



sunday pioneer

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Time for change in approach of police: Shah

'When heart races & stomach FLUTTERS, you know you've found your role'

Navigating urban FORESTS and nurturing admin

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

I also saw the film 'Pushpa-2.' I had decided to watch only historical and Telangana movies. We can do many things in our life in the 3 hours we use to watch a movie. Youths are spoiled by movies. Film heroes should follow rules. Cinema people should not come out among the public if they are not given permission by the police



-Komatireddy Venkatreddy, TG Minister P4

DON'T MISS...

Grand start to 'Deeksha Viramana'

The five-day Bhavani Deeksha Viramana commenced on a grand note on Saturday at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varta Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada. The temple's Executive Officer (EO), KS Rama Rao, and Chief Priest Vishnubhotla Siva Prasad Sharma inaugurated the event by performing Agni Pratishtapana. They lit the Homa Gundam (holy fire), allowing devotees to have Durga Devi darshan from 6.30 am amidst Vedic chants. Devotees...

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Sports Complex to come up in Tenali

Minister for Civil Supplies Nandendla Manohar has announced the construction of an Integrated Sports Complex in Tenali at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crore. Addressing the media on Saturday, the Minister revealed that 1.76 acres of municipal land would be acquired for the project, which will include volleyball and basketball courts along with a swimming pool. He further stated that rural roads in the Tenali constituency would be developed at a cost of Rs 25 crore. "The Tenali-Kollipara..."

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Gadchiroli to be the next 'steel city'

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Saturday asserted that the state's Gadchiroli district will be Naxal-free in the next three years and Gadchiroli town will be the 'steel city' of India. Replying to the debate on the opposition-sponsored last week motion in the legislative assembly here, Fadnis listed several infrastructure projects across the state and farmer-centric initiatives. He said the northern part of the Gadchiroli district, bordering Telangana and ...

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GST at 18% on used EV car sale by business

The goods and services tax council on Saturday decided to levy an 18 per cent GST on margin value on sale of used electric vehicles by businesses and agreed to keep jet fuel (ATF) out of the 'one-nation-one-tax' regime. The GST Council in its 55th meeting also decided to clarify on taxability of popcorn, saying caramelised popcorn will continue to attract tax at the rate of 18 per cent. However, pre-packed and spiced popcorn will attract 12 per cent, while 5 per cent will be levied on unpacked and unlabelled ones. It has been decided to regularise the issues for the past on "as is where is" basis. "It is a clarification being recommended by the GST Council to settle the disputes arising out of interpretation," an official statement said. The panel, headed by Union Finance ...

-MONEY

Dy CM Pawan vows to resolve tribal issues

Rs 2,869 cr plan to connect tribal villages and foster growth

PNS ■ PADERU

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj, Rural Development, and Environment, Konidela Pawan Kalyan, reaffirmed the government's dedication to tribal welfare by launching a significant infrastructure initiative in Ananthagiri mandal. On Saturday, he laid the foundation stone for a road construction project under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) at Ballagaruvu village in Pinakota Gram Panchayat.

During his address, Pawan Kalyan pledged to connect 90% of tribal villages in the district to the road network, addressing decades of neglect in the region. He lauded Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu's leadership in reducing the population threshold for road construction projects from 250 to 100, thereby extending benefits to smaller communities.

The Deputy Chief Minister unveiled a comprehensive Rs 2,869 crore plan to develop 19 road projects, improving connectivity for over 4,500 residents. He also highlighted broader developmental initiatives, including resolving drinking water shortages, enhancing living standards, and promoting the marketing of local produce like organic coffee and rice.

Further, Pawan Kalyan outlined plans to transform the area into a tourism hub, introduce skill development programmes for tribal youth, and replace marijuana cultivation with alternative crops.

Continued on Page 2



- Plans for skill programmes for tribal youth, alternatives to marijuana cultivation, and establishing a junior college.
- Pawan Kalyan lauds PM Modi and CM Naidu's efforts and assures road construction even for villages with fewer than 100 residents.

Pawan lauded for tribal outreach

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan has been receiving widespread praise for his efforts to address tribal issues in remote areas. Social media platforms are abuzz with accolades, with many highlighting his commitment to visiting locations even "inaccessible to the sun."

(makeshift stretchers) for transport. Pawan Kalyan has been laying foundation stones for these projects.

CBI former Joint Director and Jai Bharat National party President, V V Lakshminarayana, praised Pawan Kalyan's dedication via a tweet, stating, "Congratulations on your tour of the interior tribal areas. Your commitment to their development is commendable. Tribal development provisions in Articles 46, 244, 244A, and 275(1) focus on education, land rights, and welfare."

Continued on Page 2

Tremors felt in Prakasam, Bapatla

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Mild tremors were felt in parts of Prakasam and Bapatla districts on Saturday morning. Fortunately, no casualties or property damage were reported.

According to official sources, a 3.1 magnitude earthquake on the Richter scale struck Addanki in Bapatla district. The tremors were also felt in several villages of Mundlamuru mandal in Prakasam district and parts of Addanki mandal in Bapatla district.

Villages affected in Mundlamuru mandal include Polavaram, Sankarapuramu, Pasupu Ghallu, Ulaghallu, Marella, and Kambhampadu.

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AP FiberNet issues legal notice to RGV

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh FiberNet has sent a legal notice to director Ram Gopal Varma concerning his movie Vyuham. The notice reveals that FiberNet had entered into an agreement worth Rs 2.15 crore over Vyuham but only paid Rs 1.15 crore. According to FiberNet, the payment was based on the views the movie garnered, as per their earlier agreement.

However, FiberNet claims that Vyuham only received 1,863 views, which meant that the payment was Rs 11,000 per view, far less than the



agreed amount. Despite the lack of views, FiberNet alleges that Vyuham received unjust financial benefits, amounting to Rs 1.15 crore, and issued a legal notice seeking clarification.

Continued on Page 2

Midday meals for Inter students from Jan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a welcome announcement, the Andhra Pradesh government has decided to extend the midday meal scheme to intermediate students in government junior colleges and KGBVs (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas) across the State. This decision was approved during a recent Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

As per the plan, around 1.4 lakh students studying in 475 government



junior colleges and KGBVs will benefit from this scheme. Speaking to the media at the TDP office in

Tekkali, Agriculture Minister K Atchannaidu stated that the midday meal programme for intermediate students will commence from January. Additionally, the government will also provide educational kits to students.

Atchannaidu took the opportunity to criticise the previous YSRCP government, alleging that it misled farmers during its tenure and continued to make false promises. He remarked that despite public discontent, there has been no visible change in the conduct of YSRCP leaders.



4 killed, 9 injured as mini-bus hits lorry

PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

A horrific road accident claimed the lives of four persons and left nine others injured when a mini-bus collided with a lorry at Bulla Samudram village in Madakasira mandal of Sri Sathya Sai district on Saturday.

According to the police, the victims, hailing from KS Palli village in Amarapuram mandal, were returning from a pilgrimage to the hill shrine of Tirumala. While travelling back to their village, their mini-bus collided head-on with a lorry, killing four persons on the spot.

The deceased have been identified as Prem Kumar (30), Atarwa (2), Ratamma (70), and Manoj (32). The injured, including the mini-bus driver, were rushed to the Government General Hospital (GGH). The condition of five injured persons is reported to be critical.

The police suspect that the mini-bus driver may have dozed off at the wheel, leading to the accident. A case has been registered, and the bodies have been sent to GGH for postmortem. Investigations are ongoing.

HEAVY RAIN THREAT

CM puts officials on high alert



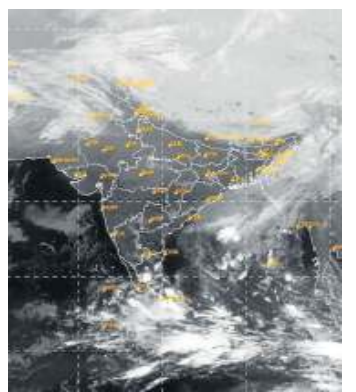
- CM Chandrababu Naidu directed officials in North Coastal districts to stay vigilant due to heavy rains from a Bay of Bengal depression.
- Urges quick assessment of crop damage and aid for affected farmers.
- Schools in rain-hit areas closed, low-lying residents alerted.
- The depression has weakened into a well-marked low-pressure area, expected to dissipate in 24 hours.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has instructed officials in the North Coastal districts to remain vigilant in view of heavy rains caused by a depression over the Bay of Bengal.

The Chief Minister reviewed the situation during a meeting held on Saturday. He emphasised that officials at all levels must stay on high alert as the north coastal districts are likely to experience heavy rainfall.

Highlighting the damage to crops in some areas due to the rains, the Chief Minister directed officials to assess crop losses promptly and provide assistance to affected farmers. He also instructed officials to alert



farmers about the weather conditions to mitigate potential losses. Continued on Page 2

GoM to study free bus ride for women

Panel to visit K'taka, TG to assess implementation of scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government has formed a Group of Ministers (GoM) to study the "Free Bus Travel for Women" scheme, which has already been successfully implemented in Karnataka and Telangana. The committee's objective is to visit these states, assess the scheme's implementation, and develop an appropriate model for Andhra Pradesh.

The committee will be led by M Ram Prasad Reddy, the Minister for Transport, Youth Services, and Sports. Vangalapati Anitha, the Minister for Home Affairs and Disaster Management, and Sandhya Rani, the Minister for Women and Child Welfare and Tribal Welfare, will serve



as members.

Government Order (G.O.Rt.No.2196) for the formation of the committee was issued by Chief Secretary, Dr Neerabh Kumar Prasad, on Saturday. The Principal Secretary of Transport and R & B has been tasked with coordinating the committee's activities and convening its meetings.

The government has directed the

committee to submit its report or recommendations promptly for further action. The "Free Bus Travel for Women" scheme was first promised by TDP National President N Chandrababu Naidu during the general elections, with plans to implement it by August 15 this year. However, the scheme has been delayed multiple times, mainly due to unresolved logistical challenges.

Opposition parties have criticised the TDP-led NDA government for failing to deliver on this election promise, especially since similar schemes are already in operation in Karnataka and Telangana. The state government hopes that studying these models will enable it to successfully implement the scheme in Andhra Pradesh.

AP Cabinet meet on Jan 2

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The TDP alliance government in Andhra Pradesh is set to offer a New Year gift to the people. As the New Year approaches, preparations are underway to launch a new initiative. On January 2, a key meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet will take place under the leadership of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu. The meeting will be held at the Secretariat in Amaravati, where crucial decisions are expected on various matters. Among the topics for discussion are the Polavaram project, the development of Amaravati, and the introduction of free bus travel for women.

The Andhra Pradesh government has already started working on the implementation of the free bus travel scheme for women.

Rs 150 cr for welfare of Christians: Kolusu

PNS ■ NUZVID

Minister for Housing and Information & Public Relations K Parthasarathy has announced that the government has earmarked Rs 150 crore for the welfare of Christians.

The Minister was the chief guest at a programme organised by TDP leaders B. Ilagaraja, B. Ramesh, and Prasanna Kumar on the eve of Christmas. He extended Christmas greetings to the people and distributed clothes and gifts to the elderly and underprivileged. Later, he also cut a cake as part of the Christmas celebrations.

In his address, Minister Parthasarathy reaffirmed the govern-



ment's commitment to the welfare of Christians and announced that Rs 150 crore had been allocated for their upliftment during the Chandrababu Naidu-led Government.

He further highlighted that funds had been set aside for the Jerusalem pilgrimage for Christians and to support higher education abroad.

Continued on Page 2

OBTUSE ANGLE



Allu Arjun was warned but he didn't listen: TG CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Pointing out that some political parties displayed their devilishness after the arrest of film hero Allu Arjun, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that BRS leaders who were ministers earlier are now criticising the government for arresting people who committed 'inhuman' acts.

The CM said the opposition is using offensive language and blaming the government when the person who was 'responsible' for a mother's death was summoned to the police station. The CM said the police did not give permission to celebrities to visit



'Allegations against me are false'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Actor Allu Arjun on Saturday said the incident in which a woman died and her son was hospitalised at a theatre here where 'Pushpa-2' was screened on December 4 was purely an accident and denied the allegations made by Telangana

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on the roadshow. Hours after Reddy slammed the actor for holding a roadshow and waving to the crowds at the theatre, without referring to anyone, the 'Pushpa 2' star refuted the allegations and said it was not a procession or a roadshow.

Continued on Page 2

Sandhya theatre due to space constraints as it had only a single entrance for the audience to enter and exit. The 'Pushpa -2' hero went to the theatre even though permission was not given, the CM said.

Raising the Sandhya theatre issue on Saturday in the Assembly, AIMIM floor leader Akbaruddin Owaisi demanded that the government should take strong action against those responsible for the Sandhya theatre incident. He said the film hero went to watch the movie despite the death of a woman in the stampede during the release of 'Pushpa-2'.

Continued on Page 2

CM's Language Transformation Becomes the Talk of the Town

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's recent change in language has left political circles buzzing. Once known for his harsh criticism, the CM has adopted a more refined tone, even referring to his rival, ex-CM KCR as "K Chandrashekar Rao garu" with notable respect. BRS leaders are attributing this transformation to Ganta Chakrapani, suggesting his feedback played a crucial role in influencing Revanth's shift. Meanwhile, Congress circles dismissed this claim and said that Ganta Chakrapani himself was influenced by Revanth and understood the Dora mindset. Regardless of the backstory, the shift in language is being seen as a conscious decision by the CM, marking a significant change in his public discourse. While the reasons behind the transformation remain a subject of debate, the polished tone is undeniably making waves in the political sphere. He may switch to his original tone during political campaigns

CM's 'Chai Pe Charcha' Leaves Journos Tongue-Tied

After a long and intense assembly session, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy hosted a casual chit-chat with the media, but with one unmissable condition—nothing discussed could be written or reported. Over two rounds of tea, the conversation meandered through a range of issues, from politics to policies, leaving reporters engrossed yet helpless. For journalists, it was the ultimate paradox—listening to a treasure trove of information while knowing they couldn't spill a word. As one seasoned reporter quipped, "It's like being handed a scoop and then told to bury it!" The session, though informal,

were not spontaneous. BRS MLAs brainstormed every evening to decide their look for the next day, proving that their "costume politics" were as meticulously planned as their speeches.

Call for Telangana Tenants Residential Rights and Residential Houses Act

With the Congress government restoring the Telangana Tenancy Rights and Agricultural Lands Act-1950 through its inclusion in the Bhu Bharati Act, discussions on tenant rights have gained traction. While the Act promises significant relief to tenant farmers, journalists covering the assembly debates on the legislation couldn't help but draw a parallel to their struggles. Journalists observed that just as tenant farmers are being protected, the government should consider the plight of residents, particularly those living in rented homes in Hyderabad. The suggestion of a "Telangana Tenants Rights and Residential Houses Act" emerged from these discussions, as the city's rental market continues to burden many, including journalists.

The issue became particularly pressing after the Supreme Court recently dismissed hopes of Hyderabad journalists being allotted house sites. With only a few owning homes, the majority are grappling with ever-increasing rents that far outpace stagnant salaries. The skyrocketing rental rates, coupled with no regulatory framework to control hikes, have left many tenants in a financial bind. A Telangana Tenants Rights and Residential Houses Act, modelled on the Telangana Tenancy Rights and Agricultural Lands Act-1950, could bring much-needed respite to the lakhs living in rented accommodations across Hyderabad. By addressing unchecked rent hikes and providing safeguards, such a move could alleviate the financial strain faced by countless families and professionals in the city. Whether this observation by journalists gains momentum and captures the government's attention remains to be seen, but the call for action underscores a growing concern for equitable housing policies in Hyderabad.

(With inputs from Naveena Ghanate and K Venkateshwarlu)

REPORTERS' DIARY

KTR's Quash Petition Raises Questions

In a surprising move, KTR's decision to file a quash petition in the Formula E case has set tongues wagging, particularly in Congress circles. The BRS leader had earlier announced that he would not seek anticipatory bail and was ready to face arrest. However, the quash petition has raised eyebrows, leading to speculation about whether KTR is having second thoughts about the arrest he once seemed prepared for. Congress leaders are quietly questioning if fear of arrest played a role in the change of strategy. While it's natural for anyone to be apprehensive about legal consequences, KTR's choice to pursue the quash route has added an unexpected twist. According to sources, legal experts advised him to go for the petition. What has also drawn attention is the engagement of Aryama Sundaram, one of the country's most expensive lawyers, to argue the case. After the conclusion of the proceedings, BRS leaders have been lauding the legal strategy, confidently stating that Sundaram's services are worth every rupee spent. For now, KTR's legal manoeuvre has sparked curiosity, leaving his political opponents to analyze whether this is a sign of caution or simply a calculated legal move.

BRS MLAs Turn Assembly Session Into a Thematic Spectacle

BRS MLAs turned heads throughout the Assembly session with their innovative protests, each day marked by a new theme. From wearing shirts featuring Revanth Reddy and Adani, to black shirts and hand-cuffs symbolising solidarity with Lagacherla farmers, their outfits carried messages loud and clear. Another day saw them arriving in autos and donning khaki attire, followed by green stoles to show support for farmers. While the themes brought attention to various issues, Congress wasn't impressed, deriding the displays as a "fancy dress competition." Whether it was a jest or a genuine critique, the mockery seemed to hit a chord, as the BRS MLAs abandoned themed protests on the final day of the session. Interestingly, these sartorial statements

TDP-Jana Sena sweeps NSLC, Krishna Eastern Delta PC polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Elections for the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal (NSLC) Project Committee (PC) and the Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee were conducted peacefully in the NTR and Krishna districts on Saturday. Both Chairman and Vice Chairman positions were filled unanimously without any untoward incidents.

The NSLC Project Committee elections were held at the Farmers' Training Centre in Vijayawada, while the Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee elections were conducted at the Collectorate in Machilipatnam.

TDP NTR district president Nettem Raghu Ram and Krishna district TDP president, APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, announced the candidates' names before the elections. As per the TDP-Jana Sena alliance agreement, the Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee Chairman post was allocated to the Jana Sena Party. Several MLAs attended the programmes and congratulated the newly elected office-bearers.

TDP state secretary and Chandralapadu Distributory Committee (DC) President Kota Veera Babu and former APEX Council member and Bapulapadu DC President Alla Venkata Gopala Krishna Rao were elected as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the NSLC Project Committee. Similarly, Koduru DC President Devanaboyina Venkateswara Rao (Jana Sena Party) and



Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal Project Committee election officer SE Sri Ramakrishna handing over declaration forms to Chairman Veera Babu and Vice Chairman Gopala Krishna Rao at the FTC in Vijayawada on Saturday.



Avanigadda MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad, APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, and Krishna district collector DK Balaji felicitating Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee Chairman Venkateswara Rao and Vice Chairman Ganesh at the Collectorate in Machilipatnam on Saturday.

Nidumolu DC President Vallurupalli Ganesh (TDP) were unanimously elected as the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee.

All 17 DC Presidents participated in the NSLC Project Committee election and elected Veera Babu and Gopala Krishna Rao unanimously. Pulichintala Project Superintending Engineer (SE) R Sri Ramakrishna conducted the election process and handed over the declaration forms to the elected leaders. Nandigama

MLA and Government Whip Tangirala Sowmya, Pamaru MLA Varla Kumar Raja, and others felicitated the newly elected Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Speaking on the occasion, Veera Babu assured that his committee would prioritise the irrigation needs of the 3.61 lakh acres under the NSP Left Canal ayacut. He also emphasised seeking government support to secure Nagarjuna Sagar water by engaging with the Telangana government. Vice Chairman Gopala Krishna Rao

pledged to ensure irrigation facilities till the tail-end of the ayacut.

The Krishna Eastern Delta Project Committee election was overseen by Irrigation Circle SE R Mohana Rao. A total of 32 DC Presidents from Krishna, NTR, and Eluru districts participated. After the elections, Avanigadda MLA Mandali Buddha Prasad, APSRTC Chairman Konakalla Narayana Rao, and Krishna district collector DK Balaji congratulated Chairman D Venkateswara Rao and Vice Chairman V Ganesh.

Atchannaidu assures farmers of grain procurement

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

State Minister for Agriculture, Marketing, Animal Husbandry, Dairy Development, and Fisheries, Kinjarapu Atchannaidu, has reassured farmers that the government will procure every grain of their produce, emphasizing the coalition government's commitment to agricultural welfare and state development.

At a press conference held at the Tekkali camp office, Minister Atchannaidu stated, "A state where farmers are happy is a prosperous state." He criticized the previous administration for its alleged poor governance, which disrupted systems, collapsed the economy, and amassed a significant debt.

In contrast, Atchannaidu highlighted the coalition government's efforts to restore power and irrigation systems, improve the state's standing at the national level, and secure 22 parliamentary seats. He noted that 95% of water reservoirs are now fully operational, ensuring better water



management and benefiting previously neglected areas like Palasa.

The government has distributed essential farming supplies, including seeds, fertilizers, and loans, during the Kharif season. Atchannaidu pledged timely paddy procurement, assuring payments would be credited to farmers' accounts within 48 hours. So far, 21 lakh metric tons of grain have been procured from 3.28 lakh farmers, with Rs 4,865 crore disbursed directly into their accounts.

To address labour shortages, the Minister urged farmers to adopt mechanization, particular-

ly for harvesting and processing. Steps have been taken to reduce paddy moisture levels from 24% to 14%, mitigating losses due to ongoing rains. He also promised benefits under the Annadata Sukhibhava scheme, providing Rs 20,000 to farmers, and announced the reintroduction of crop insurance for the upcoming Rabi season.

Highlighting infrastructure development, Atchannaidu acknowledged delays in road repairs since his tenure from 2014 to 2019 but assured their completion by Sankranti. He also discussed initiatives for pensions, ensuring widows receive immediate benefits and enabling arrears claims every three months.

Major projects under development include a Rs 60,000 crore refinery and a four-lane road from Bhogapuram to Moolapeta port, with rapid progress being made on the latter. Additionally, the government plans to elevate the tourism sector by granting it industrial status, aiming to generate employment.

AP FiberNet...

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The notice was sent not only to Ram Gopal Varma but also to former FiberNet MD Madirala Madhusudhan Reddy, Uyuru Guna Samshak Reddy, and RGV AARVI Group partners Gattimukkala Ravishankar Varma and RGV AARVI Group MD Ram Gopal Varma. The notice demands the payment of the total amount with interest within 15 days, as per the directives of FiberNet Chairman GV Reddy.

Tremors felt...

Continued from Page 1

In Thalluru mandal, Lakkavaram, Sivaramapuram, Ramabhadrapuram, Gangavaram, Ramanalavari, Korrappadu, Thurakapalem, and Dhosakayalapadu reported experiencing the tremors.

The CSIR-NGRI, Hyderabad, confirmed that the earthquake occurred at 10:22 a.m. and lasted for a few seconds. Local authorities have assured residents that there is no immediate cause for alarm.

Rs 150 cr for welfare of Christians...

Continued from Page 1

Minister Parthasarathy assured full support for the welfare of Christians, pointing out that the TDP government had allocated funds for the

development of 255 churches in the budget. He invoked the blessings of Jesus Christ for the health and prosperity of the

people of the state and appealed to the public to cooperate with the government for the State's progress. TDP lead-

ers, religious leaders, and Church representatives were among those who attended the programme.

Blood donation, cricket tourneys, poor-feeding mark Jagan's birthday

PNS ■ TADEPALLI

YSRCP celebrated the birthday of former chief minister and party chief, YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, with grandeur and enthusiasm across Andhra Pradesh and beyond.

The party headquarters was abuzz with festivities as leaders, cadres, and supporters gathered in large numbers.

The celebrations began with multi-faith prayers wishing for YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's well-being and success.

Party State Coordinator Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy inaugurated the event by cutting a cake amidst cheers and slogans.

Welfare activities took centre stage, with the distribution of sarees to underprivileged women and the launch of a blood donation camp in collaboration with the Guntur Red Cross.



Naidu greets YSRCP chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Saturday conveyed his birthday greetings to YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Reddy turned 52 on Saturday. He was the chief minister of the southern state from 2019 to 2024.

"Warm birthday greetings to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy Garu. May he be blessed with good health



and long life," said Naidu in a post on X. The TDP-led alliance unseated YSRCP in the Assembly elections held in May, 2024.

ves were held at local communities, orphanages, and hospitals, ensuring the day was marked with acts of kindness and service.

The Emmiganur constitu-

cy witnessed free blood donation camps and donations of chairs and bed sheets to hospitals, while party workers provided fruits, bread, and milk to patients.

Continued from Page 1

Minister Parthasarathy assured full support for the welfare of Christians, pointing out that the TDP government had allocated funds for the

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi:
Saptami: Dec 21 12:21 PM to Dec 22 02:32 PM
Ashtami: Dec 22 02:32 PM to Dec 23 05:08 PM
Nakshatram:
Uttara Phalguni: Dec 22 06:14 AM to Dec 23 09:09 AM
Rahukalam: 4:21 PM to 5:43 PM
Yamagandam: 12:14 PM to 1:37 PM
Varjyam: 02:18 PM to 04:06 PM
Gulika: 2:59 PM to 4:21 PM
Amritakalam: 01:04 AM to 02:52 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:52 AM to 12:36 PM
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 30°
Humidity: 68%
Sunrise: 6:32 AM
Sunset: 5:41 PM
Updated: December 21, 2024 5:00 PM

CM puts officials on...

Continued from Page 1

The Chief Minister's Office (CMO) briefed him on the prevailing weather conditions and the measures being taken by district Collectors in the affected regions. Officials informed him that schools in rain-affected areas have been closed as a precautionary measure and that residents in low-lying areas have been alerted.

According to an update from the Meteorological Department, the depression over the Bay of Bengal weakened into a well-marked low-pressure area on Saturday evening.

The system, which moved east-northeastwards, is expected to persist over the region for the next 24 hours before gradually dissipating over the sea.

Dy CM Pawan vows to...

Continued from Page 1

Educational improvements were also prioritised, with the announcement of a junior college for the mandal and additional funding for housing projects. He assured residents that roads would be built in villages with fewer than 100 people and promised to address concerns related to G.O. No. 3 with the Chief Minister.

The Deputy Chief Minister praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu for their contributions to tribal development. Prominent attendees included MLAs Bandaru Satyanarayana Murthy, Panchakarika Ramesh Babu, Sundarapu Vijay Kumar, RTC Director Nimma Gangudora, and other officials, showcasing a united effort for tribal progress.

'Allegations against... Allu Arjun was warned ...

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"There is a lot of misinformation that I behaved in a particular way. These are wrong allegations. It's humiliating and a character assassination. There is a lot of misinformation going on, a lot of false allegations, especially character assassination," he told reporters in a hurriedly held press conference. Describing the death of the woman as an accident, he said he was not blaming anyone as it is an unfortunate incident. A 35-year-old woman died and her eight-year-old son was hospitalised on December 4 during a stampede-like situation at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad when thousands of fans jostled to have a glimpse of the actor at the premiere of the blockbuster 'Pushpa 2'. Following the incident, the city police registered a case against Allu Arjun, his security team, and the theatre management under different sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Chikkapally police station based on the complaint lodged by the deceased woman's family. Allu Arjun was arrested by the city police in connection with the death of the woman on December 13. The Telangana High Court granted him a four-week interim bail on the same day and he was released from a prison here on December 14 morning.

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Akbaruddin said Allu Arjun had waved at fans while going to watch the movie without taking responsibility for the incident and asked the government to take steps to prevent such incidents from happening again.

Reacting to Akbaruddin's demand, the CM said that there would have been no objection if the hero had just gone to the theatre, watched the movie and left. While going to the theatre, he opened the roof of his car on the road and conducted a roadshow. People from theatres nearby suddenly came towards Sandhya Theatre resulting in a stampede.

"Revathi died in the stampede and her son went into a coma. The mother did not let go of her son's hand even during the stampede. That is the love of a mother for her child. She died holding her son's hand in an

attempt to save him," the CM said.

He said there was a stampede inside the theatre also when Allu entered. "The local ACP told Allu that there was a possibility of law and order incidents. But he did not listen. The city police commissioner said that Allu did not agree to leave the place. Then the DCP told Allu that he would be arrested if he did not leave. While leaving too, Allu opened the roof of his car and conducted a roadshow. Police filed a case against the hero and the theatre management. The police did their duty when they gave irresponsible answers," the CM said.

He said the family bought movie tickets for their son by paying Rs 12,000, that is, Rs 3,000 each for four tickets. The family said their son was a big fan of the hero. When the mother

er died in the theatre, the hero did not visit the grieving family and the child is undergoing treatment in a hospital.

The CM said the government permitted special shows to promote the film industry. "Is it justifiable to let go a person who is responsible for the death of a mother? Is there any special law for film actors and political leaders? The government is functioning as per the Constitution drafted by Dr BR Ambedkar," the CM said.

The CM said that film celebrities made a beeline to console Allu who went to jail but no one visited the victim's family. "I don't know what film celebrities want. The movie business is not wrong but we will not tolerate endangering others' lives. Such things will not be permitted as long as we are in power," the CM warned.

Collector vows to illuminate NTR dist under 'PM Surya Ghar' scheme

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha has said that he will strive to ensure that all households in the district will be illuminated under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana. He stated that this initiative, inspired by the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, would enhance financial stability and promote environmental sustainability. He set a target to convert two lakh houses into Surya Ghars by 31 March next year.

The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and the Electricity Department organised an awareness programme for Self-Help Groups (SHGs) members from urban and rural areas at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Saturday. Dr Lakshminsha, who attended the event as the chief guest, unveiled posters of the scheme. Addressing the gathering,



he highlighted the pivotal role SHG members could play in achieving the target. He said the district aims to lead the state by converting two lakh households into Surya Ghars. He added that families would benefit from free solar power

by investing a minimal amount, supported by substantial subsidies. Dr Lakshminsha explained that the scheme would generate around 1,000 billion units of power and reduce carbon emissions by 720 million tonnes over 25

years, contributing to environmental conservation.

Under the scheme, households can install solar panels with capacities up to 3 KW, with subsidies of up to 40% of the installation cost. For example, a 1 KW system would

receive a subsidy of Rs 30,000, while a 3 KW system would receive Rs 78,000. Beneficiaries are required to invest Rs 20,000, with the remaining cost eligible for bank loans at a concessional interest rate of 7%.

Households can save approximately Rs 32,000 annually on electricity bills and recover their investment within four to five years, after which they can enjoy free power for up to 20 years. Additionally, surplus power supplied to the grid could generate Rs 2.09 per unit as income. Currently, there are 601 Surya Ghar connections in the district, which are expected to increase to two lakh soon.

NTR District Assistant Collector Shubham Nokhwal, DRDA PD K Srinivasa Rao, Electricity SE A Murali Mohan, Surya Ghar Nodal Officer M Bhaskar, Lead Bank UBI Deputy Regional Head ISN Murthy, LDM K Priyanka, UCD PO Venkata Ratnam, MEPMA PD Sai Babu, and others attended the event.



5-day 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana' off to a grand start

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The five-day Bhavani Deeksha Viramana commenced on a grand note on Saturday at the Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada. The temple's Executive Officer (EO), KS Rama Rao, and Chief Priest Vishnubhotla Siva Prasad Sharma inaugurated the event by performing Agni Pratishtapana. They lit the Homa Gundam (holy fire), allowing devotees to have Durga Devi darshan from 6.30 am amidst Vedic chants.

Devotees from across the state and neighbouring regions flocked to the temple to conclude their 41-day and 21-day-long Bhavani Deeksha. They performed Giri Pradakshina, walking over 6 kilometres barefoot around Indrakeeladri Hill and taking a holy dip in the Krishna river before entering the queue lines. The temple authorities deployed specially trained Guru Bhavanis to assist with the relinquishment rituals at the Mallikharjuna Mahalaxmi Pratishtapana of minimum wages for sanitation workers sought

A 4-km-long queue line was arranged from the Vinayaka temple to the sanctum sanctorum. After darshan, devotees offered ghee-filled coconuts and Irumudi materials at the Homa Gundam at the hill's base. On the first day, about 50,000 devotees visited the temple to complete the relinquishment of their Deeksha.

EO KS Rama Rao noted that by 4 pm, 28,000 devotees had darshan, with another 22,000 visiting the temple by 11 pm. "We expect around 6-7 lakh devotees this year, with a significant increase in numbers on Sunday," he said, adding that all necessary arrangements for hassle-free darshan were made in coordination with other departments. He urged officials and staff to maintain restraint and ensure smooth proceedings throughout the five-day festival.

Meanwhile, NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha monitored the Deeksha Viramana Mahotsavam from the Integrated Command Control Room at the Model

CCTV and drone visuals, he later inspected queue lines, Homa Gundam, Anna Prasadam, Laddu Prasadam, and security arrangements. He also interacted with devotees, enquiring about the facilities and the newly introduced QR Tag Bands to prevent missing children cases.

NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu reviewed security arrangements, stating that 1,900 CCTV cameras and the Astram App were deployed to manage traffic and ensure safety. Two Homa Gundas and multiple holding areas were set up for the devotees, he added.

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Commissioner HM Dhyanchandra inspected sanitation, drinking water supplies, and other amenities. Temporary arrangements included 150 toilets, 10,000 water bottles, and 5 lakh water sachets for devotees. He also instructed staff at bathing ghats to periodically remove discarded red clothes to maintain cleanliness.



NTR district's public grievance efforts lauded

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Secretary of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Parthasarathy Bhaskar, praised the NTR district administration for its exemplary work in addressing public concerns through the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS) and Revenue Conferences.

The DARPG, the nodal agency of the Government of India for administrative reforms and grievance redressal mechanisms, recognised the district's proactive and efficient handling of grievances. Bhaskar commended the administration's commitment to resolving issues promptly while ensuring transparency and accountability in governance.

As part of the Good Governance Week celebrations, Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore, from December 19 to 24, Bhaskar visited the Gudavalli Sachivalayam-1 in Vijayawada Rural Mandal on Saturday.

SRM University-AP hosts second Research Scholars' Summit

18 GOLD AND 14 SILVER MEDALS PRESENTED FOR OUTSTANDING RESEARCH PAPERS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University-AP conducted the second edition of its prestigious Research Scholars' Summit, which brought together 27 universities from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The two-day event featured an impressive 243 abstract submissions from a diverse range of research fields.

The summit focused on four major thematic areas: Engineering and Technology; Medicine, Life Sciences, Agriculture and Fisheries; Management, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Applied Sciences, including Computational Physics. These thematic areas were further divided into various subtopics, highlighting the breadth of research presented.

The event was graced by Shri Mannava Mohan Krishna, Honourable Chairman of Andhra Pradesh Technology Services, who was the chief guest. Shri Mohan Krishna outlined his vision for collaboration between researchers and the government, stating, "We want to work with you, partner with you to serve the people better." He also highlighted Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's ambition to position



the state as a technological hub, calling such summits a promising starting point. He mentioned the state government's WhatsApp governance initiative, which will launch 153 services, showcasing how technology can enhance governance and benefit society.

In his address, Prof. Manoj K. Arora, Vice Chancellor of SRM University-AP, emphasised the importance of the summit as a platform for sharing ideas and advancing researchers' careers. He also noted SRM AP's growing prominence in the scientific

community, stating, "In just seven and a half years since its inception, the university has established its presence on the scientific landscape." He encouraged students to prioritise the societal impact of their work, urging them to view their PhD as a symbol of Passion, Hard Work, and Dedication. He further advised students to carefully plan their professional futures, whether as educators, researchers, or entrepreneurs, and assured them that SRM AP would provide the necessary resources for their journeys. Prof. Arora

also invited scholars from other institutions to utilise SRM AP's world-class research facilities.

The summit's academic presentations culminated in the awarding of 18 gold medals, 14 silver medals, and several special mention awards across multiple categories for exceptional research contributions. The success of the summit was made possible through the efforts of Sibendu Samanta, Jatis Kumar Dash, and Manikanta Bandlamudi, whose organisation and leadership were instrumental in the summit's smooth execution.



6 new RTC buses added to fleet of Parvathipuram depot

PNS ■ PARVATHIPURAM

Minister of Transport, Youth Affairs, and Sports Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy inaugurated six new buses at the Parvathipuram Bus Complex, marking a substantial step towards enhancing public transport services in the region.

During the inauguration, the Minister unveiled the introduction of 2,000 electric buses into the RTC fleet, marking a landmark move towards environmental sustainability and modernisation. He outlined plans for comprehensive restructuring of the transport department, including the recruitment of new drivers and conductors and the enhancement of RTC infrastructure to streamline operations and elevate commuter experiences statewide.

Speaking to a gathering, Minister Ramprasad Reddy emphasized the government's focus on uplifting backward regions like Parvathipuram. "Parvathipuram requires spe-

cial attention to drive growth and uplift the region," he stated, reiterating the administration's dedication to regional development.

The Minister also addressed concerns raised by RTC employees, including disciplinary actions and night halt allowances. He assured them of better working conditions and immediate measures to resolve these issues.

The Minister outlined several additional initiatives to bolster RTC operations, including road repairs, expansion of RTC cargo services, and plans to lease RTC properties for 33 years. He also announced efforts to resolve pending RTC land disputes and seek funding from the Government of India for road development projects. In addition to transport reforms, Minister Ramprasad Reddy unveiled ambitious sports infrastructure projects, such as a state-of-the-art sports complex, an indoor stadium, and a new Road Transport Authority (RTA) building.

2,152 kg of ganja, 0.78 g of opium seized so far: V'nagaram SP

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Superintendent of Police Vakul Jindal has announced that the district police have seized 2,152 kg of ganja and 0.78 grams of opium to date.

Speaking to the media on Saturday, the SP confirmed that a total of 2,152.139 kg of ganja, worth Rs 1,02,30,415, had been seized in the district. Additionally, 0.78 grams of opium were confiscated from

drug peddlers. The police have also opened history sheets against those arrested for transporting or selling ganja.

Since assuming office as the Vizianagaram SP on July 17, Jindal stated that he had prioritised tackling the ganja menace in the district. He mentioned that efforts were made to raise public awareness about the harmful effects of ganja.

The SP further informed that five checkpoints had been

established to monitor vehicles and prevent the illegal transportation of cannabis. In addition, surprise and dynamic vehicle checks are conducted at 10 locations. These measures have significantly curtailed the illegal transport of cannabis, he added.

SP Vakul Jindal also revealed that 247 individuals had been arrested so far for illegally transporting ganja, with 81 cases registered against them.

Visakhapatnam students win US fellowship for seagrass restoration project

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Four final-year students from Dr Lankapalli Bullayya College in Visakhapatnam have made their city proud by winning a 10-day fellowship tour to the USA. T Harshitha, A Tejabambik, M Ashwini, and J Karthikeya Narayana secured this prestigious fellowship as part of the Climate Tank Accelerator competition, a collaborative initiative between the Student Society for Climate Change Awareness and Seeds of Peace USA.

Their project, "Pioneering Blue Carbon Ecosystems: Restoring Seagrass Meadows in Visakhapatnam Coast," focuses on restoring the coastal ecosystem using seagrass

species found on the Odisha coast. Seagrasses are crucial in combating climate change, absorbing more carbon dioxide than terrestrial plants, stabilizing coastal sediments, and providing vital habitats for marine life.

Under the guidance of their faculty member, B. Madhavi, the students identified two species - Halophila Ovalis and Halodule Pinifolia - from the Chilika Lagoon in Odisha and replanted them along Mangamaripeta Beach, located between Visakhapatnam and Bheemili. The team also recognized the importance of public awareness, engaging schools, colleges, divers, and local communities through an art exhibition that merged cre-

ativity with science. Their determination and hard work culminated in this fellowship, which will provide them with further insights and opportunities to contribute to restoring and preserving coastal ecosystems. The project reflects the students' dedication to environmental sustainability and positions Visakhapatnam as a hub for innovative climate solutions.

The students' achievement sets an inspiring example for young minds to innovate and act for a sustainable future. With their fellowship tour to the USA, they aim to gain valuable knowledge and expertise, further solidifying Visakhapatnam's reputation as a leader in environmental sustainability.



Integrated Sports Complex to come up in Tenali: Manohar

PNS ■ TENALI

Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar has announced the construction of an Integrated Sports Complex in Tenali at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crore.

Addressing the media on Saturday, the Minister revealed that 1.76 acres of municipal land would be acquired for the project, which will include volleyball and basketball courts along with a swimming pool.

He further stated that rural roads in the Tenali constituency would be developed at a cost of Rs 25 crore. "The Tenali-Kollipara road will be upgraded into a CC road. Additionally, the Chinavuru road will be beautified at a cost of Rs 20 lakh, and Rs 1.15 crore has been allocated to enhance the Itanagar walkers park," he said.

The Minister assured that ongoing repairs on the Duggirala-Mangalagiri road would be completed by Sankranti. Highlighting the



government's focus on promoting sports, he announced plans to develop all stadiums in Tenali town, with completion also targeted by Sankranti.

"A comprehensive development plan for Tenali town is

being prepared. This includes the widening of the Tenali-Vijayawada-Guntur highway and steps to provide protected drinking water," he added.

The Minister also emphasised the importance of improving

rural infrastructure. He disclosed that Rs 25 crore had been sanctioned to reconstruct damaged roads in the constituency. CCTV cameras would be installed at key locations in Tenali to enhance security, he noted.

'Most petitions received from public are about land disputes'

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy stated that the majority of grievances received from the public are related to land disputes.

The Minister participated in a revenue sadassu organised at Ayyapurajuplem village in Marripudi mandal, where he received petitions and listened to the grievances of the people.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to resolving land disputes permanently. He said the revenue sadassu are being conducted to address land-related issues and appealed to the public to take advantage of this initiative.

Acknowledging the high number of land disputes across the State, the Minister explained that the Government launched the revenue sadassu to tackle these issues systematically. He directed officials to resolve the disputes within the stipulated timeframe and affirmed the Government's



determination to safeguard the inherited land rights of the people. Joint Collector R Gopal Krishna informed that the revenue sadassu would continue across the State until January 8, 2025, during which efforts would be made to resolve land disputes. Receipts would be issued for all petitions, and prompt action would be taken to address grievances.

The Joint Collector added that the sadassu would also

address issues such as caste certificates and family member certificates.

Additionally, the Joint Collector highlighted the ongoing 'Clean and Green' Prakasam district programme aimed at maintaining cleanliness across the district, from village to district levels.

Officials including RDO Keshava Reddy, MDO Arjun Naik, and Social Welfare DD Lakshmi Naik were present at the event.



'TDP alliance's win in WUA polls a slap in the face for YSRCP'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Water Resources Minister Nimmala Rama Naidu has made critical remarks against the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and its leader, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, following the resounding victory of the TDP-led alliance in the State's Water User Association (WUA) elections. Rama Naidu described the outcome as a "slap in the face" for the ruling party and its leadership.

Highlighting the significance of the win, the minister noted that farmers overwhelmingly supported the TDP alliance in the elections held after a six-year gap. He alleged that the YSRCP government had rendered the irrigation sector ineffective, prompting farmers to rally behind the opposition.

Rama Naidu claimed that over one crore farmers participated in the elections, with alliance candidates securing an unequivocal mandate. He expressed confidence that the strengthened irrigation associations would play a vital role in revitalising the sector in the days to come.

2 notorious vehicle lifters arrested, 27 bikes recovered

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The police have arrested two notorious bike lifters and chain snatchers, recovering 27 stolen motorcycles and 39.6 grams of gold jewellery.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Adnan Nayeem Asmi informed the media on Saturday that the accused, Kala Ramesh and Kadali Baby, were apprehended by Veeravasaram police. Cases were registered against them under Sections 205/204 U/s 307, 134, 304 R/w 3 (5) of the B.N.S. Act.

The accused, who had previously worked in Hyderabad with Rapido and Swiggy, returned to West Godavari district in April 2025. Reportedly addicted to vices, they resorted to criminal activities to fund their habits,



including snatching gold chains from women and stealing motorcycles.

Over 30 cases were registered against the duo at police stations in Palakollu, Poduru, Veeravasaram, Palakoderu, and Bhimavaram. On December 12, 2024, they targeted a septuagenarian woman, M Pedditilamma, at Madugu Polavaram village, snatching her gold chain while riding a motorcycle.

A police team, led by Veeravasaram Sub-Inspector M Raj Kumar, arrested the accused on Saturday in the Budarayudu Cheruvu area. The team recovered 27 stolen motorcycles and gold jewellery valued at Rs 20.80 lakh.

SP Asmi lauded the police team for their swift action. Bhimavaram DSP RG Jayasurya, ClB Srinivas, and SI M Raj Kumar were also present during the announcement.

5th Amaravati AP Flower Show begins in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The 5th Amaravati Andhra Pradesh Flower Show was inaugurated on Saturday by Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao and Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad at the Siddhartha Hotel Management College in Mogalrajapuram, Vijayawada. The six-day event will continue until December 26, featuring an impressive collection of flowers, plants, honey, fertilisers, and gardening essentials across 50 stalls.

The event has attracted around 100 participants from various districts, with highlights including honey sourced from Araku and Rajamahendravaram. Open daily from 9:00 AM to 9:30 PM, the flower show promises a vibrant experience for gardening enthusiasts and families.

Visitors can explore a wide



variety of flowers, plants, terrarium displays, lawn arrangements, and gardening supplies from different states.

The show is organised by SVR Events under the leadership of Garimella Janakiramaiah. Vijayawada Municipal

Corporation Corporator Chennupati Usha Rani and other dignitaries also graced the occasion.



Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy gives Rs.25 lakh cheque to Sri Tej's father on Saturday in KIMS hospital premises

Govt tenders apologies to Sri Tej family: Venkat Reddy

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Stating that the government is also tendering apologies to the Sri Tej family, Roads and Buildings and Cinematography Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy said that the government will not allow benefits shows in Telangana. However, the Minister said that the government will consider the patriotic films and cinemas related to Telangana history and message oriented films.

Speaking to the media after visiting Sri Tej at KIMS hospital on Saturday evening,

Venkat Reddy said, "I also saw Pushpa-2 film. I decided to watch only historical and Telangana movies. We can do many things in our life in 3 hours time instead of watching a movie. The youth is spoiled by movies".

Venkat Reddy said that no benefit shows and nothing in Telangana from now onwards. The film heroes should follow rules and regulations. Cinema people should not come out if not given police permission. The heroes should not conduct rallies in open top cars if they come for shows. Not to repeat these sorts of incidents in future.



Two siblings electrocuted while switching on motor

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a tragic incident, two siblings lost their lives due to electrocution while switching on an electric motor at their agricultural field in Maruvada village, Jiyammavalasa mandal, Parvathipuram Manyam district, on Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Vaikuntapuram Sreenu (40)

and Vaikuntapuram Simha chalam (37). According to the police, a short circuit caused electricity to pass through the motor. When one of them was electrocuted, the other rushed to help but was also fatally electrocuted.

The police have registered a case and sent the bodies to the Government General Hospital (GGH) for a post-mortem examination.

Vice President Dhankhar to visit TG for two days

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Secretary to the government Shanti Kumari on Saturday held a review meeting with high-ranking officials at the Secretariat regarding arrangements for the visit of Indian Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar to the State for two days on December 25 and 26.

Shanti Kumari mentioned that during the visit, the Vice President will visit the ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Tuniki, Kaudipalli mandal of Medak district on December 25, where he will interact with 500 farmers practising organic farming. She added that they will stay at Kanha Shantivanam on the night of December 25.

According to the Blue Book, officials from all departments have been instructed to make arrangements in a coordinated manner for the two-day visit. Shanti Kumari directed the Collectors of Ranga Reddy and Medak districts, along with officials from the Deputy President's office and senior officers from all departments to ensure smooth coordination.

The DGP was directed to make strong security arrange-



ments, including traffic management and security. The health department officials were instructed to provide adequate medical facilities during the visit. The R&B department has been tasked with repairing roads along the Vice President's route, while TSS PDCL was directed to ensure uninterrupted power supply. Similarly, the fire department was advised to make necessary arrangements.

The CS ordered officers from concerned departments to maintain security and other arrangements until the Vice

President's departure on the morning of December 26.

In this meeting, DGP Jitender, Special Principal Secretary Home Department Ravi Gupta, Special Principal Secretary Transport, Roads and Buildings Department Vikas Raj, GAD Secretary Raghunandan Rao, DG Fire Services Nagireddy, TSSPDCL MD Musharraf Ali, Special Commissioner Information Civil Relations Department Harish, Director Protocol Collectors of Venkat Rao, Ranga Reddy and Medak districts participated.

AP HC issues key directives on tree translocation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has issued directions to the State government, emphasising the preservation of trees during infrastructure projects. The court directed that instead of felling trees entirely for road construction, power line installations, and government building projects, they should be translocated to alternative locations.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur and Justice Cheemalapati Ravi instructed the Chief Secretary (CS) to form a committee to study the feasibility of translocation. The court also permitted the inclusion of experts as members of the committee at the CS's discretion.

The High Court stated that the government cannot cite the unavailability of equipment as an excuse for not translocating trees. It stressed the importance of implementing a policy decision to allocate necessary resources, regardless of the cost, for tree translocation. The bench further directed the submission of a detailed report



on the matter by March 12, when the next hearing is scheduled.

The directions were issued in response to a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by A Mohammed Sheikh Shah, a medical student from Guntur. The petitioner sought the court's intervention to mandate the translocation of trees being felled for development projects.

The petitioner's counsel argued that indiscriminate tree felling disrupts the ecological balance and highlighted the availability of technology for translocation. The court acknowledged these arguments and noted that translocation methods are already in practice in several locations, including abroad.

'Govt committed to uplift of 'Noor Basha' community'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

State Legislative Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyanna Patrudu has reiterated the government's commitment to the welfare of the Noor Basha Dudekula community, promising support in education, employment, and skill development.

Speaking at an event attended by Minority Welfare Minister NMD Farooq and local MLA Panchakarla Ramesh Babu, the Speaker stressed the state's focus on uplifting the community through targeted initiatives.

The occasion marked the inauguration of the Dudekula

Welfare Building, built entirely with self-donations, showcasing the community's resilience and unity.

Addressing the gathering, the Speaker assured the government's full cooperation in creating opportunities for the community's youth. He highlighted the need for skill training programmes tailored to job requirements and pledged support for job seekers, entrepreneurs, and artisans. Urging self-reliance, he encouraged the youth and women to explore self-employment opportunities, emphasising product branding and market expansion through creativity and strategic marketing.

Minority Welfare Minister NMD Farooq called on the community to utilise opportunities provided by the State and Central governments. He underlined the importance of skill development and collective efforts to maintain self-respect and secure rights.

Local MLA Panchakarla Ramesh Babu praised the event for fostering unity and inspiring future generations. He expressed confidence that the youth would excel in education and employment, contributing to the community's progress.

The programme concluded with the recognition of distinguished members of the Dudekula community.



ACROSS THE STATES

INSURGENCY OVER IN NE

Time for change in approach of police: Shah



Maharashtra Assembly prorogued

The Maharashtra legislative assembly was prorogued on Saturday after the end of the winter session. The budget session of the Maharashtra legislature will commence in Mumbai on March 3. The prorogation order issued by Maharashtra governor C P Radhakrishnan was read out by Speaker Rahul Narwekar. The six-day winter session witnessed uproar over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's remarks on B R Ambedkar, violence in Parbhani city in central Maharashtra over the desecration of a replica of the Constitution, and the murder of a sarpanch in Beed. The first session of the 15th assembly, held after elections, saw six sittings at an average attendance of 72.90 per cent, said Narwekar. The total duration of the assembly proceedings was 46.26 hours with a daily sitting average of 7.44 hours.



Woman, 3 children found hanging in UP village

Bodies of a woman and her three children were found hanging under suspicious circumstances at a village in Uttar Pradesh's Pratapgarh district on Saturday, police said. The husband of the deceased woman is absconding, they added. Superintendent of Police (SP) Anil Kumar said the bodies of Komal alias Durgeshwari Devi (23) and her triplets aged one-and-a-half-year each were found hanging at Bhadohi village under the Kotwali Dehat police station limits. Police have launched a probe after sending the bodies for post-mortem, the officer said. Sandeep Kumar alias Teja, a resident of Bhadohi village, married Komal three years ago. One-and-a-half-year after their marriage, Komal gave birth to triplets -- son Raunak and daughters Lakshmi and Jwala, the SP said. On Friday night, Sandeep Kumar beat up Komal under the influence of alcohol, and when his mother came to save her, he thrashed her as well, the officer said.



UNICEF, WB join forces to combat juvenile diabetes

UNICEF is working with the West Bengal government to provide treatment to children with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as juvenile diabetes, an official said on Saturday. Juvenile diabetes, also known as Type 1 diabetes, is caused when a child's body destroys cells in the pancreas that produce insulin to keep blood sugar levels stable. As a result, the children have to inject insulin several times a day. "UNICEF is collaborating with West Bengal's health and family welfare department and IPGEMR and SSKM Hospital to develop a primary health care (PHC) oriented model for prevention and control of NCDs in children through strengthening of community and primary healthcare systems and provisions," Dr Monjur Hossain, chief of UNICEF in West Bengal, said at a programme organised by the West Bengal Academy of Paediatrics. Monjur, a former pediatric practitioner, said he held meetings with experts at IPGEMR & SSKM Hospital and visited the laboratories, clinics, and other facilities to take stock of juvenile diabetes treatment and care in the state.

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday said the time has come for a change in approach of the police force with the end of insurgency in the northeast, in order to ensure that people get speedy justice. Shah, addressing the 72nd plenary of the North Eastern Council (NEC) here, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought peace in the region by inking 20 peace accords in 10 years, leading to the surrender of 9,000 armed militants. "The police fought insurgency in the northeast for the past four decades. As insurgency has now

ended, we need to change the approach of the force to ensure people get justice within three years of lodging FIRs," he said. The home minister also said connectivity is no longer a problem in the region, as the Centre has spent Rs 81,000 crore for rail connectivity and Rs 41,000 crore for road network in the north-eastern states. Asserting that PM Modi expedited development activities in the northeast, Shah said Union ministers "spent 700 nights" in states of the region since the BJP-led NDA assumed power at the Centre. "After the exchange of enclaves (land boundary agreements)



with Bangladesh, the whole world will open for the northeast. This will change the investment ecosystem in the region," he said.

The senior BJP leader also laid emphasis on the upliftment of people in rural areas by promoting vegetable cultivation, production of milk, eggs and meat.

Asks banks to frame separate guidelines for Northeast

AGARTALA: Agartala, Dec 21 (PTI) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday asked the country's banks to frame separate guidelines for the Northeast, saying the region's development is a national responsibility. Addressing a Bankers' Conclave here, he said the banks should try to devise proper policies so that the Northeast's potentials could be explored properly. "You have to

frame separate guidelines, separate parameters for the Northeast. Don't consider the Northeast as business opportunity. Development of the Northeast is a national responsibility," he said. The home minister asked Secretary Banking in the Ministry of Finance, NABARD and SBI to work on it so that a robust banking parameters are framed for the Northeast.



Gadchiroli to be the next 'steel city'

District will be Naxal-free in three years: Fadnavis

PNS ■ NAGPUR

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday asserted that the state's Gadchiroli district will be Naxal-free in the next three years and Gadchiroli town will be the 'steel city' of India. Replying to the debate on the opposition-sponsored last week motion in the legislative assembly here, Fadnavis listed several infrastructure projects across the state and farmer-centric initiatives.

He said the northern part of the Gadchiroli district, bordering Telangana and Chhattisgarh, has been rid of Naxals and is on the path of development. Naxals have either been killed or surrendered, he said. About 1,500 youth from the district, which is in the state's Vidarbha region, have joined the police force of which 150 are from families of Naxals, the CM said. "There has been no recruitment by Naxals from Maharashtra. In the next three years, Naxalism will be com-

pletely eradicated from Gadchiroli," he said. Fadnavis said capacity building for Gadchiroli, about 900 km from Mumbai, to make it the "steel city" of India is in full swing. He said Gondia and Gadchiroli are being linked through the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Expressway. Since 2022, when the Maha Vikas Aghadi government collapsed and BJP-led Mahayuti took charge of the state, 47 projects and investments worth Rs 1.23 lakh crore have come to the Vidarbha region, he said. The CM called the new regime a continuation of the government of 2022 when his present deputy Eknath Shinde was the CM. "Only responsibilities have changed. The development works (in the state) are a continuation of the efforts in the last two and a half years. Collectively, we have taken all decisions," said Fadnavi, whose party BJP has Shiv Sena and NCP as partners in the government.

'Inconceivable that NEP not implemented in some states'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said it was "inconceivable" that the NEP was yet to be implemented in some states, and rued the lack of "pressure" by the academia, intelligentsia and the media on them to do so.

Dhankhar said it was time that people leave behind partisan thinking and prioritise the country's interests. "Let nationalism and the principle of nation first always guide us," he said referring to opposition to the National Education Policy (NEP) by some state governments. "I am pained and disturbed on two counts -- one, some states have not adopted it. I am sure this is inconceivable on any rational ground. How can this happen? And this happens because academia, intelligentsia, those in journalism they don't generate that pressure," he said while



addressing the 5th Global Alumni Meet at the Panjab University here on the theme "Promoting Collaboration for Excellence and Sustainability". We cannot afford to oppose in politics at the cost of nationalism or development, the vice president said. Stressing the crucial role alumni networks can play in strengthening the educational ecosystem, Dhankhar strongly advocated that universities nurture schools. If it becomes a national culture, it will define our education and really give a cutting edge to our National

Education Policy, he said. The vice president said countries are known by the institutions they nurture because they are crucibles of innovation and research. "They catalyse the change, they create concepts. It is innovation that is translated by industry by process of execution and therefore countries that are ahead in research and develop research are the countries that emerge as world leaders," he said. Dhankhar noted that the alumni of the Panjab University have occupied positions of the prime minister, cabinet ministers, cabinet secretaries, distinguished positions in the armed forces, in journalism, in art, in culture, in sports. "...Just imagine the power of the alumni if they act in a structured manner they can nurture the alma mater. Results will not be geometrical they will be incremental," he said.

Opposition does not have concrete issue to raise: Jitan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The country's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru was "anti-reservation", Union minister Jitan Ram Manjhi said on Saturday, and slammed the Opposition for claiming Home Minister Amit Shah insulted B R Ambedkar through his remarks in Parliament. The Union MSME Minister and the leader of the Hindustani Awam Morcha, a key NDA ally, made the remarks when asked about the Opposition's attack on Shah. "They (Opposition) do not have any (concrete) issue to raise that is why they are saying this. We have the agenda of taking the nation forward from a political as well as economic point of view," he said. He said that during his speech in Rajya Sabha, Shah challenged the Congress saying they take Ambedkar's name but do not follow him.

India's green cover increases by 1,445 sq km

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's total forest and tree cover has increased by 1,445 sq km since 2021, reaching 25.17 per cent of the total geographical area in 2023, according to the latest government data. The India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, released on Saturday, said that the country's total forest cover increased to 7,15,343 sq km in 2023, reaching 21.76 per cent of its geographical area. The tree cover increased by 1,289 sq km and now constitutes 3.41 per cent of the country's geographical area, it said. Together, the forest and tree cover amount to 8,27,357 sq km or 25.17 per cent of India's geographical area. This marks an overall increase of 1,445 sq km from 2021, with forest cover alone rising by 156 sq km. According to the Forest Survey of India (FSI), forest

cover refers to all land that has a tree canopy density of more than 10 per cent and spans over an area of one hectare or more, regardless of the type of ownership or legal status. This includes natural forests as well as man-made plantations, orchards and tree patches in urban and rural areas that meet the size and canopy density criteria. Tree cover is defined as patches of trees and isolated trees outside the Reserved

Forest Area (RFA) that are less than one hectare. Madhya Pradesh continues to lead in total forest and tree cover, followed by Arunachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, according to the report. Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and Rajasthan recorded the largest gains in forest and tree cover while Mizoram, Gujarat and Odisha showed the highest increases in forest cover specifically.

REMARKS ON AMBEDKAR ISSUE

Cong to hold campaign seeking HM's resignation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress will hold protest marches against Union Home Minister Amit Shah for "insulting" BR Ambedkar and observe a weeklong campaign on the issue, party leaders said on Saturday.

As part of the "Ambedkar Samman Saptah", Congress workers and leaders will hold marches and press conferences to remember the legacy of B R Ambedkar, they said. The Congress and the BJP are at loggerheads over Shah's



remarks on Ambedkar in Parliament. AICC general secretary K C Venugopal said party MPs and leaders will hold press conferences at 150 locations

across the country on December 22 and 23 and workers will take out protest marches across the country on December 24. "Our agitation demanding

Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation will continue! We will fight to protect Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar's legacy against the Manusmriti worshippers," Venugopal said in a post on X. The INC will mark the upcoming week as Dr Ambedkar Samman Saptah, he said. "On 24 December, all across the country, we will hold Babasaheb Ambedkar Samman Marches and submit a memorandum to President of India through District Collectors demanding Amit Shah's resignation."

Marriage is relationship built on mutual trust, companionship: SC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

"Marriage is a relationship built on mutual trust, companionship and shared experiences," the Supreme Court has said as it upheld a Madras High Court decision granting divorce to an estranged software engineer couple. A bench of justices Vikram Nath and PB Varale said the length of separation and the evident animosity between husband and wife make it clear that there is no possibility of the marriage being revived.

"Marriage is a relationship built on mutual trust, companionship, and shared experiences. When these essential elements are missing for an extended period, the marital bond becomes a mere legal formality devoid of any substance," the bench said. It added that the court has consistently held that prolonged separation, coupled with inability to reconcile, is a relevant factor in deciding matrimonial disputes. "In the present case, the length of separation and the evident animosity between the parties make it clear that there is no possibility of the marriage being revived," it said. The bench said that both husband and wife have been living separately for two decades now and this fact further reinforces the conclusion that the marriage is no longer viable. It said that the top court has held that prolonged separation creates a presumption of the marriage having irretrievably broken down. "In this case, the parties have not shared a marital life since 2004, and all attempts at reconciliation have failed," it added. The top court dismissed the appeal of women who had challenged the June 8, 2018 decision of the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court granting a decree of divorce on the ground of cruelty. The bench said the husband has provided sufficient evidence to show that the appellant (wife) was engaged in a pattern of behaviour that caused him immense mental and emotional distress.

Chautala cremated with state honours

PNS ■ SIRSA

Former Haryana Chief Minister Om Prakash Chautala was cremated on Saturday with full state honours in Teja Khera village in his native Sirsa district. Chautala, who was a five-time chief minister, died in Gurugram on Friday. He was 89. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Union Minister Manohar Lal Khattar, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Shiromani Akali Dal leader Sukhbir Singh Badal reached Teja Khera to attend the last rites of the departed leader.



Earlier, Chautala's mortal remains were Saturday kept at the family's Teja Khera farmhouse here for people to pay their last respects to the departed Indian National Lok Dal chief. His body was wrapped in the Indian Tricolour and decked with garlands. An INLD spokesperson said Chautala was rushed to a hospital after his health worsened on Friday.

Om Prakash Chautala's younger son Abhay Singh Chautala, an INLD leader, elder son Ajay Singh Chautala, who heads the JJP party, and other family members, including former deputy chief minister Dushyant Chautala, ex-CM Chautala's brother Ranjit Chautala, were present in Teja Khera. The funeral pyre was lit amid chants of Vedic hymns by priests. Congress leaders Randeep Singh Surjewala and Kumari Sejha had reached the Chautala farmhouse in the morning to pay their last respects to the five-time chief minister.

Declining camel population sets alarm bells ringing

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The camel population in India faces a critical decline that requires immediate intervention, a top animal husbandry official has warned and called for enhanced support for traditional herding communities. Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary of the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying (DAHD), highlighted the urgent need to protect camels while speaking at a national workshop on camel milk production held at Bikaner, Rajasthan on Friday. She pointed to the National Livestock Mission as a key instrument for preserving grazing lands and supporting herding communities who maintain these desert animals, an official



statement said. The warning came during a major stakeholder meeting that drew over 150 participants, including camel herders and dairy industry representatives, aimed at strengthening India's camel milk sector. The gathering coincided with the United Nations' declaration of 2024 as the International Year of Camelids. "The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is committed to strengthening the non-bovine milk value chain in India," said Takayuki Hagiwara, FAO Representative in India. "We aim to unlock new opportunities for sustainable growth, enhance livelihoods, and promote the nutritional and therapeutic benefits of non-bovine milk."



UNWRAPPING FESTIVE FLAVOURS

This Christmas, MKT at The Chanakya invites you to savour the season with festive flavours and a cosy, cheerful atmosphere that makes you feel right at home, writes **TEAM AGENDA**

Christmas is the season of joy, warmth and indulgence and what better way to celebrate than with a feast that brings festive vibes to life? At MKT, The Chanakya, New Delhi, the magic of Christmas unfolds the moment you step inside. The space is beautifully adorned with sparkling lights, a majestic Christmas tree and a cosy ambience that feels like stepping into a winter wonderland. Add to that their exclusive Christmas Menu for 2024, crafted with care and creativity, and you're in for a treat that truly feels like Christmas on a plate. For vegetarians, the Vegetarians Delight Shepards Pie is pure comfort. A

delightful combination of plant-based meat, a medley of seasonal vegetables, and velvety potato, it's like wrapping yourself in a warm blanket on a chilly winter day. The garden-fresh salad on the side adds a refreshing crunch, making it a well-rounded dish. Another standout is the Wild Mushroom Wellington. Encased in flaky filo pastry, the shimeji mushrooms are earthy and rich, while the mushroom jus and wilted kale bring depth and balance. It's the kind of dish that feels festive and hearty, perfect for the season. For those craving non-vegetarian options, the menu pulls out all the stops. The Ballotine de Poulet, with tender chicken and a creamy mousse,

is elevated by the sweet-tart cranberry sauce. The Confit Duck Leg with Pomegranate Jus feels indulgent and festive, while the Lamb Ossobuco and Lobster Thermidor add a luxurious touch to the Christmas spread. Each dish is presented with elegance, making every bite feel like a celebration. The dessert menu is where the magic really comes alive. The Buche de Noel, a mini yule log filled with chocolate truffle, is not just a treat for the taste buds but also a nod to the traditional Christmas spirit. As you slice into it, the rich, velvety truffle filling and the soft, chocolatey sponge make you pause and soak in the moment. Paired with

playful chocolate mushrooms and fresh berries, it feels like a whimsical Christmas story on a plate. If there's one dessert that can instantly make you feel like a kid on Christmas morning, this is it. Other desserts, like the Sticky Date Pudding with whiskey-laced brown butter toffee sauce and the Old Fashioned Apple Crumble Pie, deliver classic holiday flavours with a creative twist. The drinks menu is equally festive and brimming with seasonal charm. The Winter Wonderland, with its blend of gin, German liqueur, pineapple, oregano, and fresh strawberries, feels bright and refreshing. The Christmas Cheer, a mix of whiskey, pineapple,

cinnamon, and a touch of citrus Tabasco sauce, is warm and inviting, like sitting by a crackling fire. And then there's the Lavender Snowflake, with lavender vodka, thyme syrup, and a soft lavender foam, offering a calming and fragrant finish.

Dining at MKT feels like celebrating Christmas in every sense. From the warm lights to the cheerful music and the thoughtfully crafted menu, it's a place where the festive spirit comes alive. Whether you're sharing stories over a hearty pie or raising a toast with a lavender foam-topped cocktail, every moment feels wrapped in holiday cheer. It truly makes Christmas taste and feel magical.

FACTSHEET

Address: Lower Ground Floor, The Chanakya Mall, Chanakyaapuri, Delhi-110021
Available: Throughout December
Timings: 12:00 pm to 1:00 am
Cost for two: ₹3,000 + taxes



The menu's diverse offerings also included vegetarian favourites like Kuku Sabzi which is a medley of fresh greens and Mirza Ghasemi - a brinjal-based dish. Explaining brinjal's prominence in Iranian cuisine, Chef Wadhwa remarked, "Brinjal is a favourite ingredient. They use it as a garnish, main ingredient, and even as an accompaniment."

A highlight of the festival was the Indo-Iranian Cultural Show which featured mesmerising performances celebrating the shared cultural ties between the two nations. This event culminated in a grand gala dinner, where representatives from the Iranian Embassy and Iran Culture House felicitated participants of the Iranian Food Competition.

A food competition also brought together top chefs from both countries to showcase their culinary talents. Judged by an esteemed panel, including Mr Kazem Samandari, Chef Mostafa Taheripour Isfahani, and Chef Diwas Wadhwa, the competition crowned Chef Neda Tavakoli. Indian chefs also shone, with Hem Chandra Arya securing the first runner-up position and Chef Bharat Khemani the second runner-up. The festival's ambience transported diners straight to Iran at the Blooms Restaurant. Chef Wadhwa added, "Despite language barriers, collaborating with Iranian chefs was seamless. Together, we breathed new life into traditional recipes, blending authenticity with a contemporary flair." He further added that saffron (kesar) played an important role in this cuisine and was not missed. Also, the Iranian rice, which you will taste in the pulao, uses pomegranate and plum paste.

The Iranian Food Festival was a celebration of cultural heritage and culinary artistry between the two nations.

Winter Wonderland



By TEAM AGENDA

Café Delhi Heights, a refuge for discriminating palates, have begun serving their winter menu that truly celebrates the season. With celebrating the warmth, comfort, and indulgence, the menu features a delectable selection of foods and beverages that will tantalise the senses and warm your soul. Café Delhi Heights is a cosy hideaway vibe from the moment you walk into the cafe. Apart from the offering of the menu, the winter meal at the cafe is a culinary wonder with dessert dishes for the winter lovers. The Chocolate Bomb, in variants of hot chocolate and Marshmallow Chocolate Ball, with a mouth watering display of molten chocolate in that cosy environment.

You have a Red Velvet Baby Croissant, with a delicate layer of pastry or Dollop of Cream Cheese or Chocolate filled looking appealing to the eyes giving a Christmas Winter feel with its red colour.

The addition to the above is the Four Cheese Fondue, a sumptuous treat served with a variety of exquisite dips. For those looking for a more savoury choice, the Bagel Sandwich, which comes with either crumbled chicken or exotic vegetables, is a soothing and fulfilling nibble to try at the Café Delhi Heights.

The Moong Daal Crumble Tart is appealing where tart meets tradition, with a beautiful combination of flavours and textures. From comforting classics to decadent desserts, every bite promises to make your chilly days cosier and more delight. The hallmark of the winter menu would have to be the Chocolate Fondue, plated aesthetically by the Café Delhi Heights. The Chocolate Fondue comes to you with a chocolate dipping sauce to be taken with strawberries, marshmallows and muffins.

FACTSHEET

Availability of Winter Menu: 1st December to 10th January
Visit your nearest Café Delhi Heights outlet

In collaboration with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Iran Culture House, and the CD Foundation, Eros Hotel New Delhi played host to the Iranian Food Festival. This week-long culinary celebration brought the flavours and traditions of Iranian cuisine to the heart of the capital, creating a unique experience that highlighted the exchange of culture between India and Iran.

The festival showcased an authentic menu crafted by master Iranian chefs, presenting a journey of Iran's rich culinary heritage. Signature dishes such as Ash Reshteh which is a hearty noodle soup with chickpeas and beans, Gheimeh - a lamb stew infused with split chickpeas and cinnamon, and Berry Pulao - saffron rice with tart berries graced the menu. Chef Diwas Wadhwa, Executive Chef of Eros Hotel, described Iranian cuisine as "young, subtle, and simple compared to Indian cuisine, which is often complex and rich with multiple spices."

PLATES THAT TELEPORT TO IRAN

The Iranian Food Festival at the Eros Hotel New Delhi had authentic flavours of Iran with celebrating the culture of the two countries, writes **TEAM AGENDA**



completely. **Prepare filling:** Whip cream, powdered sugar, and vanilla until stiff. Unroll the cake, spread filling evenly, and re-roll. **Make ganache:** Heat cream until steaming; pour over chocolate. Stir until smooth and let cool slightly before spreading over the cake. **Decorate** with powdered sugar, berries, and meringue mushrooms for a festive finish. Refrigerate before serving

Ingredients: 1 whole turkey (about 6-7 kg); 100g unsalted butter, softened; 2 oranges, 2 lemons, zested and juiced; 4 cloves garlic, minced; 2 tsp fresh rosemary, 2 tsp fresh thyme, 2 tsp fresh sage, chopped; Salt and pepper to taste **Stuffing:** 1 large onion, 2 celery stalks, chopped; 2 apples, peeled, cored, and chopped; 200g breadcrumbs; 100g dried cranberries; 100g chopped walnuts; 1 egg, beaten; 100ml chicken stock; 1 tsp dried sage; 1 tsp dried thyme; Salt and pepper to taste **Gravy:** Pan drippings from the turkey; 2 tsp plain flour, 500ml chicken stock; Salt and pepper to taste **Method:** Prepare the Turkey: Preheat oven to 180°C (356°F) In a bowl, mix the softened butter with the orange and lemon zest, minced garlic, and chopped herbs. Season with salt and pepper. Carefully loosen the skin of the

turkey breast and rub the citrus-herb butter mixture under the skin and all over the turkey. **Make the Stuffing:** Combine onion, celery, apples, breadcrumbs, cranberries, and walnuts. Mix in egg, stock, sage, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stuff turkey cavity. **Roast the Turkey:** Place turkey on a rack in a pan. Pour citrus juice over. Roast it in the preheated oven for 3.5-4 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 75°C (165°F) and baste occasionally with the pan juices. Rest 20 minutes after cooking. **Make the Gravy:** Pour the pan drippings into a saucepan, skim off excess fat, and whisk in the flour. Cook over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, then add the chicken stock, whisking continuously. Season with salt and pepper. **Serve:** Carve the turkey and serve with the stuffing and gravy.

GINGERBREAD COOKIE SANDWICH

Ingredients for cookies: Flour - 250gms, Brown Sugar - 180gms, Salted Butter - 150gms (soft), Honey - 20gms, Clove powder - 3gms, Cinnamon powder - 10gms, Nutmeg powder - 5gms, Ginger powder - 12gms, Baking soda - 5gms, Egg - 1 (whole), Vanilla Essence - 8ml **Ingredients for fillings:** Whipping cream - 100gms, Powdered sugar - 50gms, Orange zest - 10gms, Clove powder - 2gms, Cinnamon powder - 5gms, Salt - 3gms, Ginger powder - 5gms **Instructions:** Preheat oven: 160°C. Cream butter and sugar until smooth, then whisk in honey, egg, and vanilla. Sift dry ingredients (flour, spices, baking soda) and fold into the mixture. Chill dough for 15 minutes. Portion dough onto a baking tray (yields ~16-17 cookies). Bake for 11-12 minutes until tops crack and lightly brown. Cool completely. Whip cream with sugar to stiff peaks. Fold in spices and zest. Sandwich two cookies with cream, dust with icing sugar, and serve.

Savour the Spirit of Christmas!

EXPLORE FLAVORS AND DISHES WITH DIVYA BHATIA THAT PROMISE TO MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS AN UNFORGETTABLE CELEBRATION

YULE LOG

CHEF ASHISH SINGH, COO & Culinary Director at Café Delhi Heights

Ingredients Sponge Cake: 4 large eggs (separated); 1/2 cup (100g) granulated sugar; 1/3 cup (40g) flour; 1/4 cup (30g) cocoa; 1/4 tsp salt; 1/2 tsp vanilla extract **Filling:** 1 cup (240ml) heavy whipping cream; 2 tsp powdered sugar; 1 tsp vanilla extract **Chocolate Ganache:** 1 cup (170g) dark chocolate; 1/2 cup (120ml) heavy cream **Instructions:** Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C); line a 10x15-inch pan with parchment. Beat yolks with sugar until pale; add vanilla. Sift and fold in flour, cocoa, and salt.



Whisk egg whites to stiff peaks; fold into batter. Spread batter evenly in pan; bake 10-12 mins. Cool on a sugar-dusted towel, peeling parchment. Roll cake with towel; cool

FESTIVE CIRCUS & HERB ROASTED TURKEY

CHEF ADITI DIXIT, CYK Hospitalityes



turkey breast and rub the citrus-herb butter mixture under the skin and all over the turkey. **Make the Stuffing:** Combine onion, celery, apples, breadcrumbs, cranberries, and walnuts. Mix in egg, stock, sage, thyme, salt, and pepper. Stuff turkey cavity. **Roast the Turkey:** Place turkey on a rack in a pan. Pour citrus juice over. Roast it in the preheated oven for 3.5-4 hours or until the internal temperature reaches 75°C (165°F) and baste occasionally with the pan juices. Rest 20 minutes after cooking. **Make the Gravy:** Pour the pan drippings into a saucepan, skim off excess fat, and whisk in the flour. Cook over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, then add the chicken stock, whisking continuously. Season with salt and pepper. **Serve:** Carve the turkey and serve with the stuffing and gravy.





A Paw-some Celebration of Pet Love



Pet Fed 2024 celebrated the unconditional love between pets and their owners, creating unforgettable memories and promoting adoption, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

“Until one has loved an animal, a part of one’s soul remains unawakened.” *Anatole France’s* profound words perfectly capture the essence of *Pet Fed 2024*, India’s largest pet festival. The event celebrated the special bond between pets and their owners, a connection built on trust, affection and unconditional love. Held at the NSIC Grounds in Okhla, New Delhi, the festival offered a spectacular experience for animal lovers, filling the air with joy and excitement. It wasn’t just a gathering; it was a celebration of pets, especially dogs, who truly shone as the stars of the show.

Pet Fed 2024, an annual highlight for pet lovers, buzzed with energy from start to finish. The venue was transformed into a world of fun, excitement and admiration for animals. Pets strutted around in custom outfits, many of them dressed as if for a Christmas getaway, complete with Santa hats and reindeer antlers. It was a sight to behold as dogs like *Bella*, *Leo*, *Goofy*, *Sheeru* and *Noddy* pranced by, each one adding its own personality to the event. The joy and love shared between the pets and their owners was evident, making it impossible not to smile.

Inside the venue, the atmosphere was lively, filled with laughter as people chatted, took photos and enjoyed the moment with their pets. The hall was a runway of fashionable dogs, each outfit designed to showcase the personalities of the pets and their owners. It felt like a holiday celebration where pets were treated with the love and attention they deserve.

However, *Pet Fed 2024* was about celebrating the deep bond between pets and their families. The festival featured masterclasses on pet health, nutrition and grooming, offering valuable advice for pet parents. These sessions helped owners ensure the best care for their furry companions. The event also included dedicated play areas and agility rings for dogs and cats to exercise and show off their skills. The agility ring, in particular, was a hit, with pets darting through obstacles and jumping with excitement, providing a thrilling



the true highlight of the day was India’s Biggest Pet Fashion Show, where pets and their owners walked the ramp in coordinated outfits, creating a spectacle that was unforgettable. As I walked through the venue, I was captivated by the wide range of activities designed to keep pets entertained. The retail area, featuring over 100 stalls, offered pet parents the chance to shop for the latest products, accessories and food. From high-end pet clothing to innovative toys, there was something for every pet and every budget. The food and beverage stalls ensured that pet parents could relax and enjoy the event while their furry companions stayed by their side.

One of the most touching elements of *Pet Fed 2024* was its inclusivity. Indie pets, often overlooked, were given special attention with free entry for their parents. This gesture was a beautiful reminder of how important it is to support the adoption of all pets, regardless of breed. It was a sentiment that resonated deeply with attendees, showing that the festival wasn’t just about fun, but also about creating a compassionate world for animals.

Akshay Gupta, the Founder of *Pet Fed*, shared his excitement about the event, saying, “Wrapping up the 10th edition in Delhi has been an incredible experience. The love and support from Delhiites, along with the growing awareness about pet adoption, have been truly heartwarming. This event has shown us the deep bond that exists between pets and their parents, and it’s a privilege to create a platform that celebrates this connection.”

Pet Fed 2024 was a heartwarming celebration of the unconditional love our pets give us every day. It reminded us that animals, like art, have the power to inspire, bring joy and change our lives in ways we never imagined. The event created beautiful memories, showcasing the enduring bond between pets and their families. Most importantly, it carried a meaningful message, *#AdoptDontShop*, encouraging everyone to give a second chance to animals in need, reminding us that love is the best gift we can offer.

experience for both pets and their parents.

One of the standout segments of the festival was *Catapalooza*, an event organised in association with the Cat Club of India, designed specifically for cats. This segment celebrated all cat breeds and included fun activities and competitions. Cats and their owners participated in games, with participants vying for trophies and certificates. It was a joyous experience for everyone involved, showcasing the fun side of feline companionship.

The festival also placed a strong emphasis on pet adoption. Adoption camps were set up to encourage families to adopt rather than shop, in line with the *#AdoptDontShop*

mantra. The festival partnered with NGOs to find loving homes for animals in need and it was heartwarming to see so many pets finding their forever homes. Several adoption stories unfolded during the event, highlighting the festival’s commitment to making a difference in the lives of animals.

For those seeking some friendly competition, *Pet Fed* offered engaging contests and activities. The Official *Pet Fed Premier League Award Ceremony* was a crowd favourite, while other events like *Temptation Alley* and *Bug Buster* had everyone cheering for their furry friends. Day 2 of the festival included even more thrilling events, such as *Trick Roulette*, *Kibble Craze* and the *Security Dog Show*. But



IN BRIEF



Ola founder Aggarwal inducted as INAE fellow

The Indian National Academy of Engineering on Saturday said it has inducted Ola founder Bhavish Aggarwal as its fellow. Aggarwal was inducted as fellow at the annual convention of the Indian National Academy of Engineering (INAE) held at IIT-Delhi on Friday, it said in a statement. "The INAE Council elected Aggarwal in recognition of his engineering contributions and leadership in the domain," it said. INAE brings together specialists from relevant interdisciplinary engineering fields to promote the advancement of engineering and technology and their applications to solve problems of national importance. INAE also represents India as one of the 33 Member-Academies from across the world in the International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS).



IndiGo launches direct flights between Chennai and Penang

IndiGo has launched daily direct flights between Chennai and Penang in Malaysia on Saturday, becoming the 37th international destination for the private airliner. The new route caters to the growing demand for travel between the two cities, offering both business and leisure travellers a convenient and affordable option, IndiGo said in a statement on Saturday. "We are extremely pleased to further expand our network into Malaysia with the launch of direct flights from Chennai to Penang, our third destination in Malaysia, alongside Kuala Lumpur and Langkawi. With the inclusion of these flights to Penang, IndiGo will now operate 28 weekly flights to Malaysia from 2 cities in India." IndiGo Head of Global Sales Vinay Malhotra said in a statement. At the inaugural ceremony, Chennai Airport director C V Deepak handed over the boarding pass to the first passenger on Saturday.



'GST hike for Kashmiri shawl will finish craft'

Supreme Court judge Mehbooba Mufti on Saturday said the proposed increase in GST for Kashmiri shawl will finish the craft and appealed to Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah to address the issue. She also alleged that the Centre was trying to make the people of Jammu and Kashmir dependent solely on tourism. "The Kashmiri shawl is not just a means of livelihood for us but an identity of Jammu and Kashmir. It is famous all over the world. The (previous) National Conference government banned the Shahtoosh, which was our heritage. That also caused economic losses," Mehbooba told reporters. "Today, when you increase GST on Kashmiri shawl to 28 per cent, our art will automatically die," the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president added. The former chief minister of the erstwhile state alleged efforts were being made to destroy Jammu and Kashmir by undertaking development work on horticulture land and imposing GST on the handicraft sector.

GST at 18 pc on used EV car sale by business

ATF STAYS OUT OF ITS AMBIT

PNS ■ JAISALMER

The goods and services tax council on Saturday decided to levy an 18 per cent GST on margin value on sale of used electric vehicles by businesses and agreed to keep jet fuel (ATF) out of the 'one-nation-one-tax' regime.

The GST Council in its 55th meeting also decided to clarify on taxability of popcorn, saying caramelised popcorn will continue to attract tax at the rate of 18 per cent. However, pre-packed and spiced popcorn will attract 12 per cent, while 5 per cent will be levied on unpacked and unlabelled ones.

It has been decided to regularise the issues for the past on "as is where is" basis. "It is a clarification being recommended by the GST Council to settle the disputes arising out of interpretation," an official statement said.

The panel, headed by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising



representatives of all states and UTs, deferred decisions on reducing tax rate on insurance products as also on levy of the tax on food delivery by app-based platforms.

The panel cut the tax rate on fortified rice kernels used for public distribution to 5 per cent from 18 per cent, Sitharaman told reporters after the meeting of the Council here.

The Council also decided that no GST will be payable on penal charges levied and collected by banks and NBFCs from borrowers for non-compliance with loan terms.

The panel deferred a decision on reducing the rate of tax on insurance premium, pending comments of the sector regulator, she said.

A group of ministers examining the issue had recommended exempting insurance premiums paid for term life insurance policies from GST and premium paid by senior citizens for health insurance cover. It had also suggested GST exemption on premium paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh.

Decision to cut tax on insurance postponed

The GST Council meeting on Saturday postponed a decision on reducing taxes on health and life insurance, while the much talked-about GoM recommendation of rate rejig in 148 items was not tabled before the Council. Some members of the Council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, felt that more deliberations were required before a final decision could be arrived at with regard to insurance taxation. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, who heads the panel on GoM on insurance, said one more meeting is required to take a call on taxation of group, individual, senior citizen's policies.

GST Council clarifies on popcorn taxation

PNS ■ JAISALMER

GST Council on Saturday agreed to issue a clarification on taxation of popcorn, saying that pre-packed and labelled ready-to-eat snacks will attract a 12 per cent tax while an 18 per cent GST will be levied if it is caramelised. There is no change in the tax rate of popcorn and the GST Council has only agreed that the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) will issue a circular clarifying the current taxation regime of popcorn. "Ready-to-eat popcorn", which is mixed with salt and spices, and has the essential character of namkeen currently attracts a 5 per cent GST if it is not pre-packaged and labelled. If it is supplied as pre-packaged and labelled, a 12 per cent GST is levied.

However, when popcorn is mixed with sugar (caramel popcorn), its essential character changes to that of a sugar confectionary, and would therefore be classifiable under HS 1704 90 90 and attract an 18 per cent GST, as per the clarification.



Housing sales to fall 21 pc in top 9 cities: PropEquity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Housing sales are estimated to fall 21 per cent annually across nine major cities during October-December period to 1.08 lakh units on high base effect, according to PropEquity.

Real estate data analytics firm PropEquity on Saturday released the sale numbers for India's top nine housing markets - Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai, Thane. It has estimated sales to rise only in Delhi-NCR.

As per the data, the total sales of residential properties across the nine cities are likely to decline to 1,08,261 units in the current quarter as against 1,37,225 units in the same period last year. However, sales are likely to

rise 5 per cent from 1,03,213 units in the preceding September quarter.

Samir Jasuja, CEO & Founder of PropEquity, said the sales have declined on annual basis because of high base effect.

He said the sales are likely to rise quarter-on-quarter on the back of festive demand.

"A closer look at the numbers reveals that despite the drop, the supply to absorption ratio in 2024 remains the same as in 2023 which indicates that the fundamentals of the real estate sector are strong and healthy," Jasuja said.

Housing sales are estimated to fall in Hyderabad by 47 per cent to 12,682 units during October-December 2024 from 24,044 units in the year-ago period.

Vedanta revises demerger plan; to retain base metal biz

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Mumbai-listed mining conglomerate Vedanta Ltd on Friday said it has revised its demerger proposal and decided to retain the base metals undertaking within the parent firm.

In a regulatory filing, Vedanta said that the decision was taken following the deliberations with stakeholders, including lenders with respect to the scheme and approval by the board of directors in a meeting held on Friday.

The company had earlier said that existing businesses will be structured in the six independent companies after the demerger: Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, Vedanta Power, Vedanta Steel and Ferrous Materials, Vedanta Base Metals and Vedanta Ltd.

"Lenders believe the Scheme would be more favourable for unlocking value and overall optimal balancing of debt allocation across residual Vedanta and resulting companies if the Vedanta Base Metals undertaking is retained in residual Vedanta itself," the company said in the latest filing.



Vedanta also stressed the ongoing search for alternative avenues for restarting the copper business in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, which is an integral part of the Base Metals undertaking, to be the reason behind the development.

The non-implementation of demerger of the Base Metals undertaking and retaining the same in Vedanta will not impact the overall value creation for shareholders. "A demerger of the Vedanta Base Metals undertaking may be considered at

a stage when the Base Metals business evolves and matures to realise the full value potential of such demerger for shareholders," the filing said.

The shareholders will continue to benefit from value unlocking in the Base Metals business as part of residual Vedanta, while also receiving equivalent shares in the resulting companies.

The shareholders' beneficial interests in the overall value of Vedanta and resulting companies will remain unaffected, it said.

The revision will not impact the parts of the demerger scheme. All terms which also includes the share entitlement ratio, remain unchanged.

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal had earlier said the proposed demerger of the company's diverse verticals that represent more than 15 commodities will see it progress from being asset managers to asset owners.

As the company passes through the transition phase, Vedanta is focusing on consolidating and strengthening its asset base to emerge as a world leader in each of its verticals, the chairman had said.

Number of domestic migrants lowered by 12 pc: EAC-PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of domestic migrants is estimated to have lowered by around 12 per cent to 40.20 crore between 2011 and 2023, indicating increased economic opportunities across the country, said a report by prime minister's economic advisory panel EAC-PM.

According to a working paper by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM), the number of domestic migrants stood at 40,20,90,396 in 2023, which was 11.78 per cent lower compared to the figure registered as per Census 2011.

The paper titled '400 Million Dreams! Examining volume and directions of domestic migration in India using novel high frequency data', said as per Census 2011, the total

number of migrants stood at 45,57,87,621.

"Overall domestic migration in India is slowing. We estimate the overall number of migrants in the country, as of 2023, to be 40,20,90,396. This is about 11.78 per cent lower as compared to the number of migrants enumerated as per Census 2011 (45,57,87,621)," it said.

Consequently, the paper said, the migration rate which stood at 37.64 per cent of total population as per Census 2011, is estimated to have reduced to 28.88 per cent.

"We hypothesize that this is on account of availability of improved services such as education, health, infrastructure and connectivity as well as improved economic opportunities in or near in major sources of migration and is an



indicator of overall economic growth," noted the paper authored by former EAC-PM chairman Bibek Debroy.

The paper used three high-frequency and granular data sets - Indian Railway Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) data on passenger volumes; mobile telephone subscribers roaming data from the

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), and district level banking data to understand the likely impact of migration at the places of origin.

Looking at the spatial dimensions of travel, the paper said, the top origin districts are coalesced around major urban agglomerations viz.

NPS AUM to touch Rs 15 lakh cr by fiscal end: PFRDA

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The assets under management (AUM) of the National Pension System are expected to touch Rs 15 lakh crore by the end of the current fiscal year, Pension Fund Regulatory Development Authority Chairman Deepak Mohanty said on Saturday.

At a media interaction following the official launch of the Association of NPS Intermediaries, Mohanty also said the take up rate by the employees in the corporate sector remains a challenge.

This Association of NPS comprises stakeholders including pension fund managers, points of presence (bank and non-bank), central record keeping agencies, trustee banks, custodians, aggregators, annuity service providers, pension agents, retirement advisors, and other industry participants.

The association aims to represent the interests of all intermediaries in the NPS ecosystem, promote NPS as a reliable, flexible, and tax-efficient retirement product, focus on subscriber welfare by ensuring

smooth and transparent processes within the system and also to collaborate with regulators and policymakers to improve the NPS framework.

"The total subscribers (in the pension sector) at this moment are more than 8 crore (including 6.4 crore in Atal Pension Yojana), out of which in NPS there are about 1.6 crore subscribers and the corpus what people are contributing to the pension system is almost Rs 14 lakh crore, and given that situation, our expectation is that by the end of the year, it should Rs 15 lakh crore," Mohanty said.

Of the 1.6 crore NPS subscriber base, 62 lakh are from the private sector and 18 lakh from the corporate sector.

"So, that is the big challenge.

We have about 18,000 corporates, including big corporates, who have joined NPS, but the take up rate by employees is less partly because there are so many things (and) partly, because of lack of awareness that we are trying to expand," he said.



Sri Lanka claims it has officially ended debt default

PNS ■ COLOMBO

With the decision by the Hong Kong based Fitch Ratings to upgrade Sri Lanka's credit rating, the island nation has officially ended its debt default, the Finance Ministry said here on Saturday.

Fitch upgraded Sri Lanka's long term credit default rating to CCC+ from CCC- on Friday as it said that "the risk of another default on local currency debt has been reduced by the completion of the international sovereign bond restructuring and an improved outlook for macro-economic indicators."

Mahinda Siriwardana, a top bureaucrat in the Finance

Ministry, said in a statement: "December 20 marked a major milestone in our economic recovery process as Sri Lanka officially exited sovereign default."

Sri Lanka had plunged into an economic crisis when the island nation declared sovereign default in mid-April of 2022, its first since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. Almost civil-war-like conditions and months of public protests led to the fleeing of the then president Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Ranil Wickremesinghe, who then took over as the president, began the negotiations with the International Monetary



Fund (IMF) soon after. His government then clinched the bailout a year later in March 2023.

Siriwardana said the crisis was man made and could have been averted if the early warnings had been heeded with an early engagement with the IMF.

"While macroeconomic outcomes have indeed been satisfactory and the debt restructuring process is completed culminating in this rating upgrade, people still feel the pain from the crisis and the difficult remedial measures." He was perhaps referring to the time of unprecedented forex crisis that had triggered shortages of essentials and long queues were witnessed

for fuel and cooking gas while the island faced power cuts for over 10 hours in 2022.

Siriwardana stresses that no room exists for a repeat of policy errors, the collapse happens rapidly but the recovery is painful. "This is indeed a historic moment and a time to celebrate but it is a moment that should never be repeated."

Siriwardana was one of the two top officials besides the Central Bank Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe, who saw through the recovery process from its start in 2022.

There have been three presidents and three finance ministers since the country was plunged into crisis.

COCONUT TRUFFLES

RECIPE:

- Coconut milk powder 3 tbsp
- Sumeru Grated Coconut 5 tbsp
- White chocolate 200g
- Whipping cream 1/4 cup
- Butter 1 tbs
- Vanilla extract 1/2ts

PREPARATION METHOD:

- Step 1.** Defrost the required quantity of Sumeru Grated Coconut as per the cooking instruction mentioned on the pouch
- Step 2.** Roughly chop the white chocolate and add it to a bowl along with whipping cream and melt it in a bowl by keeping it in boiling water
- Step 3.** Now add butter to the bowl and give a mix and let it melt
- Step 4.** Then add coconut milk powder, Sumeru Grated Coconut (1 Tbsp) to the melted chocolate along with vanilla extract. Use a spoon to mix and make a thick mixture.
- Step 5.** Cover it with a lid and cool it in freezer for 2-3 hours to hold shape.
- Step 6.** Scoop out small portions from the mixture using a spoon and roll between your hands to make balls. Roll these balls in coconut flakes to coat them from all sides.
- Step 7.** Your Coconut Truffles are now ready to be served. Enjoy!



LOADED FRIES WITH SAUSAGE

RECIPE:

- Sumeru Piri Piri French Fries 1cup(200g)
- Sumeru Garlic Chicken Sausage ¼ cup
- Cheddar Cheese (Diced) 1/3 cup
- Thousand Island Sauce (Veeba) 1/4 cup
- Salted Butter 1 tbsps



PREPARATION METHOD:

French Fries preparation:

Step 1. Deep-fry Sumeru Piri Piri French Fries as per the cooking instruction mentioned in the pouch. Set aside on a plate.

Chicken Sausage cooking:

Step 1. Heat a pan on medium heat and add butter.

Step 2. Sauté the sliced Sumeru Garlic Chicken Sausage for 3-4 minutes or until fully cooked.

For Loaded Fries:

Step 1. Arrange the fried Sumeru Piri Piri French Fries on a microwaveable plate or tray.

Step 2. Top with the sautéed Sumeru Garlic Chicken Sausage and sprinkle the diced cheddar cheese evenly

Step 3. Drizzle Thousand Island Sauce or any sauce of your choice on top.

Step 4. Now keep it in a microwave oven or pan for 1-2 minutes until the cheese melts slightly.

Step 5. Enjoy the Loaded Fries with Sausage immediately while hot and gooey!

SWEET & SPICY PRAWNS

RECIPE:

- Sumeru Medium Prawns 1cup
- Capsicum (2 cm cubes) ½ cup
- Onion (2 cm cubes) ½ cup
- Green Chilli (Jullienne cut) 1tbsp
- Salt 1 tsp
- Garlic Paste 1 tbsp
- Ginger Paste 3tsp
- Sunflower Oil 2 tbsp
- Tomato Sauce 6 tbsps
- Red Chilli Sauce 1tbsp
- Soya Sauce 1½tsp
- Vinegar ½ tsp
- Water 1 cup
- Green Chilli Sauce 1 tbsps
- Chicken Aromat powder ¼ tsp
- Corn Flour 2 tsp
- Water for Corn Flour 4 tsp
- Spring Onion (Chopped) 1 tsp
- Black Pepper crushed ¼ tsp

- Step 2.** Add chopped onion and capsicum, stir-fry for 1 minute.
- Step 3.** Add green chilli, tomato sauce, red chilli sauce, green chilli sauce and soya sauce.
- Step 4.** Add salt and chicken aromatic powder, mix well.
- Step 5.** Add a cup water and bring the mixture to a simmer.
- Step 6.** Mix corn flour in water, add this mix to the pan while stirring continuously.
- Step 7.** Cook for 1-2 minutes, until the gravy thickens.
- Step 8.** Add the coated prawns and add vinegar, black pepper, mix well.
- Step 9.** Cook for another minute, and then turn off the flame.
- Step 10.** Garnish with spring onion.
- Step 11.** Your Sweet & Spicy Prawns are now ready! Serve hot with steamed rice or noodles.



PREPARATION METHOD:

Prawns coating:

- Step 1.** Thaw the Sumeru Medium Prawns as per the cooking instruction mentioned on pouch
- Step 2.** In a bowl, mix maida, corn flour, salt and black pepper crushed and add water to form a batter
- Step 3.** Dip the Sumeru Medium Prawns into the batter, coating them evenly.
- Step 4.** Heat oil in a pan and deep-fry the coated Sumeru Medium Prawns at medium flame for 2 minutes until crispy.

Gravy preparation:

Step 1. Heat sunflower oil in a pan and add garlic paste, ginger paste, saute

SHADES OF RED:

Christmas and New Year party looks to steal the show



As the festive season approaches, it's time to dazzle in style and turn heads at every gathering. Whether it's a cozy Christmas dinner, a glamorous soirée, or a sparkling New Year's Eve bash, the colour red has long been synonymous with celebration, passion and elegance. We bring you five stunning red dresses blending bold design with timeless charm. Perfect for women looking to make a bold statement, these outfits fuse the festive spirit with a touch of Russian artistry.

If you're aiming for elegance and grace, Oksana Kosareva's one-shoulder red dress is the perfect pick. With delicate tulle details and a flowing silhouette, this dreamy ensemble exudes an ethereal charm that's ideal for an intimate Christmas dinner or a formal gala. The design draws inspiration from Russia's rich textile heritage, blending tradition with modern elegance. Add sparkling silver accessories to elevate the look further and prepare to leave everyone mesmerised.

For those who prefer bold, contemporary styles, Alena Nega's structured red creation is a head-turner. Featuring a corset-style top paired with dramatic flowing layers, this outfit redefines festive glamour. The dress radiates modern couture while celebrating love for architectural silhouettes. It's an excellent choice for Christmas or New Year parties where you want to make a style statement like no other. Pair it with sleek stilettos and minimalist jewelry to keep the focus on the striking design.

Luba Gonchar's floor-length gown is all about timeless elegance with a bold twist. The gown's thigh-high slit and sculpted bodice make it a showstopper, exuding allure and sophistication. Perfect for upscale parties, this dress beautifully cele-

brates femininity and confidence. Its soft drapery and bold design ensure you'll be the center of attention. Finish the look with a bold red lip and statement earrings for a touch of drama.

If you're looking for a unique outfit that blends cultural heritage with festive flair, Atelier Irina Vorobyeva's red maxi dress is the answer. Featuring intricate cuffs inspired by traditional Slavic rushniki towels, this design beautifully marries tradition with contemporary style. Ideal for Christmas gatherings or family events, this textured creation radiates understated sophistication. Pair it with delicate gold jewelry to add a hint of festive sparkle.

Velvet never goes out of style and Paseshnic's pressed velvet red dress is the ultimate in festive glamour. With a doll-like silhouette and vintage charm, this dress channels an almost theatrical appeal. Perfect for those who love making bold style statements, it's an excellent choice for both Christmas and New Year parties.

Complete the look with embellished heels and a classic clutch to exude elegance with a touch of whimsy.

Conclusion

This festive season, embrace the power of red and let your outfit do the talking. Whether you're attending a Christmas gala or ringing in the New Year, these designs ensure you'll shine like the star of the evening. Take inspiration from these global creations and craft a look that's as vibrant and unforgettable as the season itself.

HOROSCOPE



ARIES

Harmony defines your week. Balance work, relationships and ethics while overcoming setbacks. Stay focused and embrace change. Navigate situations with confidence and adaptability.



TAURUS

This week favours a job change and new projects. Balance emotions and career dilemmas. Meet inspiring people and nurture creativity and romance through social interactions.



GEMINI

Patience with siblings is key. Family brings joy, but challenges arise as a father. Socialise, embrace romance and seek guidance. A new contract ensures career stability and growth.



CANCER

Handle relationships gently amidst pressure. Balance loyalty and emotional needs. Avoid false pride. Fulfill family demands, seek guidance for commitments, and trust time for recognition.



LEO

Embrace change. Balance relationships and emotions. Manage financial stress calmly, focus on goals, and innovate. Relief from ailments brings relaxation. Trust in professional guidance.



VRIGO

Recheck ideas before presenting. Balance relationships and work calmly. Embrace wit, generosity and love. Face delays in projects with patience. Strengthen your bonds with children.



LIBRA

Stay calm amid challenges and focus on family harmony. Avoid overindulgence, do meditation and seek stable relationships. Prioritise responsibility for success in projects and life growth.



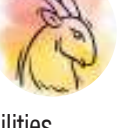
SCORPIO

Balance work and relationships calmly. Embrace unexpected connections and self-reflection. Shed pride, seek support and express love to avoid regrets. A short vacation will be good.



SAGITTARIUS

Consider a job change or solo project. Balance emotions and relationships calmly. Embrace family, talents and social connections. Socialise and let your charm uplift your life.



CAPRICORN

Success takes time; stay optimistic. Balance family, emotions, and responsibilities. Overcome insecurity with guidance. Avoid negativity and focus on thoughtful decisions for positive results.



AQUARIUS

Stay calm under pressure, communicate openly and avoid emotional blowups. Seek advice before innovating. Carefully consider changes to prevent losses and ensure success.



PISCES

Stay calm and rely on trusted support. Focus on patience and self-improvement. Boost your confidence and avoid impulsive decisions. Analyse health for more energy and stay hopeful.

the pioneer agenda

"Have yourself a merry little Christmas. Let your heart be light"
— Judy Garland



LIGHTING UP THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT



AT BEEYOUNG BREWGARDEN



BeeYoung Brewgarden ushered in the festive season with its Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony which drew an enthusiastic crowd who gathered to celebrate the magic of Christmas in the brewpub's signature European-style ambiance. The evening's highlight was the countdown to the illumination of a stunning Christmas tree adorned with twinkling lights and elegant decorations, marking the official start of the holiday season at BeeYoung Brewgarden. There was a selection of bite-sized festive treats, signature holiday cocktails, and BeeYoung's renowned craft brews delighted the attendees, enhancing the celebratory atmosphere. The evening concluded with a heartfelt toast to the spirit of togetherness.

From timeless carols to dazzling tree lighting ceremonies, the Christmas magic unfolds, writes ABHI SINGHAL

When a cold breeze begins to blow, the lights around you feel like home and the wind feels cosy, the spirit of Christmas starts to weave its magic. It's a time when families gather around crackling fires, the scent of freshly baked cookies fills the air and the sound of carollers stirs nostalgia. Though rooted as a Christian festival, Christmas is celebrated with immense joy by people of all faiths. This occasion, observed annually on December 25, marks the birth of Jesus Christ, but it transcends religious boundaries, becoming a cultural celebration of devotion and joy. Christmas is not merely a day, but a season of reflection, hope and togetherness. Through the years, Christmas has been known by various names in English. The Anglo-Saxons referred to it as "midwinter". Preparation for this grand occasion begins with Advent, the First Sunday of which marks the start of spiritual anticipation and reflection. For Christians, Advent is a time of introspection, leading to Christ's birth, which symbolises divine love and redemption. This culminates in the twelve days of Christmastide, a period rich with historical customs that concludes on Twelfth Night, adding layers of ritualistic meaning to the holiday. At the heart of Christmas are the carols of melodic songs that embody joy,



nostalgia, and spiritual reflection. These timeless tunes, sung in homes, churches and streets, unite communities in celebration. Over time, these melodies became synonymous with Christmas, expressing devotion and cheer. From sacred hymns like "O Holy Night" and "Silent Night" to lively tunes such as "Deck the Halls" and "Jingle Bells," carols range from reverent celebrations of Christ's birth to jubilant expressions of festive cheer. Christmas is also about the excitement of children, their eager anticipation and the magic of Santa Claus. Every Christmas Eve, children hang their stockings with wishes, hoping that Santa will fulfil them. Santa Claus, with his jolly face, white beard, and red suit, stands as a global symbol of Christmas

magic. This beloved figure, transcending cultures, embodies joy and the spirit of giving. His story traces back to Saint Nicholas, a 4th-century Christian bishop known for his acts of kindness and secret gift-giving. Over time, his legend evolved into the modern image of a merry, bearded man delivering gifts on Christmas Eve, riding a sleigh pulled by reindeer. Santa's presence in Christmas celebrations is symbolic of the spirit of giving, teaching children the joy of kindness and the magic of believing in something greater than themselves. Christmas decorations are more than just festive embellishments; they are heartfelt expressions of love and joy. From the glimmer of tinsel to the soft glow of fairy lights, these adornments transform homes and public spaces into magical places. The traditional colours of Christmas: pine green, snow white, and vibrant red symbolise life, purity and warmth. When it comes to the Christmas table, one can't forget the classic Christmas cake. Rich with dried fruits, nuts, and spices, it represents the flavours of the season, often soaked in brandy or rum and matured for weeks before being served. Alongside this, candies which are especially the iconic candy canes add sweetness to the season. Many homes also offer platters of colourful, homemade candies, each bringing its festive joy to the celebrations. *Wishing you all merrier than before, A Merry Christmas!*



AT CROWNE PLAZA MAYUR VIHAR

Crowne Plaza Mayur Vihar showcased *Charkha: The Loom Tree*, a breathtaking 10-foot Christmas installation made entirely of Khadi, crafted in partnership with Vikara, a Khadi India initiative. This innovative display celebrated the essence of sustainability, self-reliance, and empowerment. It was created by women artisans trained in traditional weaving, the tree featured natural dyes and zero-waste decorations made from upcycled fabrics and pearls. The installation paid homage to Gandhian principles and the Swadeshi Movement, blending artistry with ecological responsibility. Through its vibrant colours and handcrafted ornaments, *Charkha: The Loom Tree* served as a powerful reminder of the interconnectedness of conscious actions and a greener future.



AT SHANGRI-LA EROS NEW DELHI

Shangri-la Eros New Delhi recently unveiled its *Enchanted Wonders* celebration, marked by the lighting of a beautiful and breathtaking 10-foot-tall Christmas tree. The Christmas tree symbolises the spirit of the season taking the centre stage at the entrance of the hotel. With a sophisticated green and gold palette, the tree exudes elegance, serving as the centrepiece of the festivities. Guests were invited to revel in its artistic charm and experience the magic of the holidays in a truly luxurious setting. The tree lighting ceremony at *Shangri-la Eros New Delhi* was kick started with a series of festive experiences, promising a memorable holiday season for all with Christmas carols, chocolates and Santa Claus making it a complete vibe.



'When heart races & stomach flutters, you know you've found your role'

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Divya Dutta is a name synonymous with brilliance, versatility and an unmatched ability to breathe life into any character she portrays. With a career spanning over two decades, she has carved a niche for herself in Indian cinema, seamlessly transitioning between impactful roles in mainstream blockbusters and nuanced performances in independent films. Whether as a protagonist, a complex antagonist, or a supporting character who leaves an indelible mark, her dedication to her craft shines through in every frame. Her journey, defined by bold choices and an instinctive connection to her roles, continues to inspire audiences and peers alike, solidifying her as one of the most compelling performers of her generation.

"It's something I always wanted to do, even as a child — to be in the movies," she begins, her voice tinged with nostalgia and pride. "It's been 20 years now and as I look back, I feel it's been totally worth it. The road I took for myself has not only shaped me but has also become a path many others are following now. That's a very gratifying feeling." The *Ishq Mein Jeena Ishq Mein Marna* actress reflects on the earlier days of her career, highlighting the rigid molds that heroines were often confined to. "Back then, there were certain images or perceptions of what a heroine could do. You were expected to fit into a specific box. But I always believed that if you're an actor, you should be able to do everything. So, I started breaking those stereotypes."

She recalls one pivotal moment that tested her resolve — her first negative role. "I remember when it was being contemplated, people said I had a very sweet face and questioned if I could pull it off. That was a challenge for me, to prove that I could transcend those preconceived notions. And I did." Over the years, the industry has transformed significantly, something Dutta is proud to have contributed to. Her own career is a testament to this change. "Right now, I'm working on six or seven projects and none of them are remotely similar. That speaks volumes about the kind of content being created today. Of course, it also means you have to learn to say no to some things to make space for the yes(es) that truly matter."

What sets the *Veer-Zara* fame apart is the impact her performances leave on the audience. Whether it's a lead role, a supporting part, or a title character, her work resonates deeply. She attributes this to her intuitive approach to choosing roles. "For me, it's always been about taking on roles that stay with people long after they leave the theater. If a script touches my heart, I know it will touch the audience too." Her cinematic journey has always been marked by her fearless choices, her ability to take risks and her unyielding desire to follow her heart. Reflecting on her earlier years, she recalls moments that shaped her career. "There were many times, about ten years ago, when I was offered roles where there were two female leads in the project. Often, I was given the larger part opposite the hero. But I would look at the other role and say, 'That one is more interesting. Can I do that instead?'" she shares.

This instinctive gravitation toward challenging roles often left people surprised. "They would ask, 'Arey, isko kya hua hai?' But for me, it was about pushing my comfort zone rather than playing it safe with the popular role. I wanted to create something lasting, something that would make its place in people's hearts," she says with a smile. "Popularity follows when you follow your heart, even if the path is difficult. Eventually, things fall into place."

Recently, the *Welcome to Sajjanpur* actress garnered immense love and appreciation for her performance in *Bandish Bandits Season 2*. Speaking about her entry into the much-loved series, she says, "It was a surreal experience. My association with this show started with a casual conversation with the director. I told him how much I loved the first season and wished I could have done something like that. To my surprise, he said, 'Really? You mean it? Give me 24 hours.' I didn't know why he needed that time, but when he came back, he brought me a role (Nandini) that was stunningly beautiful." Originally envisioned as a male character, the role underwent a

transformation to better suit the story's narrative. "They were already contemplating making the mentor a female character, to bring a feminine energy that could mirror Tamanna's journey. The timing was divine, and it all just fell into place. Anant (the director) asked me to read the male version of the script and assured me, 'We'll shape this entirely in your way.'"

Taking on the role of Nandini required significant unlearning and preparation. "I had to immerse myself in a world I was unfamiliar with—classical music and operatic singing. It wasn't easy. I remember thinking, 'How am I going to do this?' But Anant had faith, and I had an amazing mentor, Vasundhara, a beautiful singer who took my training personally. She helped me understand everything—from the technicalities of singing to the body language and nuances of Nandini. I practiced relentlessly, even rehearsing in the garden, oblivious to people staring at me shouting at the top of my voice!" she laughs.

Despite the challenges, Dutta poured herself into the character, earning widespread praise. Critics described Nandini as a standout addition to the show, and audiences were captivated by her unique teaching methods. "What I loved most about Nandini was her way of teaching. She was assertive yet nurturing, always finding creative ways to bring out the best in her students. Whether it was blindfolding them, encouraging group activities, or teaching Tamanna notations without her realizing it, Nandini's philosophy was so innovative. I often thought,

'I wish we had a teacher like her!'"

Dutta continues, "The beauty of Nandini lies in her belief that success comes from helping her students shine. She had this incredible way of making learning fun, impactful, and meaningful. It's something I found deeply inspiring, and it's been heartwarming to hear audiences connect with her on that level."

The *Stanley Ka Dabba* fame's instinctive choices have often led to memorable performances. "I've always relied on my gut," she shares. "And thank God for that because the best compliment I've ever received is when people say, 'Whenever you're in a character, we know it's worth watching.' For me, that's the biggest validation. I truly believe your heart guides you in the right direction. I approach work for the sheer joy of it—if I'm enjoying myself, my audience will enjoy watching it too." But joy doesn't mean it's always easy. Dutta explains that every character comes with its unique set of demands. "It's not about being skeptical; it's about feeling the challenge. If a character doesn't demand something extraordinary, then what's the point of doing it? Someone else could do it. For me, there has to be that thrill, that nervousness, that excitement—your stomach should flutter, your heartbeat should race, your hands and feet should turn cold. That's when you know you've found something special."

She elaborates on her process of finding the character's essence. "It's a tradition in my house. On the first day of any shoot, my brother always asks me, 'Surr mil gaya kya?' And I truly believe in that. You have to find the 'surr'—the rhythm, the tone, the soul of the character. That's what defines you for the days you inhabit that role."

Over her illustrious career, Dutta has played a myriad of diverse and unforgettable characters. While she resonates with every role in some way, a few stand out more personally.

"There's a piece of you in every character you play," she reflects. "For example, in *Sharmaji Ki Beti*, I deeply connected with the character. She's someone who comes from a small town, feels a bit lost, but keeps trying to find her place. That was very me in many ways. And then there's the child-woman element in her—I see that in myself too. Even after all these years, I've managed to preserve that innocence. I've nurtured it, pampered it, and kept it close, and I'm proud of that." She continues, "In *Bandish Bandits*, I saw a little of myself in Nandini as well. Her vulnerability, her strength—it all felt familiar. But there are roles that are completely unlike me, and those are equally thrilling. For instance, in *Dhakkad*, I played Rohini, a character so different from who I am. But I had an absolute blast. It was almost like unlocking a quirky, chaotic box in my mind every time I stepped into her shoes. The thoughts, the emotions, the unpredictability—it was exhilarating."

Looking ahead, the *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*'s slate is brimming with exciting projects that showcase her versatility and passion for storytelling. She shares her enthusiasm for *Chhava*, a project she's deeply invested in, and a film based on a book where she takes on an antagonist's role opposite Manoj Bajpayee. There's also a beautiful show where she plays a titular role, adding yet another layer to her repertoire. Among her upcoming ventures is *Ek Ruka Hua Faisla* and a poignant biopic of an Army wife—a graceful woman from Kolkata whose life story she has embraced wholeheartedly. Working alongside Neeraj Kabi in this touching narrative has been a unique experience for Dutta. With two films ready for release soon, she continues to push creative boundaries, leaving audiences eagerly anticipating what she'll bring to the screen next.

Divya Dutta takes The Pioneer into her world, discussing the evolving nature of her career, her approach to challenging roles and the drive that continues to inspire her as she takes on one unforgettable performance after another



TRENDING

USTAD ZAKIR HUSSAIN

PERSON



The Indian Music Legend, Ustad Zakir Hussain's news of him passing away came out as a shock for not just the music fraternity, but also the entire world. He was in the US during his last days.

DRUNK LAW STUDENTS THREAT TO TRAFFIC POLICE

VIDEO



In a viral video, a young law student, who was high on alcohol was seen threatening the traffic police, after being stopped by the officials.

MOVIE

MISMATCHED SEASON 3



The much-awaited season of *Mismatched's* return has generated quite an immense buzz giving fans a glimpse of what's in store for the characters.

ARDHAM CHESKOVU ENDUKU

SONG



The fourth single *Ardham Cheskovu Enduku* from *Drinker Sai* expressed the pain of love, portraying the emotional turmoil of love and longing.

GANGES RIVER DOLPHINS

PICTURE



A team of wildlife conservationists tagged the almost-blind Ganges river dolphin for the first time.

PCOS, INSULIN RESISTANCE AND VULNERABILITY TO RECURRENT INFECTIONS

Beyond hormones and weight gain, a silent metabolic storm heightens the risk of UTIs for millions of women with PCOS. For millions of women globally, Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) is often reduced to its visible symptoms: irregular periods, weight struggles, acne, and excessive hair growth. Yet beneath this surface, a deeper, often overlooked pathology quietly unfolds—one that not only disrupts the endocrine system but also impacts immunity, paving the way for recurrent infections like urinary tract infections (UTIs).

The bridge between PCOS and frequent UTIs is a metabolic minefield: insulin resistance. "Polycystic ovarian disease has a fundamental pathology that is closely tied to metabolic processes, with insulin resistance being the most crucial factor," explains Dr. Arati Adhe Rojekar, consultant gynecologist at P.D. Hinduja Hospital.

Cascade of consequences

At the heart of the problem lies insulin resistance, where the body's cells fail to respond adequately to insulin, forcing the pancreas to produce more of the hormone. While the link between insulin resistance and weight gain is well known, the trickle-down effects are far more insidious. Elevated insulin levels don't just promote weight gain—they disrupt glucose metabolism, weaken the immune system and create an environment ripe for infections.

The urinary system, already vulnerable in women due to anatomy, becomes particularly susceptible. The explanation is twofold: high glucose levels in urine (glucosuria) foster bacterial growth, while impaired nerve function in advanced insulin resistance (diabetic neuropathy) leads to incomplete bladder emptying. "When severe insulin resistance is left untreated for extended periods and affects the nervous system, it leads to incomplete bladder emptying and impaired urinary voiding. These conditions ultimately contribute to the development of recurring urinary tract infections," Dr. Rojekar adds.

Spectrum of severity

The severity of insulin resistance varies from patient to patient, amplifying based on weight, comorbidities like diabetes and genetic predispositions. For women with PCOS who are overweight, the risk of developing type 2 diabetes—and, subsequently, diabetic nephropathy—rises dramatically. Diabetic nephropathy, which signals kidney damage caused by high blood sugar, further complicates the immune system's ability to fend off infections.

The numbers tell a grim story. Studies have shown that women with PCOS are up to four

times more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes in their lifetime compared to the general female population. The accompanying risk of UTIs is an unspoken part of that statistic, often brushed aside as an unrelated issue.

But for women experiencing persistent or recurrent UTIs, the ripple effects are far-reaching: chronic discomfort, reliance on antibiotics and in severe cases, kidney infections or sepsis.

Gendered burden

It is no secret that UTIs disproportionately affect women. Anatomically, the urethra in women is shorter, giving bacteria easier access to the bladder. The addition of insulin resistance into this equation intensifies the vulnerability. "There is an intricate interplay between metabolism, immunity and infections in women with PCOS. It's not just about hormones—it's about the way the body handles insulin and glucose at every level," says Dr. Vasundara Cheepurupalli. Senior Consultant Gynaecologist, Robotic and Laparoscopic Surgeon, Cosmetic Gynaecologist and Obstetrician at KIMS Cuddles.

For many women, this connection is revelatory. PCOS is often treated as a "reproductive issue" and the focus remains on restoring menstrual cycles and managing symptoms like infertility. The metabolic consequences—particularly insulin resistance—are sidelined, with infections like UTIs being treated as isolated incidents.

"The real problem is the fragmented approach to care," says Dr. Rojekar. "We manage infections as they come, but fail to connect them back to the root cause, which is insulin resistance."

Breaking cycle

For women with PCOS who battle recurrent UTIs, a multifaceted approach to treatment is crucial. Managing insulin resistance becomes the linchpin—not just to improve metabolic health but also to reduce susceptibility to infections. Dr. Cheepurupalli lists out the possible interventions:

Lifestyle Changes: A low-glycemic, anti-inflammatory diet and regular physical activity can improve insulin sensitivity.

Medications: Metformin, a drug commonly prescribed to treat insulin resistance, can help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce the risk of glucosuria.

Bladder Health: For women with impaired bladder function due to diabetic neuropathy, pelvic floor therapy or urogynecological interventions may be necessary.

"We need a paradigm shift in how we view PCOS. It's not merely a gynecological disorder; it's a metabolic syndrome with far-reaching implications," says Dr. Cheepurupalli.

Road forward

Despite being one of the most common endocrine disorders among women of reproductive age, PCOS remains underdiagnosed and misunderstood. As awareness grows, so does hope. Addressing insulin resistance not only alleviates the visible burdens of PCOS but also fortifies the body against silent threats. For women navigating the complexities of this condition, it's a step toward reclaiming their health—one infection-free day at a time.



NAVIGATING URBAN FORESTS AND NURTURING ADMIN

EDUCATION

did Bachelor of Science (Forestry) from Osmania University (1982-85) and Master of Science (Life Sciences) from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (1986-1988). I also did Postgraduate Diploma in Environment Management from the University of Hyderabad, Post Graduate Program in Public Policy and Management at the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB), and Ph.D. in Environmental Sciences from Kakatiya University.

STANDOUT ACHIEVEMENTS

nurtured the growth of Hyderabad's Botanical Garden into 'Vruksha Parichaya Kshetram'. This innovative initiative connects people with nature through thematic planting and cultural integration. With over 2,000 plant species grouped into 75 themes, such as the Sports Tree Garden, the project has become an interactive learning hub for children and visitors.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

My efforts have brought me accolades and awards, including the very prestigious Golden Peacock Award and the Indra Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Award. I have poured out my sweat and blood at each step of the growth of the Forest College and Research Institute (FCRI) as its founding dean. I know in our field applauses are claimed by someone later, but I had executed the best building for the institute in Telangana and was there until the first batch celebrated convocation. My sweat is there in every brick and blood in each step. This institution has since become a beacon for professional forestry education in Telangana. As the Managing Director of the Forest Corporation, I demonstrated leadership by achieving sustainable management certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Bonn, and replacing exotic plantations with native species along the Regional Ring Road.

ENHANCING CITY'S CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Enriching urban reserve forest blocks through protection from weeds, human activities, and cattle, coupled with soil and moisture conservation, water harvesting efforts, and the planting of native species, enhances the city's climate resilience. These initiatives contribute to creating carbon sinks, mitigating floods, and reducing urban heat, thereby improving the environment. Additionally, they provide fresh air for morning walkers and recreational spaces for city dwellers, making urban forestry a vital component of sustainable urban living.

PUSHPA SANDALWOOD CASE

It has been an unforgettable mark for 10 years. In the initial stage of my career, during my interactions with red sanders handlers, we were supposed to monitor licenced stock in private custody. In 1996, as the then District Forest Officer in Chittoor, I inspected a godown and issued a memo for not maintaining records. He had claimed red sanders material worth rupees thirty crore and the next day what happens is he burnt the material. Higher officials were worried about the burnt material. However, I verified and found out that the burnt material was of substandard quality and that the material in my district was not more than 600 tons. I had to chargesheet a team. I had worked with the team for four years. I did face real *Pushpa* threats during that time and was attending enquires for 10 years.

RAPID FIRE

- FAVOURITE COLOUR: BROWNISH
- FAVOURITE DESTINATION: LANDSCAPE PLACES NOT CROWDED
- FAVOURITE BOOKS: PERSONALITY BASED BOOKS
- FAVOURITE HERO: PRABHAS



DR CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER, IS SO TO SPEAK A REAL-LIFE HERO. MANY FEATHERS ADORN HIS CAP, FROM CONFRONTING A 'PUSHPA' ON THE GROUND TO HANDLING MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTS IN THE CHIEF MINISTER'S OFFICE NOW. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE PIONEER'S DEEPIKA PASHAM, DR CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY, SHARES CERTAIN SIMILARITIES BETWEEN HIS STINT AS A DISTRICT FOREST OFFICER AND THE ONE FICTIONALISED IN PUSHPA MOVIE CONCERNING RED SANDALWOOD SMUGGLERS AND HOW HE ROSE TO EMINENCE IN THE CORRIDORS OF POWER IN TELANGANA STATE



DR CHANDRASEKHAR REDDY, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY TO TELANGANA CHIEF MINISTER

ROOTS IN FORESTRY

I started off as a Sub-Divisional Forest Officer in the erstwhile Nizamabad District. That stint laid the foundation for my lifelong commitment to sustainable development and ecological restoration. Over the years, I have played multiple roles, ranging from leading participatory irrigation and watershed management projects to pioneering urban forestry models.

IN STEP WITH LONG-TERM VISION

The environmental demands of cities are expected to increase significantly as urban populations grow, with 50 per cent of the population projected to reside in cities. Urban forest ecosystems must be preserved permanently to ensure climate resilience in cities. Additionally, protecting rural lands from encroachment poses a significant challenge, as forests have a natural ability to regenerate. Agroforestry and horticulture will play pivotal roles when it comes to adopting a landscape approach for environmental restoration and sustainability.

NO FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

In my growing years as a student, I could meet the growing financial needs by doing very well in all my examinations and receiving a scholarship to sustain my education.

A MOTHER'S CHILD

I am very close to my mother as she has been managing the house and taking care of the whole family. My father, a people's man, has been active in society. We were somewhat afraid of him. She is happy that I have made it to the Chief Minister's Office from a remote village in Adilabad.

EXTENDED FAMILY

I hail from Boregaon village in the Ichoda mandal, Adilabad. My elder brother has done M Sc Agriculture. He was with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). He resigned and has since been the Managing Director of Sreenidhi Bank, Self Help Micro Finance Bank of Telangana for the past 15 years. Another brother of mine is Chief Engineer in the Panchayati Raj Department. I have a sister. I am married to a doctor. I have two sons, one is married and the other one will get married this year. All of us live in Hyderabad and we are a happy extended family.



HAPPIEST MOMENT

My happiest moment was seeing my name in the UPSC results list. It was the fruition of a seven-year dream and a struggle. In all, 35 years have elapsed since then.

NOT JUST AN EMPLOYEE

My motto has been to always make a difference. I create my own work. I don't like someone telling me about work, even if it is my boss. I create the work; make a vision, strategise and decide who all should be enrolled. Team work has been my strength and commitment to work is fundamental to my cadre.

DISTRACTIONS FROM OFFICERS

There are a lot of distractions these days. Officers do have knowledge but lack in building a commitment. However, a few are doing a great job.

TRAINING 600 CIVIL SERVANTS

Similar to the one in the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie there is a training course in Hyderabad and my participation was three times as its Course Coordinator. It is an achievement for me, because while leaving MCRHRD officers have written "It was worth training UPSC to get trained in MCRHRD" I saw the change in their minds. I changed the version of training. Introduced innovative things in learning: for example, Heritage Walks, Public Policies debates etc, and asked groups to make presentations.

MARRIAGE

I am a family man and I interact with my family members in my free time. I attend workshops. My marriage was an arranged one; my wife has an MA Political Science and is a homemaker.

I NORMALLY DON'T MISS MOVIES

I watch movies quite often and will search and watch them again after a year or so. In Tollywood, it has been Prabhas,

Allu Arjun and Nani for natural acting. In Bollywood, it is hit movies that I watch. I take time at night.

I WORKED IN SIX DEPARTMENTS

I have worked in Forest, Rural, Irrigation, Energy, HRD and Urban Development departments. Now I am handling 11 departments from the Chief Minister's Office.

EXPERIENCE WITH FORMER CM KCR

After (then TRS chief) K Chandrasekhar Rao became Chief Minister, when we all, as first IFS batch, met him; our most memorable interactions were in the initial days when he had his first file ready for Haritha Haram. No politician dares to plant so many saplings in the first year. In the administrative process, I was made to wait six months for a posting in my own Telangana. It was always a one-day posting. In 2015, I was appointed as a member of the environment of HMDA. Then CM K Chandrasekhar Rao instructed officers on deputation to go back. It was my paid holiday.

REVANTH RECOGNIZED SINCERE WORK

Current Chief Minister Revanth Reddy chose us for the sincere work we have been doing. He is a neutral man who has the capability and capacity to make a difference.

EXPOSURE TO VARIOUS COUNTRIES

We studied a lot as part of IIM Public Policy. I have visited the World Bank. I have been to Europe and during my paid holidays I travelled to China. Recently, I had been to Argentina, Brazil. I have travelled throughout Australia. From a work point of view, it was over 10 countries and I covered almost all the continents.

ECOTOURISM POLICY

I have many plans for Adilabad district. Once the Ecotourism Policy is established, I will have three to four ecotourism projects to work and implement in Adilabad.



AN INSPIRATION

My inspiration was SP Tucker, retired IAS officer of Andhra Pradesh. It was he who encouraged us to explore, innovate, and work as a team. We were trained not to show off as government officers but to remain public servants. We never show off.

CHERISHES CLASSICAL DANCE AND ART

I have fond memories of watching accomplished artistes perform, from Sumathi Kaushal to Jamuna Krishnan. I do keep my schedule and attend events featuring traditional dance and music. It fills my eyes with happiness while watching them perform.

