opportunity. "At present, music directors are giving excellent music, but there's a gap for a new kind of music and I want to fill that gap. I have some great ideas in music and I'm confident that I can deliver good music," said the music composer. He has worked on four films with Pawan Kalyan in the past and is now happy to see Pawan Kalyan in a prominent position as the Deputy CM of Andhra Pradesh.

