



# the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY  
The pioneer

**AICC should think strategically as there is a situation that the South Indian states would lose with less increase of Parliament Constituencies if delimitation of Parliament Constituencies takes place based on population. AICC should step forward cautiously to ensure that the South Indian states would not experience loss in regard to increasing constituencies**

-Revanth Reddy, CM, Telangana

P4



**Equip youngsters with skills in emerging technologies: PM Modi**



**SUSTAINING GROWTH REQUIRES DEEPER COMMITMENT: FINMIN**



**Dooradarshini is a period drama SET IN 90s**

**DON'T MISS...**

## Three held for 'dead body parcel'

Andhra Pradesh Police arrested three persons in connection with the dead body found in a parcel received by a family here recently, said an official on Thursday. On December 19, the corpse of a 45-year-old unidentified man was delivered to Mudunuri Ranga Raju's home at Yendagandi village of Undi mandal in West Godavari district in a wooden box, with an embedded letter demanding the family to pay over Rs one crore. Later, police identified the deceased person as B Parlayya from Gandhinagar...

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## 'Situation at LAC stable but sensitive'

The overall situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is 'stable' but 'sensitive' and broad consensus was reached to restore ground situation based on principles of 'equal and mutual security', the defence ministry said on Thursday, weeks after Indian and Chinese militaries disengaged from last two friction points in eastern Ladakh. In an year-end review, the ministry referred to the understanding reached between the two sides on October 21 on disengagement and said patrolling activity has commenced...

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## India initiates anti-dumping probe

India has initiated a probe into alleged dumping of LNG fuel tanks from China following a complaint by a domestic player, according to a commerce ministry notification. The commerce ministry's investigation arm, Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), is probing the dumping of liquefied natural gas (LNG) fuel tanks as imports are allegedly hurting the margins of the domestic industry. Inox India Ltd has filed an application seeking the imposition of anti-dumping duty, stating that the cheap...

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## India needed Rohit to open: Nayar

India's assistant coach Abhishek Nayar on Thursday defended axing Shubman Gill from the Boxing Day Test, saying it was in team's best interest to not only have Rohit Sharma back to his usual opening slot but also add some sting to the attack by drafting in spin all-rounder Washington Sundar. Gill, who missed the first Test due to a finger injury, scored 31 and 28 in the Pink Ball Test and looked the most assured among Indian batters. He, however, got out for a duck in Brisbane. With Rohit Sharma opening the...

-SPORTS

# Manmohan no more

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, widely regarded as the architect of India's economic reform program and a landmark nuclear deal with the United States, has died. He was 92.

Singh was admitted to New Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences late Thursday after his health deteriorated due to a "sudden loss of consciousness at home," the hospital said in a statement.

"Resuscitative measures were started immediately at home. He was brought to the Medical Emergency" at 8:06 p.m., the hospital said, but "despite all efforts, he could not be revived and was declared dead at 9:51 PM." Singh was being treated for "age-related medical conditions," the statement said.

A mild-mannered technocrat, Singh became one of India's longest-serving prime ministers for 10 years and leader of the Congress Party in the Parliament's Upper House, earning a reputation as a man of great personal integrity. He was chosen to fill the role in 2004 by Sonia Gandhi, the widow of assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

But his sterling image was tainted by allegations of corruption against his ministers.

Singh was reelected in 2009, but his second term as prime minister was clouded by financial scandals and corruption charges over the organization of the 2010 Commonwealth Games. This led to the Congress Party's crushing defeat in the 2014 national



election by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party under the leadership of Narendra Modi. Singh adopted a low profile after relinquishing the post of prime minister.

Prime Minister Modi, who succeeded Singh in 2014, called him one of India's "most distinguished leaders" who rose from humble origins and left "a strong imprint on our economic policy over the years."

"As our Prime Minister, he made extensive efforts to improve people's lives," Modi said in a post on social platform X. He called Singh's interventions in Parliament as a lawmaker "insightful" and said "his wisdom and humility were always visible." Rahul Gandhi, from the same

party as Singh and the opposition leader in the lower house of the Indian Parliament, said Singh's "deep understanding of economics inspired the nation" and that he "led India with immense wisdom and integrity." **Continued on Page 2**

## A STATESMAN: NAIDU

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed his condolences on the passing of former Prime Minister and renowned economist, Dr Manmohan Singh. In a message, he said, "I am deeply saddened by the demise of Dr Manmohan Singh Ji. An intellectual statesman, he embodied humility, wisdom, and integrity. From his economic reforms in 1991 as Finance Minister to his leadership as Prime Minister, he served the nation tirelessly and uplifted millions. His passing is a great loss to the nation. My heartfelt condolences to his family, loved ones, and admirers."

## A VISIONARY: JAGAN

Deeply saddened by the sudden demise of former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh Ji, his visionary policies and economic reforms laid the foundation for India's rise as a global power. Heartfelt condolences to his family members. May his soul rest in peace.

## Govt announces 7-day mourning

NEW DELHI: The Union government on Thursday declared a seven-day mourning in honour of former prime minister Manmohan Singh, officials said here. They said the Cabinet will meet at 11 am on Friday to pay tributes to him. Singh's last rites will be conducted with full state honours, the officials added. Manmohan Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died here on Thursday night at the age of 92. He was the prime minister during 2004-14.

# Gottipati slams Jagan's 'hypocrisy' on power charges

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Energy Gottipati Ravi Kumar has accused former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of reaching a new low with his "Tughlaq-like actions." He claimed that Jagan, who had earlier proposed an increase in electricity charges, is now protesting against the charges he once supported. The Minister said that Jagan's poor decisions during his tenure burdened the people of Andhra Pradesh.

Minister Ravi Kumar reminded that when the Telugu Desam Party handed over power to YSR Congress in 2019, Andhra Pradesh was a power surplus state. However, in just five years, Jagan's government turned it into a power deficit state due to wrong decisions and corruption. He alleged that Jagan cancelled power purchase agreements, threatened solar and wind energy investors, and drove them out

of the state, resulting in a loss of 10,000 MW of renewable energy.

The Minister also accused Jagan of ruining APGenCo, the state's power generation company. He claimed that to address the power deficit, Jagan's government purchased electricity at much higher prices—between Rs 8 and Rs 14 per unit—when it could have been bought at Rs 5 per unit. These costly purchases, he said, were made to benefit Jagan's close associates and to earn commissions.

Minister Ravi Kumar pointed out that the true-up charges approved by the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC) during Jagan's tenure have become a heavy burden on the people. These charges amounted to Rs 3,082 crore for 2021-22, Rs 6,073 crore for 2022-23, and Rs 9,412 crore for 2023-24.

He explained that APERC was supposed to issue the final order on the true-up charges within 90 days of filing. **Continued on Page 2**



## Andhra man Cherukumalli appointed IARI Director

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Cherukumalli Srinivas Rao has been appointed as the Director of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), becoming the first Telugu person to hold the prestigious position. Currently serving as Director of the National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM), he has an extensive academic and research background, including a BSc in Agriculture from Bapatla Agricultural College, an MSc and PhD from IARI Delhi, and postdoctoral research at Tel Aviv University.

State Agriculture Minister Kinjirapu Atchannayudu congratulated Srinivas Rao, expressing pride in the achievement and wishing for continued progress in the state's agriculture sector under his leadership.

## TG CM MEETS FILM INDUSTRY BIGWIGS

# Revanth takes full control of Tollywood

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com  
PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has made it clear to Tollywood bigwigs that under no circumstances, benefit shows and ticket price hikes will be allowed in the state. Taking full control of the situation, the Chief Minister suggested that film personalities must participate in social service activities and anti-drug campaigns without fail. Although the meeting was widely expected to discuss the raging controversy over the recent Sandhya theatre stampede and the consequent arrest of actor Allu Arjun as well as demolition of N-Convention belonging to film star Nagarjuna Akkineni, none of these items came up for discussion. It was a meeting that apparently followed the agenda set by Chief Minister

**Ticket price hikes and benefit shows off the agenda**



**"We didn't discuss the Allu Arjun issue at all in the meeting. Those are very small issues and were never discussed. Ticket price hikes are a producer's individual choice, and whoever wants it can request the government."**  
- Dil Raju, TFDC Chairman

ly agreeing to come to terms with the state government on all aspects. After the meeting, Tollywood representatives expressed their happiness over the 'positive' manner in

hoped that the currently soured relations between the industry and the state government would improve soon. **Continued on Page 2**

## 6,000 prisoners escape from Mozambique jail

PNS ■ MAPUTO

At least 6,000 inmates escaped from a high-security prison in Mozambique's capital on Christmas Day after a rebellion, the country's police chief said, as widespread post-election riots and violence continue to engulf the country. Thirty-

three prisoners died and 15 others were injured during a confrontation with the security forces, the police chief Bernardino Rafael added.

The prisoners fled during violent protests after the country's Constitutional Council confirmed the ruling Frelimo party as the winner of the Oct.9 elections. **Continued on Page 2**



**'New manufacturing golden age for India beckons': P8**

## Low pressure area weakens

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The well-marked low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal has weakened into a low pressure area and became less distinct, even as incessant rains lashed Chennai and neighbouring northern districts on Thursday morning, followed by bright sunshine.

The Met Office stated that the Well-Marked Low Pressure Area, which was located over the southwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal, off the coasts of South Andhra Pradesh and North Tamil Nadu, moved westward and weakened into a low pressure area. It gradually became less marked.

Under the influence of this system, light to moderate rainfall with thunderstorms and lightning is very likely at isolated places, with heavy rainfall expected in some parts of Coastal Andhra Pradesh on December 26. The associated cyclonic circulation



still persists over the same region and extends up to 1.5 km above sea level. A warning has been issued at all sea ports in the state, advising fishermen not to venture into the sea for the next 24 hours. Heavy rains are forecasted for the Nellore district due to the influence of the low pressure system.

# AP skater Jessy Raj receives PM's 'Bala Puraskar'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

International skater Matrapu Jessy Raj, hailing from Mangalagiri in Guntur district, has been honoured with the prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bala Puraskar by President Droupadi Murmu. The award ceremony took place on Thursday at the Rashtrapati Bhavan Cultural Centre, New Delhi.

Jessy Raj, a Class 9 student of NSM Public School, Vijayawada, recently won a gold medal at the World Artistic Skating Championship in New Zealand, representing India. Her stellar achievement earned her this national recognition for 2025.

Encouraged by Minister for Human Resources and IT Nara Lokesh, Jessy applied for the award from the Guntur district. Jessy, the daughter of Suresh and Radha, is the only sportsperson selected for the award out of five children who applied for it from Andhra Pradesh.

Post the ceremony, Jessy interacted with President Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who praised her remarkable talent and encouraged her to pursue her passion.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Jessy expressed her joy, describing the honour and her interactions with the President and Prime Minister as unforgettable moments.



**Encouraged by Minister for Human Resources and IT Nara Lokesh, Jessy applied for the award from the Guntur district. Jessy, the daughter of Suresh and Radha, is the only sportsperson selected for the award out of five children who applied for it from AP.**

Jessy Raj received the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bala Puraskar from President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, on Thursday.



Jessy Raj interacting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi after receiving the award on Thursday.



# India's 'reforms' man and politician with a difference

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

He drew the roadmap of India's economic reform, unshackled it from the licence raj and pulled it back from the brink when even all its gold reserve was pledged. Former prime minister Manmohan Singh was the scholar and architect of the India of today who evolved into a stubbornly resolute politician.

Unassuming, erudite, soft-spoken and a consensus builder, Manmohan Singh died on Thursday night at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). He was 92. The Congress leader, who steered the country for 10 years from 2004-2014 and helped set up the country's economic framework as finance minister before that, was a renowned name in the global financial and economic sectors.

The man who famously spoke of studying under the dim light of kerosene lamps in his village without electricity and went on to become a storied academic was the copybook reluctant politician, almost stumbling into the rough and

tumble of mainstream politics. He was the proverbial dark horse when Sonia Gandhi stepped back from taking the prime minister's post, ignoring the clamour from her party, and chose him instead. And so Manmohan Singh the academic bureaucrat became the 14th prime minister of India in 2004.

Their was a partnership that lasted 10 years, the equation between Sonia Gandhi and Singh often cited for its equanimity and an example of how a working relationship should really be. Notwithstanding the inevitable tensions, Singh also had to balance the interests of the United Progressive Alliance's coalition partners.

NN Vohra, a former Jammu and Kashmir governor, said Singh always "stood firm as a rock in pursuing the ethical path even if he got into trouble with the political party he represented".

In 2014, the UPA was voted out in a cloud of corruption scandals, establishing BJP's unbroken rule since then. Hailed for putting India on the road to liberalisation and privatisation in the early 1990s, Singh was crit-

icised for turning a blind eye to charges of corruption. The going often got tough.

During his first tenure as prime minister, the coalition began to unravel when India signed a civil nuclear deal with the US. It almost cost his government with the Left parties pulling out of the UPA coalition. However, his government survived.

On July 22, 2008, the UPA faced its first confidence vote in the Lok Sabha after the Communist Party of India (Marxist) led Left Front withdrew support over India approaching the IAEA for Indo-US nuclear deal. The UPA won the confidence vote with 275 votes to the opposition's 256, with a record thin 19-vote victory after 10 MPs abstained.

During the fag end of his tenure as prime minister, when he was seen defending his government's record and the Congress' positions on controversial issues such as the 2G scam, Singh spoke up and declared he was not weak.

"I honestly hope history would be kinder to me than the contemporary media, or for

that matter, the opposition parties in Parliament," he had said famously in January 2004.

More than two decades later, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge reacted to Singh's death with a poignant post on X: "Undoubtedly, history shall judge you kindly, Dr. Manmohan Singh ji!"

The decade with Singh at the helm of affairs is widely believed to be an era unprecedented growth and prosperity.

His journey to the acme of India's governance and political power is unique in the annals of India's politics.

Singh, always seen in a powder blue turban, was appointed India's finance minister in 1991 in the Narasimha Rao government. His role in ushering in a comprehensive policy of economic reforms is now recognised worldwide.

In January 1991, India struggled to finance its essential imports, especially of oil and fertilisers, and to repay official debt. In July 1991, the RBI pledged 46.91 tonnes of gold with the Bank of England and the Bank of Japan to raise \$400 million.

# Manmohan no...

Continued from Page 1

"I have lost a mentor and guide. Millions of us who admired him will remember him with the utmost pride," Gandhi wrote on X.

Born on Sept. 26, 1932, in a village in the Punjab province of undivided India, Singh's brilliant academic career took him to Cambridge University in Britain, where he earned a degree in economics in 1957. He then got his doctorate in economics from Nuffield College at Oxford University in 1962.

Singh taught at Panjab University and the prestigious Delhi School of Economics before joining the Indian government in 1971 as economic advisor in the Commerce Ministry. In 1982, he became chief economic adviser to the Finance Ministry. He also served as deputy chair of the Planning Commission and governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

As finance minister, Singh in 1991 instituted reforms that opened up the

economy and moved India away from a socialist-patterned economy and toward a capitalist model in the face of a huge balance of payments deficit, skirting a potential economic crisis. His accolades include the 1987 Padma Vibhushan Award, India's second-highest civilian honor; the Jawaharlal Nehru Birth Centenary Award of the Indian Science Congress in 1995; and the Asia Money Award for Finance Minister of the Year in 1993 and 1994.

Singh was a member of India's Upper House of Parliament and was leader of the opposition from 1998 to 2004 before he was named prime minister. He was the first Sikh to hold the country's top post and made a public apology in Parliament for the 1984 Sikh Massacre in which some 3,000 Sikhs were killed after then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated by Sikh body-

## DONATIONS TO POLITICAL PARTIES

# BJP got over Rs 2,600 cr, Congress Rs 281 cr: Election Commission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling BJP received contributions of over Rs 2,604.74 crore during 2023-24 while the opposition Congress got Rs 281.38 crore in its kitty, according to contribution reports of the two parties put in public domain by the Election Commission (EC).

The donations listed in the reports were received till March 31, 2024 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The BJP had declared donations worth over Rs 740 crore ahead of the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, while the Congress had claimed to have received over Rs 146 crore in 2018-19.

During 2023-24, while the BJP received over Rs 723 crore worth of donations from

Prudent Electoral Trust, it also got over Rs 127 crore from Triumph Electoral Trust and over Rs 17 lakh from Einzigtartig Electoral Trust.

The Congress got over Rs 150 crore from the Prudent Electoral Trust, which was the sole trust donor to the party. Interestingly, the Congress received multiple donations of Rs 1.38 lakh including those from top leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, K C Venugopal and Digvijaya Singh, among others.

Multiple donations were made to the Congress under the heading "Happy Birthday to our leader--JKB".

The contributions declared by the BJP and the Congress do not include the donations

received through electoral bonds as these have to be declared in the party's annual audit reports and not contribution statements.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), which is also a recognised national party, received contributions of over Rs 11.06 crore during the fiscal.

Another recognised national party, Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), received donations worth over Rs 7.64 crore.

National People's Party (NPP), which is the only recognised national party from the North East, got over Rs 14.85 lakh in its kitty.

The BJP was also a major beneficiary of electoral bonds purchased by big corporate groups like Vedanta, Bharti

Airtel, Muthoot, Baja Auto, Jindal group and TVS Motors.

The party also received Rs 3 crore through multiple donations from Future Gaming and Hotel Services Pvt Ltd owned by Santiago Martin, also known as the 'Lottery King' of India. He is under scanner of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Income Tax (IT) department for alleged money laundering.

Future Gaming was also the biggest donor through electoral bonds route with the Trinamool Congress (TMC) being the top beneficiary.

The company had donated Rs 542 crore to the TMC, Rs 503 crore to the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and Rs 154 crore to the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP).

# Collector unveils plan to enhance visitor experience at social justice Statue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha has emphasised the administration's commitment to enhancing the visitor experience at the 125-foot tall Dr BR Ambedkar Social Justice Statue. A steering committee meeting, chaired by the Collector on Thursday, deliberated on various measures to transform the iconic statue into a major tourist attraction in Andhra Pradesh.

Recognising the statue as the tallest of its kind in the state, the Collector noted that a comprehensive plan is being prepared to ensure visitors have a memorable experience. Key discussions centred on improving facilities for visitors, such as expanding vehicle parking areas, installing fountains, setting up a reverse osmosis (RO) water plant, and creating children's play zones.

Dr Lakshminsha stressed the importance of additional amenities, including drinking water, sanitation, and waste disposal, to enhance the experience for visitors exploring the Dr BR Ambedkar Social Justice Statue, the Musical Fountain, exhibits, and the Ambedkar Chaitya Experience Centre.

He directed officials to draft proposals for upgrading these facilities. The meeting also highlighted the need to maintain green spaces, plan parking expansions for peak times, and intro-



duce new attractions such as a Dolby Atmos Mini Theatre, exhibitions, food courts, and scientific entertainment programmes.

NTR District Joint Collector Dr Nidhi Meena, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Additional Commissioner D Chandrashekar, Vijayawada RDO K Chaitanya, District SC Welfare and Empowerment Officer Shiromani, APIIC Zonal Manager K Babji, KPC project representatives, and others attended the meeting.

# Gottipati slams...

Continued from Page 1

DISCOMs had filed the charges for Q4 of 2022-23 in May 2023, meaning the order should have come by August. Similarly, for 2023-24, the charges were filed in May 2024. However, the approval was delayed to avoid a backlash before the elections. Ultimately, these charges were approved, adding to the financial burden on the citizens.

Minister Ravi Kumar called Jagan's protests against electricity tariff hikes hypocritical. "Jagan created this crisis with his policies, and now he is staging protests to mislead the people."

What else can be called but a Tughlaq act?" he said. The Minister assured the public that the current government is working to repair the damage caused by the previous administration and is focused on ensuring transparency and accountability in the power sector.

# Take advantage of 'Muft Bijli Yojana', says PM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed Chief Secretaries of various state governments to ensure that people make extensive use of the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, which is being implemented nationwide until 2026-27. On Thursday, a video conference was held with Chief Secretaries to review the progress of Metro Rail projects, national highway construction, mineral block auctions, and the implementation of the scheme in major cities.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister stated that the Government of India approved the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana on February 29, 2024, to increase solar rooftop capacity and enable households to generate their own electricity. The scheme, with an allocation of Rs 75,021 crore, will be implemented through the National Programme Implementation Agency (NPIA) at the national level and State Implementation Agencies (SIAs) at the state level, with DISCOMs serving as the SIAs. The Prime Minister instructed DISCOMs to promote rooftop solar installations and take timely steps to resolve issues such as net meter availability, inspection and commissioning, vendor registration, and inter-departmental coordination. He emphasised the need to create awareness about the scheme so that more people can benefit. The scheme provides a subsidy of 60% for solar systems with capacities up to 2 kW and 40% for systems between 2 and 3 kW, capped at 3 kW. At current benchmark prices, this translates to subsidies of Rs 30,000 for 1 kW systems, Rs 60,000 for 2 kW systems, and Rs 78,000 for 3 kW systems.

Eligibility criteria include Indian citizenship, a suitable rooftop for solar panel installation, a valid electricity connection, and no prior solar subsidy benefit.

## TODAY

### ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha

Tithi: Dwadashi: Dec 27 12:44 AM to Dec 28 02:26 AM

Trayodashi: Dec 28 02:26 AM to Dec 29 03:32 AM

Nakshatram: Vishaka: Dec 26 06:09 PM to Dec 27 08:28 PM

Anuradha: Dec 27 08:28 PM to Dec 28 10:13 PM

Rahukalam: 10:55 AM to 12:17 PM

Yamagandam: 3:01 PM to 4:24 PM

Varjyam: 12:46 AM to 02:29 AM

Gulika: 8:10 AM to 9:32 AM

Amitakalam: 10:49 AM to 12:34 PM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 AM to 12:39 PM

## VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Sunny

Temp: 31°C

Humidity: 69%

Sunrise: 6:34 AM

Sunset: 5:43 PM

Updated: December 26, 2024 5:00 PM

# YSRCP to protest today against rise in power tariff

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has strongly criticised the TDP-led government for imposing steep electricity tariffs across Andhra Pradesh. Within six months, power charges amounting to Rs 15,485 crore were levied, including Rs 6,000 crore in November bills and an estimated Rs 9,412 crore for December.

In response, the YSRCP has called for peaceful statewide protests on Friday. Party workers plan to submit

memorandums to divisional engineers and other officials at local power offices, demanding immediate relief for citizens.

Speaking at the YSRCP central office in Tadepalli, Bapatla district president and former minister Dr Merugu Nagarjuna highlighted the financial burden on the public. He pointed out that power tariffs have surged by 25-55% even during winter, raising concerns about unaffordable rates in summer. Despite a 1.17% reduction in power

demand compared to the previous year, unofficial load shedding continues, revealing operational inefficiencies in the TDP government.

Dr Nagarjuna also criticised the withdrawal of 200 free electricity units for SC/ST families, contrasting it with YSRCP's tenure, during which Rs 47,800 crore in subsidies were provided to DISCOMs (2019-2024), compared to Rs 13,255.76 crore during the TDP's rule (2014-2019). He accused TDP leader Chandrababu

Naidu of breaking public trust with unfulfilled promises, such as the "Super 6" manifesto, and recalled past incidents like the 2000 Bashirbagh firing on farmers.

The YSRCP demanded the immediate rollback of Rs 15,485 crore in increased tariffs and the reinstatement of the 200-unit free power benefit for SC/ST families. Reaffirming its commitment to the people, the party vowed to voice public concerns through peaceful and democratic means.

# Vijayanand emerges...

Continued from Page 1

The previous YSRCP government's decision to extend Nilam Sawhney's tenure set a controversial precedent, fuelling discontent within the bureaucracy.

Prominent names have emerged as contenders for the coveted position, including RP Sisodia, K Vijayanand, and Sai Prasad. Each candidate brings distinct credentials and challenges to the table.

Sai Prasad, a senior IAS officer with strong backing from an influential community, has garnered significant political support. Hindupur MLA N Balakrishna and other leaders have reportedly urged Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu to appoint him. However, his community affiliations could be a double-edged sword, potentially complicating his candidacy. If overlooked now, the community's representation in the IAS could remain absent for a decade until Katamaneni Bhaskar reaches the requisite seniority. However, Sai Prasad's strength is also his weakness as several prominent figures in the government are of the view that if the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary belong to the same community, it would send wrong signals in society.

RP Sisodia, another strong contender, is renowned for his efficient and controversy-free administrative record.

Having faced challenges during the YSRCP regime, Sisodia is keen to prove his capabilities. His close rapport with CM Naidu further strengthens his bid for the top post.

However, it is K Vijayanand, currently the Special Chief Secretary for the Energy Department, who is emerging as the frontrunner. Vijayanand's extensive experience in managing the state's energy sector since bifurcation has earned him widespread respect. His adept handling of critical issues, including the Adani-SECI dispute and ensuring uninterrupted power supply, has been lauded. These achievements have not only bolstered Andhra Pradesh's economic stability but also impressed Chief Minister Naidu.

Vijayanand's candidacy has also garnered remarkable political support. A group of 35 MLAs, cutting across party lines, has rallied behind him, recognising his leadership as vital for the state's progress. This endorsement reflects a broad-based consensus, extending from seasoned legislators to first-time MLAs.

With Chief Minister Naidu and Jana Sena Party leader Pawan Kalyan wielding considerable influence in Delhi, their decision on the Chief Secretary's appointment is unlikely to face resistance. As the coalition government steers forward with its governance agenda, all indications point towards K Vijayanand's imminent elevation as Andhra Pradesh's new Chief Secretary.

# 6,000 prisoners...

Continued from Page 1

The escape from the Maputo Central Prison, located 14 km southwest of the capital, started around midday Wednesday after "agitation" by a group of subversive protesters" nearby, Rafael said, adding that prisoners at the facility snatched weapons from prison warders and started freeing other detainees.

"A curious fact is that in that prison we had 29 convicted terrorists, who they released. We are worried, as a country, as Mozambicans, as members of the defense and security forces," said Rafael.

"They (protestors) were making noise demanding that they be able to remove the prisoners who are there serving their sentences," said Rafael, adding that the protests led to the collapse of a wall, allowing the prisoners to flee. He called for the voluntary surrender of the escaped prisoners and for the population to be informed about the fugitives.

Videos circulating on social media show the moment inmates left the prison, while other recordings reveal captures made by military personnel and prison guards. Many prisoners tried to hide in homes, but some were unsuccessful and ended up being detained.

Continued from Page 1

The Telugu film industry, represented by Telangana Film Development Corporation (TFDC) Chairman Dil Raju, met Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Thursday morning. This meeting scotched speculations about the perceived 'gap' between the government and the film industry. "The Chief Minister shared his vision for the development of the Telugu Film Industry and expressed his ambition to make Hyderabad a hub for not only Indian cinema, but also Hollywood," said Dil Raju. Nearly 40 people from the industry, including producers, actors, and directors, attended the meeting. Prominent figures like K. Raghavendra Rao, Suresh Babu, Murali Mohan, Allu Aravind, and others shared their views on how to develop Telugu cinema and elevate Hyderabad's status on the international map.

The recent controversy surrounding the arrest of actor Allu Arjun has been making headlines and amplified across social media and other platforms. However, Dil Raju clarified, "We didn't discuss the

# Revanth takes full...

Allu Arjun issue at all in the meeting". He acknowledged that some participants briefly mentioned it as an unfortunate incident but stressed that it was treated as a passing cloud. Addressing expectations of the meeting focusing on ticket price hikes and benefit shows, Dil Raju remarked: "Those are very small issues and were never discussed. Ticket price hikes are a producer's individual choice, and whoever wants it can request the government."

The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy responded positively to the discussions. Dil Raju noted that the Chief Minister reiterated his commitment to making Telangana a "drug-free state". To support this endeavor, he requested actors to use their influence to create awareness about the dangers of drug

abuse. "Most actors have a huge fan following. The CM requested them to include a small video message on drug awareness to inspire their fans," said Dil Raju.

Dil Raju emphasized that the discussions revolved around the industry's overall growth rather than minor issues like ticket pricing or benefit shows. "The agenda of the meeting was to explore Telugu cinema's potential on national and international scales. The CM wants Hyderabad to become a hub for cinema, much like it is for the IT and Pharma sectors," he said.

The state government asked the industry to also support key initiatives, including holding the 'Gaddar Film Awards' annually. The TFDC will play a key role in facilitating these events, ensuring collaboration between the industry and the government.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**  
**RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT**  
**SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
 No.21 to 39/2024-25/AE3 Date: 21-12-2024  
 On line tenders are being invited for the maintenance of the integrated protected drinking water supply schemes in Vijayanagara and Parvatipuram districts. The estimated value of 19 works: Rs. 1023.87 lakh. Availability of tender documents: From 11.00 am on 31-12-2024 to 3.00 PM on 06-01-2025. For other details, contact www.appeprocurement.gov.in or call 9100120737.  
 Sd/- Superintending Engineer  
 R.O.No: 14/82/CLADVT/11/2021-22 Dt. 26.12.2024  
 RWS and Sanitation Circle, Vijayanagara

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Durga Temple EO KS Rama Rao felicitating Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu at the Police Commissionerate in Vijayawada on Thursday



VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra inspecting the sanitation maintenance at a Ghat in River Krishna in Vijayawada (File photo)

# VMC employees praised for smooth conduct of 'Bhavani Deeksha Viramana'

■ Ceremonies successfully managed through coordinated efforts of various departments

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Bhavani Deeksha Viramana Mahotsavam, organised under the guidance of NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha, concluded successfully, with the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) staff ensuring seamless arrangements. On Thursday, VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra commended the staff for their tireless efforts and effective execution of responsibilities, which contributed to the smooth completion of the Deeksha rituals. The Commissioner stated that the ceremonies were successfully managed through the coordinated efforts of the departments of Police, Endowments, Health, Revenue, Fire, and ANPCDCL, ICDS etc. He said that sanitation, a major focus, was monitored using drone surveillance.

Officials tracked the operations in real-time via live streaming which was indeed displayed in the integrated control room, and any shortcomings were immediately addressed by alerting the staff via wireless communication. Further, he said during the event, approximately 10 lakh water bottles and 6.5 lakh water packets were distributed to Bhavani devotees. As many as 200 temporary toilets were installed at 15 locations and maintained regularly to prevent inconvenience, he said. A Command Control Room was set up at the VMC to monitor the water supply to ensure the timely refilling of tanks and drums, he said. A team of 300 engineering staff worked round-the-clock to manage drinking water supply and toilet maintenance without disruption, he explained.

Meanwhile, 1,400 sanitation workers worked tirelessly under the supervision of 104 senior staff members. Conveyor belts were used to collect and transport Bhavani Deeksha garments and other waste to the Excel plant for disposal. During the five-day Bhavani Deeksha Viramana Mahotsavam, approximately 750 tonnes of solid waste was collected and processed efficiently, he said. To assist devotees, six free cloakrooms were established to store belongings, including footwear. Public announcements were made every 30 minutes to inform devotees about these free services, ensuring they were well-utilised. The veterinary and malaria wings of VMC took proactive measures to prevent any inconvenience caused by mosquitoes or animals. Regular fogging and ML

oil spraying were carried out to ensure a safe and hygienic environment for devotees performing their rituals. Although the official Deeksha rituals were scheduled from December 21-25, VMC staff began preparations a day in advance and continued working after the event to ensure complete success. **EO felicitates police officials** Meanwhile, Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam Executive Officer (EO) KS Rama Rao appreciated the services of the NTR district police in successfully conducting the Bhavani Deeksha Viramana Mahotsavam. In a meeting held at the Police Command Control Room, EO Rama Rao felicitated Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhara Babu and other police officials.

## Unnecessary patient referrals in Anakapalli: Health Dept steps in

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

A trend of rising patient referrals from local hospitals to higher-level medical facilities like King George Hospital (KGH) in Visakhapatnam has prompted intervention from senior officials in the Anakapalli District Medical and Health Department. Despite being equipped with specialist doctors and modern equipment, several hospitals within the district are referring patients unnecessarily, leading to delays in treatment, increased inconvenience for patients, and a strain on higher-level facilities. Statistics from November reveal that 20,412 patients visited Anakapalli District Hospital, with 1,904 admitted as inpatients. Of these, 121 were referred to KGH, including 57 gynaecological cases, indicating a significant number of patients requiring higher-level care. Across the district, 74,328 patients sought treatment in November, and 549 cases were referred from smaller hospitals to Anakapalli District Hospital. District Coordinator, Medical and Health Department, Dr. Srinivasa Rao, emphasised that all necessary facilities have been provided to hospitals within the district. He stressed that referrals should only be made when advanced treatment is absolutely essential. "Monitoring systems will help address these challenges and ensure that patients receive the care they need within the district whenever possible," Dr. Rao stated.



# Tributes paid to Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Malladi Vishnu, YSRCP Central constituency coordinator and former MLA, paid rich tributes to the legendary leader Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga, remembering his selfless dedication to the welfare of the poor. Speaking at a commemorative event at Janahitha Sadan in Andhra Prabha Colony, Vishnu praised Ranga for his disciplined political leadership and commitment to the people, regardless of being in power or in Opposition. Vishnu recalled Ranga's significant contributions, including his leadership during the 1983-1989 protests against the oppressive Telugu Desam Party government, where he led hunger strikes and

faceted severe repression. He highlighted Ranga's role in standing up for democratic rights during the NTR government's controversial policies, making Vijayawada a hub for political movements. In memory of Ranga's tireless fight for the poor, the YSRCP government distributed land titles to 26,000 underprivileged families during the 2019-2024 term. Vishnu further mentioned the regularisation of land and house registrations for several families under government schemes. Deputy Mayor Sree Shailaja Reddy, along with several other leaders also paid tribute, praising Ranga's enduring legacy in the hearts of Vijayawada's citizens. The event was attended by YSRCP corporators and supporters.

## CPI centenary celebrations begin in city

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Communist Party of India (CPI) grandly commenced its Centenary Celebrations in Vijayawada on Thursday. CPI State Secretary K. Ramakrishna hoisted the Red Flag at the party's state office, Dasari Bhavan, and recalled the party's significant role during the freedom struggle. Later, he paid a heartfelt tribute to the late veteran Communist leader Chandra Rajeswara Rao by laying flowers at his statue near the Police Control Room. As part of the Centenary celebrations, the CPI Red Shirt Volunteers organised a rally in Vijayawada, with a large number of party workers participating and raising slogans. Following the rally, the CPI Vijayawada City Committee held a public meeting at Lenin Centre, which was attended by several party leaders. Speaking on the occasion, CPI State Secretary Ramakrishna recalled the revolutionary movement of Telangana Sayudha

Poratam and noted that around 4,000 party leaders sacrificed their lives for the merging of various Samsthanams. He said the CPI played a pivotal role in distributing thousands of acres of land to the landless poor in the state. Ramakrishna also emphasised the CPI's crucial contribution in establishing the Visakha Steel Plant, recalling the sacrifices of 32 party leaders during the 'Visakha Ukku' struggle. Ramakrishna further stated that his party is committed to empowering the working classes and promoting their welfare without seeking to gain political power either at the Centre or in the state. "Whether farmers, labourers, employees, or anyone fighting for their rights, the Communist Party stands with them," he said. He expressed pride in the party's historic involvement in the freedom movement. The CPI leader criticised the BJP-led Central government for its lack of involvement in the free-

dom struggle and for failing to honour leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. He alleged that the BJP government had used police forces to suppress farmers protesting for their rights at the Delhi border. Ramakrishna also condemned Home Minister Amit Shah for allegedly humiliating Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Parliament. He announced that left parties would stage protests across the state on December 30, demanding Amit Shah's resignation. Additionally, he criticised the state government for imposing a burden of Rs. 15,486 crore on the people in the form of true-up charges. CPI Vijayawada City Secretary G. Koteswara Rao presided over the meeting. Party National Council Member Akkineni Vanaja, AITUC State President R. Ravindranath, and leaders Ch. Koteswara Rao, Donepudi Sankar, P. Jamalaih, and others were also present.

## JAGAN LISTENS TO PEOPLE'S GRIEVANCES AT PRAJA DARBAR

PNS ■ PULIVENDULA

On the third day of his visit to Pulivendula, former Chief Minister and YSRCP leader YS Jagan Mohan Reddy conducted a Praja Darbar at the camp office in Bakarapuram, engaging with party workers, leaders and citizens to address their concerns. Jagan listened attentively to grievances from people across various regions, offering solutions wherever possible and assuring them of his support. "I am here for you," he assured the attendees. Many YSRCP leaders and workers expressed frustration with the current coalition government's misgovernance and politically-motivated attacks. Jagan urged them to stay strong, promising that better days were ahead and that the party would soon return to power, ensuring justice and prosperity. He also urged party cadres to counter the ruling TDP's alleged oppressive tactics and stay resilient in the face of Opposition's violence. Jagan assured unwavering support to party workers during difficult times and addressed individual grievances promptly. Highlighting the burden of rising electricity tariffs, Jagan vowed that the YSRCP would lead Statewide protests. He reiterated the party's commitment to fighting for the people's rights and holding the government accountable.



MLA Yarlagaadda Venkata Rao paid tributes to former MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga's statue at Ramavarappadu near Vijayawada on Thursday.

# Yarlagaadda questions Jagan's Praja Darbar

■ The TDP MLA from Gannavaram pays tributes to Vangaveeti

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Gannavaram MLA and Government Whip Yarlagaadda Venkata Rao criticised Pulivendula MLA and former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, alleging he avoids Assembly sessions to evade facing Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. Addressing the gathering at former MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao's death anniversary at Ramavarappadu near Vijayawada on Thursday, Venkata Rao claimed Jagan lacks the courage to confront

the ruling party in the Assembly. Venkata Rao also questioned Jagan's right to conduct the Praja Darbar, asserting that he lacks the public mandate to serve as Opposition Leader. He dismissed Jagan's claims that the TDP prevents him from raising issues in the Assembly, calling them baseless. Furthermore, he highlighted the absence of official Opposition status for YSRCP in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, questioning their continued presence in Parliament. Separately, former Vijayawada

East MLA Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao's death anniversary was observed in the NTR and Krishna districts. Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad and Ranga's son, former MLA Vangaveeti Radhakrishna, participated in commemorative events organised by Radha Mitramandali and Ranga Yuva Sena near Ranga's statue in Vijayawada. Speaking at the event, Radhakrishna remarked that Ranga remains a revered figure among his followers and urged everyone to uphold his ideals and vision.

## NTR dist Civil Supplies Manager assumes charge

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Collector Mutyala Srinivasa took charge as the NTR District Civil Supplies Manager at the District Manager's office in Vijayawada on Thursday. He was recently transferred from Rajamahendravaram to the NTR district. Following the assumption of his new role, Srinivasa paid a courtesy visit to NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshminsha. Earlier in his career, Srinivasa served as Tahsildar in Mylavaram and Reddigudem. Alongside his responsibilities as the Civil Supplies Manager, he has also been appointed



as the Voter Enrollment Officer for the Mylavaram Assembly Constituency.

## 18 YO SURVIVES A RARE CANCER

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An 18-year-old girl from Mangalagiri has overcome a rare form of osteosarcoma, a cancer affecting less than 4% of cases globally. She was treated at the American Oncology Institute (AOI), Mangalagiri, after presenting with a swelling and sinus in the left gluteal region. The multidisciplinary team led by Dr N Subba Rao, Medical Oncologist, and Dr Eshant Inapuri, Surgical Oncologist, administered chemotherapy followed by surgery. Post-surgery recovery was smooth, and she now walks normally. Follow-up care remains complication-free as she continues adjuvant chemotherapy for complete recovery.



## RBI urged to include tourism sector under Priority Sector Lending

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation has submitted a formal appeal to Sanjay Malhotra, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, advocating for the inclusion of the tourism sector under the Priority Sector Lending framework. AP Chambers president Potluri Bhaskar Rao said that they highlighted the immense potential of tourism to drive economic growth, create employment opportunities, and contribute significantly to foreign exchange earnings while fostering inclusive development across the nation. "In the representation, the AP Chambers stated that tourism is a vital component of India's economy, serving as a major contributor to GDP and a key driver of employment across urban and rural regions.

# KGH to establish AP's first mothers' milk bank

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a move to improve neonatal care in Andhra Pradesh, King George Hospital (KGH) in Visakhapatnam is set to establish the State's first mothers' milk bank. The initiative, funded by the Sushena Health Foundation at an estimated cost of Rs 1.5 crore, aims to provide life-saving nutrition to premature and ill infants. The milk bank will collect, pasteurise, and store breast milk donated by lactating mothers, ensuring that vulnerable newborns—especially those whose mothers face breastfeeding challenges—have access to the essential nutrients they need. A feasibility study by the National Health Mission has paved the way for this transformative initiative. The formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between KGH and Sushena Health Foundation will be signed on January 5, 2025. KGH Superintendent Dr. P. Sivananda emphasised the significance of this initiative. "The bank is being established with the theme that breast milk is the best nutritional choice



for infants. It is a life-saving resource for vulnerable newborns, significantly reducing the risk of infections and lowering infant mortality by over 20 per cent," he said. KGH, which handles thousands of deliveries annually and operates a bustling

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), is ideally positioned to implement this initiative. The milk bank will cater to newborns whose mothers are unable to breastfeed due to health issues or other complications. Dr. Sivananda also highlighted the strin-

gent safety and quality measures in place. "We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety and hygiene during milk collection, storage, and distribution. Every donor mother will undergo thorough medical screening to ensure the milk's quality and safety." The facility will feature advanced pasteurisation equipment to retain essential nutrients while ensuring milk safety. Counselling services will also be offered to donor mothers and recipient families, covering milk expression, storage, and supply maintenance techniques. Qualified lactation consultants will support donor mothers, guiding them throughout the donation process. The milk bank will follow a rigorous five-step protocol—collection, screening, pasteurisation, storage, and distribution—with 24/7 operations to address emergencies promptly. "This initiative will be a game-changer for neonatal care in Andhra Pradesh. It will save countless lives and provide premature and ill babies the best possible start in life," remarked a hospital representative.

## Varudu Kalyani flays AP Govt for failing to address key issues

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

YSRCP State woman president and MLC Varudu Kalyani has voiced strong criticism of the coalition government in Andhra Pradesh, accusing it of failing to address pressing issues impacting the State. Speaking on Thursday, Kalyani alleged that liquor and ganja are being sold in large quantities under the current administration, highlighting its inability to curb these illegal activities. She also expressed disappointment over the government's neglect of promises made to women and the Christian community. Kalyani raised concerns over the lack of festive gifts for Christians during Christmas, calling it a failure to honour commitments.





# DC: Resolve land issues at Revenue Sadassulu

**PNS ■ ONGOLE**  
Prakasam District Collector A Thameem Ansariya has reiterated that land-related disputes can be resolved through the ongoing Revenue Sadassulu and urged the public to take advantage of this initiative.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's directives, Revenue Sadassulu are being organised across the district from December 6 to January 8, 2025. A detailed schedule has been prepared, and villagers are informed about the dates in advance.

The Collector emphasised that these conferences aim to provide permanent solutions to land disputes. Each petition is registered online, and receipts are issued. Complex cases requiring additional records and coordination among departments are addressed within 45 days.

# 3 held for 'dead body parcel' to family

Police arrested Sridhar Varma (Siddharth Varma), his wife Revathi, and one Vijaya Lakshmi (Sushma), who is reportedly in a live-in relationship with Varma. "It is a conspiracy of these three people. Revathi, her husband Sridhar Varma and Sushma. Revathi has inspired her husband and Sushma to target her sister Tulasi. She thought that she could scare her sister (Tulasi), send her into a guilt trap, and then grab her share of property," a police official said.

**PNS ■ YENDAGANDI**  
Andhra Pradesh Police arrested three persons in connection with the dead body found in a parcel received by a family here recently, said an official on Thursday.

relationship with Varma. "It is a conspiracy of these three people. Revathi, her husband Sridhar Varma and Sushma. Revathi has inspired her husband and Sushma to target her sister Tulasi. She thought that she could scare her sister (Tulasi), send her into a guilt trap, and then grab her share of property," the official said.

# ₹92 crore sanctioned for 983 CC roads: Collector

**PNS ■ ELURU**  
District Collector K. Vetri Selvi announced that Rs 92.02 crore has been sanctioned for constructing 983 cement concrete (CC) roads in rural areas under the 'Palle Panduga' programme in the district.



Accompanied by Chintalapudi MLA Songa Roshan Kumar, the Collector inaugurated newly constructed roads in Chintalapudi, Kamavarapukota, and Asannagudem villages. The roads in Chintalapudi constituency alone were completed at a cost of Rs 2.50 crore.

She revealed that Rs 19.03 crore has been allocated for developing 187 roads in Chintalapudi constituency, with most works nearing completion and expected to be finished by the end of December. She



# ₹140 crore loans extended to 20,000 tenant farmers: Collector

**PNS ■ ELURU**  
District Collector K Vetri Selvi expressed dissatisfaction over the disbursement of Rs 140 crore in loans to 20,000 tenant farmers, falling short of the set target of Rs 240 crore.

Addressing the District Level Review Committee (DLRC) meeting on Thursday, the Collector pointed out that the district has over 65,000 tenant farmers, and the target was to extend Rs 240 crore in loans. However, only Rs 140 crore has been disbursed so far to 20,000 farmers.

# Police command control room opens in Chittoor

**PNS ■ CHITTOOR**  
Superintendent of Police Manikanta Chandolu inaugurated the Police Command Control Room at V Kota on Thursday.



Room. Later, the SP inspected the office records of police stations. DSP Prabhakar and V Kota CI Somasekhar were also present.

# Ex-MLA Badeti Buji's statue unveiled

**PNS ■ ELURU**  
The statue of former MLA Badeti Kota Ramarao, also known as Badeti Buji, was unveiled at Narasimha Rao Pet near ZP Centre on Thursday by Housing and I&PR Minister K Parthasarathi and Water Resources Development Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu.



Addressing the gathering, Minister Parthasarathi lauded Badeti Buji's dedicated service to the people and his relentless efforts for the development of the constituency. "He would pursue works tirelessly until their completion," he said, adding that Badeti Buji would always remain in the hearts of the people.

lighted his close coordination with then Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to resolve issues. Denduluru MLA Chintamaneni Prabhakar described Buji as a non-controversial leader who maintained friendly relations with everyone, while Eluru MLA Badeti Radhakrishnaiah also paid tributes to him.

# 2 youths killed as bike hits tree

**PNS ■ KAKINADA**  
Two youths lost their lives when the motorcycle they were riding went out of control and crashed into a roadside tree near Velangi village, falling under Annavaram police station limits, on Thursday.

# Sisodia to attend 'Revenue Sadassulu' at Pedapalaparru in Eluru district

**PNS ■ ELURU**  
As part of the statewide 'Revenue Sadassulu' initiative, Special Chief Secretary (Revenue, Land Administration, Survey Settlement, Stamps and Registration, Disaster Management) R.P. Sisodia will visit Pedapalaparru in Mudinepalli Mandal, Eluru district, on Friday. During the event, he will address public grievances at the 'Revenue Sadassulu' on the premises of Sri Ganga Bhramaramba temple.

ing issues related to revenue records in the village. He highlighted problems caused by certain residential areas being erroneously classified as 'chukkala bhumi' (dotted land), affecting registrations and property transactions. He also pointed out challenges arising from the hurried land survey conducted by the previous government.

# Inter-district thief held; gold worth ₹26 lakh recovered

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
Vijayawada on Thursday for stealing gold ornaments worth Rs. 26 lakh. They recovered 349 grams of gold ornaments and Rs.1 lakh in cash from his possession.

ence held at the Command Control Room on the AR Grounds premises in Vijayawada on Thursday. Rajasekhara Babu stated that the accused had stolen two gold chains and two pairs of gold earrings, along with Rs.2.22 lakh in cash, from a house at MS Apartment in Prasadampadu on October 10.



# 25 kg of ganja seized; 3 peddlers arrested

**PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA**  
The police seized 25 kg of ganja while being sold in retail at Avilala Cheruvu area in Tirupati rural mandal.

# CPI office demolished in Buttayagudem

**PNS ■ ELURU**  
Revenue officials demolished the CPI office in Buttayagudem on Thursday, amid heavy police security.



revenue officials. The officials, using a JCB, demolished the CPI office, disregarding objections from the CPI leaders.

# CM to AICC: Think strategically

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has suggested that the All India Congress Committee should think strategically, considering the emerging situation in which south Indian states would be losers with fewer increases in MP seats upon eventual reorganization of parliamentary constituencies on the basis of population.

conclusion. The Chief Minister said that the Congress should be very careful in this regard as there were chances for the BJP to turn reservations in its favour through the Women's Bill.



ACROSS THE STATES



Woman stabbed to death by jilted lover

A 27-year-old woman was stabbed to death in broad daylight on Thursday by her estranged lover, a married man, in the capital city of Assam, police said. The incident took place at Nahoroni Path in the Hatigaon area, the police said. The victim, identified as Mousumi Gogoi, was going out for some work from her rented accommodation when a man stabbed her multiple times just outside the housing complex, Assam Police Inspector General Parthasarathi Mahanta said. The lady was taken to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) for treatment, but she succumbed to her injuries, he added. "The special operation group was immediately activated and the attacker was caught. He has been admitted to GMCH with self-inflicted injury," Mahanta said. Another senior official said that preliminary investigations revealed that the accused was in a relationship with the woman. "The attacker is a married man and the woman had come to know about it a few days ago. After that, she started maintaining a distance from him, but he wanted to continue with the romantic relationship," he said.



Crop loss pain takes lives of two farmers

Two farmers died in two different places in Odisha as they were allegedly upset over Kharif crop loss due to the recent unseasonal rainfall. One farmer allegedly died by suicide in Ganjam district, while the second suffered a heart attack in Kendrapara district, their family members claimed. In the first incident, a 64-year-old farmer allegedly died by suicide after unseasonal rainfall damaged his crops in Barang village under Ganjam district's Chhatrapur police station limits on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Banamali Penthei. He allegedly died by suicide after returning from his field, where the near-to-harvest paddy crops were submerged due to the untimely rainfall, his family members claimed. Ganjam collector Dibya Jyoti Parida said an inquiry will be conducted into the incident by an executive magistrate to find out the cause behind his death. Police will also conduct an investigation separately. The district administration will provide assistance of Rs 30,000 to the family members of the deceased from the district Red Cross fund, he said.



MP govt approves 16 projects

The Madhya Pradesh government on Thursday gave approval to a group of 16 works that had been left out of the Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal (PKC) river linking project with an estimated cost of Rs 28,798 crore. The approval was given in the cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, an official said. "The approved projects will create new irrigation capacity in land measuring 4.73 lakh hectares in 1865 villages of Guna, Shivpuri, Morena, Ujjain, Sehore, Indore, Dewas Agar Malwa, Shajapur and Rajgarh of Malwa and Chambal region. The modernization of Chambal right main canal system will ensure irrigation facilities in 3.62 lakh hectares in 1205 villages of Bhind, Morena and Sheopur," state water resources minister Tulsiram Silawat told reporters. "An MoU was signed on January 28 this year between the Union government and governments of MP and Rajasthan to prepare a detailed project report of revised Parvati-Kalisindh-Chambal River Link Project cum Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project. The Centre will bear 90 per cent of the cost of the project, while the remaining will be contributed by the two states," he added.

National parties bag over 63% of vote share in 2024 LS polls



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The six national parties bagged over 63 per cent share of the total valid votes polled in the Lok Sabha elections held this year. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)], Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and National People's Party

(NPP) are the six national parties. Besides the six recognised national parties, 47 recognised state parties and 690 registered, unrecognised political parties contested the parliamentary polls, according to statistical data issued by the Election Commission (EC) on Thursday. According to the data, 3,921 independent candidates contested but only seven of them were elected.

Besides, 3,905 independent candidates forfeited the deposits. Their vote share stood at 2.79 per cent of the total valid votes. Out of the 3,921 independent candidates, 279 were women, the EC noted. The none of the above (NOTA) option got 63,71,839 or 0.99 per cent votes in 2024 compared to 1.06 per cent in 2019. Over 97.97 crore citizens had registered themselves as

electors as compared to over 91.19 crore in 2019 - an increase of 7.43 per cent. Out of these registered electors, 64.64 crore had cast votes in 2024, compared to 61.4 crore in 2019, the EC said. According to the poll panel, any Indian citizen who registers in the electoral roll is defined as an elector. The elector who eventually votes is called voter.

Equip youngsters with skills in emerging technologies: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday stressed the need for a futuristic approach to equip youngsters with skills in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning, as he highlighted the crucial role they play in the country's progress.

Speaking at an event to mark Veer Bal Diwas, Modi underscored the need to adapt to rapid changes and challenges across various fields, emphasising the government's "youth-centric" policies and efforts to move in that direction with the start of the new education policy.

With his government marking the journey of the Constitution's 75 years in a major way, Modi said the Constitution's principle of equality aligns with the teachings of gurus who advocated the welfare of all. Modi said his government is committed to supporting young talent and fostering their self-confidence.

"This era has moved beyond machines to machine learning. AI is taking centre stage, and we can see its application replacing conventional software. It is essential to make our youth future ready to tackle these challenges," he said.

He urged the youth to work

"More than 300 years ago, on Dec 26, the Sahibzadas, despite their tender age, displayed unparalleled bravery and sacrificed their lives. They rejected every temptation and endured unimaginable torture, showing that for them, the nation's cause was supreme."



towards making their respective sectors, be it railways, semiconductors, travel or astronomy, the best.

Remembering the "unparalleled" sacrifice of Guru Gobind Singh's sons, the Sahibzadas, he said they chose "unwavering courage and faith over submission to the Mughal Empire's oppression".

He noted that Veer Bal Diwas teaches an enduring lesson: "No matter how adverse the circumstances, nothing is greater than the nation's cause. Every act done in the interest of the nation is an act of valour."

"More than 300 years ago, on December 26, the Sahibzadas, despite their tender age, displayed unparalleled bravery and sacrificed their lives. They rejected every temptation and endured unimaginable torture,

showing that for them, the nation's cause was supreme," he said, urging youngsters to draw inspiration from their legacy.

He said India's strong democracy was built on the bravery and sacrifice of the Sahibzadas.

"The Constitution teaches us that no one is small or big in the country," he said, adding that this principle aligns with the teachings of our gurus, who advocated for the welfare of all.

The prime minister also interacted with the winners of the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. Seventeen children from 14 states and Union Territories were honoured for their exceptional contributions in fields like art and culture, bravery, innovation, science and technology, social service, sports, and environment. Congratulating the awardees,

Controversy erupts over 'incorrect Indian map' during Cong session

PNS ■ BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA)

A controversy has erupted over the alleged misrepresentation of the India map on the posters displayed by the Congress to commemorate the centenary of 1924 Congress session in Karnataka's Belagavi, with the BJP dubbing it as "vote bank" politics by the national party.

The ruling Congress has put up these posters throughout Belagavi town as part of celebrations for the centenary event.

According to BJP and its ally JD(S) in Karnataka, the Indian map featured on the posters omits the Gilgit region of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir as well as the Aksai Chin region, currently under the Chinese administration, which are integral parts of Jammu

and Kashmir. Reacting to the controversy, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also the Congress Karnataka unit president, said the posters would be removed if there is any mistake.

"Some leaders might have made some mistake, we are removing everything. Don't try to pick a small stone in the curd... We have done according to Indian tradition and values of those days... BJP is there to attack us, they can't digest. There is no medicine for jealousy. Let them do what they want..." he told reporters in Belagavi.

The national unit of BJP strongly criticised the Congress. In a post on 'X' it said, "RaGa's Mohabbat ki Dukaan is always open for China! They would break the nation. They've done it once. They'll do it again."

Worker dies due to suffocation at dairy

PNS ■ HIMMATNAGAR

A 25-year-old worker died of suffocation after he went to clean an area close to a boiler at a milk processing facility near Himmatnagar town of Gujarat's Sabarkantha district, officials said on Thursday.

Two others who also fainted after they tried to rescue the worker, Kirpalsinh Zala, are being treated in a hospital. The exact cause of the death is yet to be ascertained, they said. Officials from Sabar Dairy, where the incident took place, have denied the possibility of any gas leak.

"We visited the spot upon learning that three persons were hospitalised after they fainted while working near the boiler. One of them has died and the other two are under treatment. Further investigation is underway," said Deputy Superintendent of Police AK Patel.

Annamalai vows to not wear sandals till DMK regime is dislodged

PNS ■ COIMBATORE

BJP Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai on Thursday said he would not wear sandals and walk barefoot until the DMK regime is dislodged.

Further, he said he would lash himself six times with a whip on December 27 at 10 am outside his residence here to draw people's attention over the tragic sexual assault of the Anna University student. Also it was to condemn the police, and the state government for its "apathy" in handling such matters.

Addressing a press conference, Annamalai alleged that the accused, Gnanasekaran was a DMK office-bearer, which was denied by the ruling party. The BJP leader, showing photographs of the accused with DMK leaders, alleged that he



was a ruling party's student wing office-bearer.

Tamil Nadu Law Minister S Regupathi asserted that the accused in the varsity student sexual assault case was not even a primary member of the DMK. The BJP leader alleged that the accused committed the crime emboldened by his affil-

iation to the ruling party. "This is very simple," he told reporters here. Since, the accused was associated with the DMK, police did not act against him, he alleged and wanted to know about the use of Nirbhaya funds to prevent such crimes.

Annamalai also questioned the way the FIR was written and said it was drafted as if the victim had committed a crime. "The DMK (government) should be ashamed of disclosing the identity of the victim."

Announcing that he would not wear footwear till such time the DMK government is ousted, he said he would go on a 48-day 'Viratham' (spiritual vow) by worshipping Lord Muruga, offering prayers at all the six 'Aarupada' temples in the state by February, 2025.

Situation at LAC stable but sensitive: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The overall situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) is "stable" but "sensitive" and broad consensus was reached to restore ground situation based on principles of "equal and mutual security", the defence ministry said on Thursday, weeks after Indian and Chinese militaries disengaged from last two friction points in eastern Ladakh.

In an year-end review, the ministry referred to the understanding reached between the two sides on October 21 on disengagement and said patrolling activity has commenced in traditional areas in Depsang and Demchok. "Overall situation along the LAC is stable but sensitive," it said.

Broad consensus has been achieved to restore the ground situation based on principles

of equal and mutual security following prolonged negotiations at diplomatic and military levels, the ministry said on the understanding.

"Consensus achieved includes disengagement and relocation of troops from the friction areas of Depsang and Demchok followed by joint verification," it said.

"Currently, blocking positions have been removed by both sides and joint verifica-

tion has been completed. Patrolling activity has commenced to traditional patrolling areas in Depsang and Demchok," the ministry said in a brief on Indian Army's activities in 2024.

It said the Army maintained a high state of operational preparedness to ensure stability and dominance along all the frontiers including LAC and Line of Control (LoC).

British rulers distorted India's history, says Mohan Bhagwat

PNS ■ NAGPUR

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Thursday said the British rulers of India distorted the country's history to propagate the message that the local populace was unfit to govern by themselves.

"In 1857, the British rulers of India realized that despite innumerable castes, sects, languages, geographical disparities and Indians fighting among themselves, they stay united till they evict foreign invaders from the country," Bhagwat said. He speaking at an event on the occasion of 70th foundation day of Somalwar Education Society in Nagpur on the role of teachers in the 21st century.

"The British rulers decided to do something that will end this trait of Indians to ensure that the British rule lasted forever. Their objective was to make Indians forget their history, ancestors and proud heritage. Towards this objective, the British, under the garb of facts, implanted several untruths in our heads," the RSS chief said. "The biggest lie was that most of the people in India had



come from outside. One such untruth was that India was invaded by Aryans who fought Dravidians, he said. They propagated that it is not in the Indians' blood to govern by themselves and that people here live like those staying in dharmashalas," Bhagwat said. The RSS chief said teachers will continue to play a very important role in the 21st century even in an era of Artificial Intelligence. The present generation is exposed to a lot of knowledge because of technology, but teachers can transform lives, he said. "Seeing and observing is learning. We can get information through reading and listening...How to use information you possess is learnt from seeing and observing," Bhagwat said.

North India continues to be in grip of cold wave conditions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Several parts of north India continued to be in the grip of intense cold wave conditions on Thursday with minimum temperatures settling several degrees below the freezing point in some cities of Kashmir valley.

Weather was mostly dry across Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the last 24 hours.

Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan experienced severe cold wave conditions with mercury falling several notches below normal.

Officials said there is a possibility of light snowfall over the

higher reaches of Kashmir on Friday and Saturday as a western disturbance is set to impact the region.

The night temperature dropped at most places in Kashmir as the valley continued to reel under freezing conditions. The fall in the mercury led to the freezing of water supply lines as a thin layer of ice covered the surface of several water bodies including the Dal Lake.

Srinagar recorded a low of minus 7 degrees Celsius (C) on Wednesday night, slightly up from the previous night's minus 7.3 degrees C, the meteorological department said.

Gulmarg, a tourist resort

town known for skiing activities in north Kashmir, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6 degrees C, up from minus 6.6 degrees C the previous night.

Pahalgam, the base camp for



the annual Amarnath Yatra in south Kashmir, registered a minimum temperature of minus 8.6 degrees C, slightly down from the previous night's minus 8.4 degrees C, it said.

Qazigund, the gateway town

to Kashmir, logged a minimum temperature of minus 7 degrees C, while Konibal, a hamlet in the Pampore area, was the coldest recorded place in the valley at minus 9 degrees C, it said.

The meteorological department has said an active western disturbance is set to impact Jammu and Kashmir from Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Thursday said people in the valley were facing difficulties due to intense cold conditions but the government would be able to provide uninterrupted electricity only after 100 per

cent metering is achieved. "As far as winter preparedness is concerned, there is an intense cold and there has been a dry spell. I pray to God for snowfall so that this dry spell ends.

"Our endeavour is to minimise the power cuts and ensure water supply even as pipes freeze due to the low temperature. Despite difficulties, our endeavour is that the government functions smoothly," Abdullah told reporters in Srinagar.

The chief minister said the complaints of unscheduled power cuts would continue "because there is pressure on the system".





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## A blow to regional peace

The fragile peace of South Asia faced a severe setback when Pakistan conducted airstrikes in Afghanistan

On the night of December 24, 2024, a series of airstrikes conducted by Pakistan in Afghanistan's Barmal district of Paktika province claimed the lives of at least 15 civilians, including women and children. The strikes targeted seven villages, causing significant destruction, particularly in areas like Murg Bazaar and Laman, where an entire family of five was killed. This incident has further strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, raising serious concerns about the stability of South Asia. The airstrikes appear to be a direct response to Pakistan's growing concerns over the activities of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Pakistan has justified the strikes as a necessary measure to eliminate TTP hideouts and secure its borders. However, the Afghan Taliban strongly denies these allegations, claiming instead that the airstrikes targeted civilians, including Waziristani refugees who had previously fled military operations in Pakistan's tribal areas. The implications of this attack extend far beyond the immediate violence, casting a shadow over peace and security in South Asia. The airstrikes, coupled with the Taliban's vow to retaliate, risk escalating into a broader conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Such hostilities could destabilise the region, which is already grappling with insurgencies, cross-border terrorism, and long-standing disputes.



In addition to the geopolitical ramifications, the humanitarian impact is profound. Afghanistan, a nation still recovering from decades of war, now faces further devastation. Civilian populations, particularly refugees, are bearing the brunt of this violence, with villages like Murg Bazaar reduced to rubble and countless families displaced. The destruction exacerbates an already dire humanitarian crisis, highlighting the urgent need for international aid and support. This conflict also undermines ongoing peace efforts in the region. Dialogues involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other stakeholders, essential for fostering stability, risk being derailed by such incidents. Additionally, it hinders cooperative initiatives against terrorism, a shared threat that requires coordinated regional action. The situation further complicates geopolitics in South Asia, prompting countries like India, China and Iran to reassess their strategies. Pakistan's actions, though driven by immediate security concerns, may strain its relationships with traditional allies and global powers advocating for peace in the region. To address this growing crisis, both countries must prioritise dialogue and cooperation. Constructive bilateral engagement is crucial to resolving mutual concerns, particularly regarding the TTP and border security. Neutral mediators, such as the United Nations, could play a vital role in facilitating these discussions. Beyond bilateral efforts, regional cooperation is essential. A unified initiative led by organisations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) could encourage collective action against terrorism and promote economic interdependence, reducing the incentives for conflict.

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### PICTALK



The Badrinath Dham covered with snow during fresh snowfall, in Chamoli

# Jordan's ambivalent stance on Palestine



BHOPINDER SINGH

While maintaining a façade of solidarity, Jordan's actions often reveal a pragmatic, if controversial, approach to safeguarding its own interests in a volatile region

Jordanian reality towards the Palestinians/Jordanians have had a wounded, complicated, and manipulative history. House of Hashim or the Hashemite dynasty rules Jordan with the current King Abdullah II, as the 41st generation of the direct descendants of Prophet Muhammad. While Hashemites were the Sharif and Emir of Mecca with rule over larger Hejaz, they were violently ousted from the control over the same by the rival Saud family. This military loss led to the loss of the symbolically vital title of the "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques" to the Saud family, of modern-day Saudi Arabia. Hashemites were also to lose monarchical claim of rule on lands of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq and were left with only the Jordanian swathes – which unlike other Arab lands was bereft of oil, natural resources, ports, or any other meaningful lever of power. They had to be creative in dealing with the situation and remaining relevant and protected. Geographical contiguity to Palestinian lands led to Jordan demonstrating fluctuating concern that oscillated from supporting the Palestinian cause to willy-nilly, acting against the same. During the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, Jordan occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem (which it annexed in 1950), only to lose the same to Israel in the Six-Day War of 1967. Historians often note the unique culture of "back channels" (facilitating clandestine meetings) between the Jordanians and Israelis that led to counterintuitive accommodations, even amid war. In the subsequent Arab-Israeli War of 1973 (Yom Kippur War), Jordan had curiously avoided joining Arab ranks against Israel. Jordanian King Hussein had secretly flown to Tel Aviv to warn Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir of the impending Arab plans to attack Israel. Ultimately when Jordan was morally forced to support the war against Israel, declassified accounts confirm that it was only to preserve Jordan's image in the Arab world and that it had already entered into a tacit agreement with Israel that it would not attack Israeli elements.



It wasn't the first time the Jordanians had worked duplicitously against the Arab or Palestinian cause, as just a couple of years earlier, the infamous and bloody "Black September" (Sep 1970 – July 1971) had occurred. Jordanian Army had surrounded camps and townships with Palestinians fideayen of various groups and brutally cut them down to size. Nearly 3500 were killed in the purge and the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organisation) fighters were expelled to neighbouring Lebanon. Again, the Jordanians had aligned with Israel before commencing this attack. Importantly Syrian forces that had intervened on behalf of Palestinian fighters were repulsed leaving 600 Syrians dead and a loss of 120 tanks. Interestingly, like the historically insincere support of Jordanians towards the Palestinians, one important figure who participated along the Jordanian forces in massacring the Palestinians was a then Pakistani Brigadier (later dictator) Zia-ul-Haq, who was on deputation. In 1987 Jordanian King Hussein and Israeli foreign affairs minister (later President) Shimon Peres met secretly to work on a peace treaty which was followed up with Jordanians forsaking their claim on the West Bank, the subsequent year. By 1994 the two countries



IN THE SUBSEQUENT ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF 1973 (YOM KIPPUR WAR), JORDAN HAD CURIOUSLY AVOIDED JOINING ARAB RANKS AGAINST ISRAEL

signed a formal Peace Treaty (the second Arab nation after Egypt) and normalised relations with Israel. Odd public bickering on issues like Al Aqsa Mosque aside, the top leadership of both countries kept meeting discretely, whilst Jordan kept maintaining the façade of support towards Palestine. Practically, they engaged and operated as allies. Post the Hamas terror attack (7th Oct 2023) on Israel and the subsequent and disproportionate bludgeoning of the Gaza Strip, the Jordanians had no choice but to expel the Israeli ambassador to maintain face in the Arab world. However, as it was only Iran and its proxies like the Syrian Bashar Al Assad government and the Lebanese Hezbollah who were offering any meaningful resistance to the Israelis – then the Jordanians did the unthinkable in favour of the Israelis when they shot down Iranian drones attacking Israel. Practically, the Jordanians weighed in favour of the Israeli military (all perfunctory concerns towards the beleaguered Palestinians, notwithstanding). Jordanians watched silently as Southern Lebanon was attacked and as the Syrian regime was overrun by forces born out of Al Qaeda, ending the last possible faction that had taken on the Israelis in favour of the Palestinians. For

a long, Jordanian King Abdullah had warned against the spectre of a rising "Shia Crescent" (assertion of Shiite rule in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon). He therefore would be presumably pleased to see the decimation of the sectarian rivals, which coincidentally also ended the last modicum of challenge to the Israelis. Beyond vacuous words, the practical conduct of the Jordanians has been suspiciously two-faced on the ostensible redlines as defined by King Abdullah i.e., "No to abandoning the guardianship of Jerusalem and the holy sites, no to the one-state solution, and no for Jordan to be an alternative homeland for the Palestinians." The picture has perhaps never been further from the so-called Jordanian redlines, as now, the fate of Palestinians, Jerusalem, and the possibility of a two-state solution, is at its lowest. History will judge the conduct of Arab monarchies and their lip-serving commitment towards Palestine, but perhaps none as ambidextrously as the Jordanians, who often fancy themselves to be of the highest order. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SOLVING INDIA'S WATER CRISIS

Madam — Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has laid the foundation stone of the Ken-Betwa river linking project, the first initiative under the national river linking policy, at Khajuraho in Madhya Pradesh. It is really a welcome step in solving the water crisis in India. Nearly 65 lakh people of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh will get drinking water, and more than 7 lakh farmer families of 2000 villages will benefit from the project. Also, it has been proposed to generate 103 MW of hydropower. The project aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken River in Madhya Pradesh to Betwa in UP to irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region. Under the project, a 77 m high and 2.13 km long Daudhan dam and two tunnels will be constructed on the Ken River. Interlinking rivers can control both floods and droughts. This river linking project can have significant ecological consequences, can impact the biodiversity of the region, and can affect Panna Tiger Reserve too. Even then the project will create many employment opportunities as well as boost the rural economy. Ken-Betwa is the first river linking project under the National Perspective Plan (NPP) for the linking of rivers. The National Water Development Agency should identify a few more river linking projects to avoid floods and to cultivate more lands in drought-prone areas in India.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

### DEBATE ON CONSTITUTION

Madam —The recent debate commemorating 75 years of the Constitution's adoption left the citizens highly disappointed. The expectation from our parliamentarians was of a healthy debate and an academic discussion. Instead what we saw was a brownie point scoring match between our parliamentarians, who decided to nitpick on what our founding fathers had said and when without providing the context in which it was said.



KAPEEL BARSAIYAN

## India's hidden crisis: Battling malnutrition for a healthier future

Malnutrition among children in India stands as a pressing public health challenge, intricately linked to poverty, systemic inequalities and environmental hurdles

Malnutrition among children remains a critical public health issue in India, deeply intertwined with poverty, systemic inequalities, and environmental challenges. Despite the nation's economic progress, the persistent issues of undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies continue to hinder India's overall growth and development, casting a shadow over its aspirations for a healthier future. The 2023 Global Hunger Index paints a grim picture, with India ranked 111th out of 125 countries and a score of 28.7, indicating a "serious" hunger situation. Although there has been marginal improvement from a score of 29.2 in 2015, the pace of progress lags behind peer economies. Disturbingly, India records the world's highest rate of child wasting at 18.7 per cent, while 35.5 per cent of children under five are stunted. These figures highlight the long-term health and developmental implications of malnutrition. Several interconnected challenges exacerbate this issue.



Poverty remains a significant factor, with India contributing nearly 40 per cent to the global poverty rate and 389 million people living in poverty across South Asia. Millions of children are left vulnerable to malnutrition due to limited resources. Compounding this is inadequate nutrition and sanitation, as poor dietary intake, restricted access to clean water, and insufficient healthcare facilities worsen the situation. The health and cognitive impacts of malnutrition are profound, weakening immune systems, increasing susceptibility to diseases, and impairing cognitive development. These effects

ripple through to academic performance and future opportunities, trapping many in a cycle of poverty. Regional disparities further intensify the problem, with states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh shouldering a disproportionate burden of malnourished children. Higher poverty rates and systemic challenges in these regions make addressing the issue even more complex. To combat malnutrition, the Government of India has implemented various programs. POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to enhance the nutritional status of children, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program offers supplementary nutrition, education, immunisation, and health check-ups. The Mid-Day Meal Scheme addresses hunger and malnutrition among school-going children, while the National Food Security Act (NFSA) provides subsidised food grains to economically vulnerable populations. Other initiatives, such as the Pradhan Mantri Matru

Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) and the National Health Mission (NHM), include financial incentives for pregnant women and specialised care through Nutrition Rehabilitation and Lactation Management Centres. While these efforts have yielded positive outcomes, more comprehensive strategies are needed to address the root causes of malnutrition. Tackling poverty, improving education, expanding healthcare access, and ensuring sanitation are critical steps toward sustainable progress. Collaborative efforts among policymakers, non-governmental organisations, and local communities are essential to create meaningful change. True progress is reflected in the wellbeing of every individual, especially the youngest members of society. By prioritising nutrition and equity, India can foster a healthier, well-nourished generation and pave the way for sustainable development. (The writer is Kapeel Barsaiyan, President, Buddhi Jyoti Foundation; views are personal)

## One Nation, One Subscription



The Government of India's One Nation-One Subscription (ONOS) initiative aims to transform education, research, and innovation by ensuring equitable access to academic resources. Announced in 2022 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 to create a knowledge-based society. With a Rs 6,000 crore budget allocated for 2025-2027, ONOS will provide subscriptions to international research

journals, academic databases, and other resources, addressing disparities in education and research. The initiative will empower students and researchers, especially from rural and smaller institutions, by granting them access to resources previously limited to well-funded universities. This inclusivity will bridge the rural-urban divide and foster innovation by enabling access to global advancements. Additionally, its focus on digital platforms reduces dependency on physical materials, supporting environmental sustainability and the objectives of the Digital India campaign. Despite its promise, ONOS faces challenges, including concerns over its high cost and limited digital infrastructure in rural areas, which could restrict access. Critics caution that without transparent implementation, the initiative may primarily benefit larger institutions.

RK Jain | Barwani

Our parliamentarians decided to cherry-pick the words of our founding fathers, like B R Ambedkar, J L Nehru, K M Munshi, etc., to suit their own narrative. The constituent assembly had various members with varying views. Each motion was debated and voted in favour of or against, and ultimately the majority carried, but to now selectively pick up each and every sentence and comma from their speeches to paint a narrative is a disservice to the memory of our founding fathers. It is necessary to remember the words of two members of the Constituent Assembly who went on to forge different paths later in life—one Minoo Masani, a parsi who joined Savantartar Party and became Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha who said, "Where the state belongs to the people, the state is subordinate to the people and only then does the state serve the people" and Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, a devout hindu who served in Nehru's cabinet who said, "We shall go ahead with our work in spite of all obstacles and help to create that great India, united and strong

which will be the motherland of not this community and that, not of this class Or that but of every person, man, woman and child inhabiting this country. " May these words of our founding fathers guide our parliamentarians in securing a bright future for India, and may their sacred constituent be their conscious keeper.

Gurnoor Grewal | Chandigarh

### KHEL RATNA CONTROVERSY

Madam —It is baffling that Manu Bhaker, who made history by bagging two medals in a single Olympics in Paris, is absent from the list of Major Dhyana Chand Khel Ratna awardees. If any athlete deserves to be given this award this year, it is Manu Bhaker. Her father is absolutely right: Manu has done her part by giving huge laurels to the country where we have only a handful of individual medal winners; now it is up to the GoI to recognise her feat and reward it.

Bal Govind | Noida

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com





## FIRST COLUMN

### ACHIEVERS NEVER QUIT

Achievers are not born but forged by their ability to ignite their natural talents over time



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

Jack Croushore was a charismatic leader, a successful steel magnate and an achiever, who never called it quits, regardless of the situation that confronted him. He was also equally adept in adopting the strategy of using kid gloves when situations so required. Over a period, his mind learnt that situational factors influence leadership effectiveness. Successful leaders are high-end achievers, those who do not quit. They are blessed with halcyon days in life, which provide them with joyful moments, and there may be woebegone incidences that fortuitously do not cripple their passion to climb the ladder of prosperity. Nancy Gibbs says, "High achievers, we imagine, were wired for greatness from birth. But then you must wonder why, over time, natural talent seems to ignite in some people and dim in others." Recall the talismanic movie 3 Idiots. Amir Khan, Sharman Joshi and R. Madhavan essayed the principal roles.

They were euphemistically called the 3 idiots by the director of the institute. Among them, Rancho (Amir Khan) was an achiever blessed with natural talent, out-of-the-box thinking and revolutionary ideas. There is a poignant scene in the movie where Ali Fazal, who played the role of Joy Lobo, snuffs out his life as he was unable to meet the deadline for completing the assigned project work and thus became a laggard. He was working on a battery-operated 'flying machine', which could capture various events through its magical eyes and features. Alas, his attempts were abortive, while the consummate Rancho was successful in designing the machine... and during a test flight, he and the entire college were witnesses to the shocking tragedy of Joy Lobo taking his life. Dismayed at the turn of events, Lobo prominently wrote on the walls of his room - I QUIT.



The scene graphically recorded the miscarriage of the project and the abject subjugation of the character who was not an achiever. Once, some superiors decided to cashier an employee for a lacklustre performance. He decided to quit all relationships and his spirituality, and in sheer desperation informed God that he had decided to abandon his life. God asked him to look around in a forest for ferns and bamboo. When God planted ferns and bamboo seeds, he took special care of them and protected them from all the vagaries of weather. Within a year the ferns became resplendent and iridescent, covering the entire floor space, while the bamboo seeds showed no growth.

Over the following four years, the forest became verdant with the ever-expanding ferns and yet there was no sign of the bamboo growing or developing into a tree. In the fifth year, the bamboo seeds began to sprout. Within the next six months, the bamboo shoots rose to a height of a hundred feet, lording over the fern plantation. God smiled at the man and said that he never gave up on the bamboo seeds over five years. During this timeframe, the roots of the bamboo tree were growing. Our period of struggle is akin to the development of the roots of the bamboo tree. Both the fern and the bamboo grew at their own pace, as willed by the universe and nature. They complemented each other's growth and were not competitors. Happiness makes us sweet and trials fortify us; sorrows when encountered should make us strong and success ought to make us grateful and radiant. In the ultimate analysis, it is only a positive disposition and thoughts that keep us ticking so that achievers do not lower their guard and thereby do not quit.

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

# The key to shaping inclusive future

As automation, artificial intelligence and globalisation reshape industries, lifelong learning and adaptability are essential to staying competitive



DINESH SOOD

In an era of rapid technological advancements and shifting economic landscapes, the conversation around skill development has never been more relevant. Skills are no longer just tools for employment; they are the chisels and hammers that sculpt our collective future, shaping individuals and nations. Historically, skills were tied to tradition and geography. A farmer learned the trade from generations before, and an artisan honed their craft through years of apprenticeship. But the 21st century has shattered these boundaries. Today, the Advent of automation, artificial intelligence, and globalisation demands a workforce that can continuously adapt, innovate, and learn. Skills are not static; they evolve, and the pace of this evolution is accelerating. At the heart of this transformation lies the understanding that skill development is no longer a one-time event but a lifelong journey. The future belongs to those who embrace this mindset. A software engineer may need to transition to being a data analyst tomorrow. A marketer should delve into behavioural psychology or artificial intelligence. The world is moving toward a gig economy, where flexibility, creativity, and adaptability are not just assets but necessities. Those who rest on their laurels risk being left behind in a world where change is the only constant. India has the brain power needed to rise in the skilled world. Governments, educational institutions, and private enterprises all play a role in fostering a skill development culture.

Traditional education systems, built to serve industrial-era needs, must undergo a radical shift. The focus should be more than rote learning or degree acquisition, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and technical competencies. Initiatives like coding boot camps, vocational training, and online learning platforms have already begun to disrupt the status quo, democratising access to quality education. But more must be done to ensure inclusivity and widespread reach. When we talk of skills, we mean making one employable to earn a livelihood quickly and decently. As per the National Policy of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015, we had the target to impart various skills to 40 crore people by the end of 2022. However, around 4 crore people have been trained. Still, there is a massive opportunity for varied stakeholders to come forward and arm our men and women with employable skills. It is nothing but aligning the entire skilling ecosystem with the demands of employers. Today, a considerable gap exists between the demand for a skilled workforce and their availability in the market.

Among 150 million young people in developing countries, around 33 per cent are skilled but unemployed, as their employability quotient could be better. Government policy interventions can bridge the gap between demand and supply in the workforce market. Incentivising employable skill development through subsidies, tax benefits, or public-private partnerships can empower citizens to upskill or reskill. Furthermore, governments must create frameworks encouraging lifelong learning, such as subsidised courses or learning credits for professionals looking to update their skills. Meanwhile, industries must recognise their role in creating agile workforces.



AMONG 150 MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AROUND 33 PER CENT ARE SKILLED BUT UNEMPLOYED, AS THEIR EMPLOYABILITY QUOTIENT COULD BE BETTER. GOVERNMENT POLICY INTERVENTIONS CAN BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN DEMAND AND SUPPLY IN THE WORKFORCE MARKET

Corporate training programs, mentorship initiatives, and collaborations with educational institutions are not just investments in employees but investments in the future of the business itself. Companies that foster a culture of continuous learning often enjoy higher productivity, better employee retention, and a competitive edge in their industries. Moreover, the private sector can lead the way in identifying future skills by analysing market trends and technological advancements, ensuring training programmes remain relevant and forward-looking. However, skill development is not just about economic progress but also a tool for social empowerment. In many developing nations, lack of access to education and skills has perpetuated cycles of poverty. Equipping marginalised communities with in-demand skills can uplift entire populations, ensuring more inclusive growth. A young woman in a rural village learning coding or a displaced worker mastering digital marketing are potent examples of how skills can change lives. These stories highlight the transformative potential of skill development, turning adversity into opportunity and fostering hope where it is needed most. This empowerment extends beyond individuals to communities and entire societies. Skilled populations are better equipped to address local challenges, from improving infrastructure to boosting small businesses. In this way, skill development catalyses innovation and self-reliance, reducing dependency on external aid and fostering sustainable growth. Communities investing in their human capital often see a ripple effect, where increased productivity and prosperity lead to better healthcare, education, and quality of life. As we champion skill development, addressing the challenges it pre-

sents is also critical. The digital divide, for instance, threatens to exclude those who lack access to technology or internet connectivity. Rural areas and underserved regions often bear the brunt of this inequity, leaving millions without the tools to participate in the modern economy. Bridging this gap requires a concerted effort from the public and private sectors, including infrastructure investments, affordable technology, and localised training programs catering to specific regional needs. Similarly, a one-size-fits-all approach to skills training is likely to fail. Each individual's journey is unique, shaped by their aspirations, context, and potential. Personalised, learner-centric approaches must become the norm. Adaptive learning technologies powered by artificial intelligence can significantly tailor educational content to suit individual needs and learning styles. This ensures that skill development is essential, practical, engaging, and relevant. Moreover, we must shift the narrative around failure in skill acquisition. Learning a new skill often involves trial and error, and creating an environment where individuals feel encouraged to experiment and grow without fear of judgment is essential. Employers and educators must foster a culture that values resilience and continuous improvement over perfection. The metaphor of skill as a sculptor is apt. Like marble, raw talent has limitless potential. But becoming something remarkable requires the right tools, guidance, and effort. Skill development chisels away ignorance, carves out opportunities and polishes the rough edges of human potential. It bridges the gap between dreams and reality, between where we are and where we aspire to be. As we look to the future, let us remember the power

of skills to redefine what is possible. Whether combating climate change, revolutionising healthcare and wellness, or exploring the frontiers of space, skilled individuals will be at the helm of every breakthrough. By investing in skill development today, we are not just preparing for tomorrow but shaping it. The urgency of this investment cannot be overstated. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a wake-up call, highlighting the vulnerabilities of unskilled or under-skilled workers in a volatile economy. Millions faced job losses, and industries struggled to adapt to new remote work and digital operations norms. Yet, it also demonstrated the resilience of those equipped with the right skills to pivot and thrive in uncertain times. The lessons learned must guide our approach, emphasising the importance of resilience, adaptability, and future-proof skills. Furthermore, as technology evolves, ethical considerations must be integrated into skill development. Understanding the implications of artificial intelligence, data privacy, and sustainability is as crucial as mastering technical competencies. This holistic approach ensures rapid and responsible progress, fostering a future where innovation aligns with human values and societal well-being. In conclusion, skill development is more than a response to economic demands; it is a transformative force that shapes our world. It empowers individuals, drives innovation, and fosters inclusive growth. By investing in skills, we invest in people, and by investing in people, we invest in the future. *(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation and a network member of India International Skills Centres. The views expressed are personal)*

# Witch-hunting in India: A persistent plague claiming women's lives

## Despite legal interventions, witch-hunting remains a grim reality in parts of India, targeting marginalised women

In 2014, Partners for Law in Development (PLD), a legal resource group working on social justice and women's rights, carried out a study to understand the reasons behind rising violence against women in the name of witch hunting in Bihar, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. They found that women were blamed for illness, death and even a bad crop and branded as witches.



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

there was complicity in the community. Their study also revealed that although laws in Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh criminalising acts/offences particular to witch hunting, such as 'identifying' any person as a witch along with the mental and physical torture accompanying such identification existed, the apathy of the state led to the continuation of witch hunting prac-

tices. Ten years later, nothing seems to have changed. Witch hunting continues to claim women's lives even in 2024. Over 663 were killed for allegedly practising witchcraft during 2015 and 2021 according to the National Crime Research Bureau (NCRB). Worryingly, the main perpetrators of this violence also remain the same, says Nirantar Trust, a NGO working on gender and education. Findings of the Trust's recent survey on witch hunting in 114 villages across 10 districts in Bihar showed 43 per cent of the victims were targeted by members from their own family. Their study, released earlier this month, also found a significant proportion of the

women victimised as witches were between the age group 45 to 60. Moreover, 73 per cent of the victims had never been to school. Nirantar also found that more than single women or widows, it was married women who were branded as witches, corroborating the findings of the 2014 PLD study. In many instances, perpetrators were related to the male kin of the husband and thus negated the traditional belief that married women were safer than single women. Another grave concern raised in the 2024 study is the targeting of women from marginalised backgrounds who have shown agency and the courage to raise their voices against the



deeply entrenched patriarchy. The inability of the government to sensitise men while pushing for women's empowerment has endan-

gered many women in leadership roles. One of the easiest ways to show the woman her place has been to brand her as a witch. Of the 44 per cent of women who faced

accusations of witchcraft from castes other than their own, the majority were from the upper caste. Nirantar found that most women preferred not to report this mental and physical assault as they were afraid it would lead to increased violence, greater social ostracisation and humiliation. They also lacked trust in the sincerity and efficacy of law enforcement agencies. The inability to provide timely justice can be fatal was found by Action Aid Association. The NGO, which detailed 102 case studies from Odisha's 12 districts reporting maximum witch-hunting incidents in 2021, found that despite the law, more than 30 per cent of the total cases had led to the death of the

woman branded as a witch. Chhutni Mahto, the fire-brand social activist from Jharkhand, who received the Padma Shri in 2021 for her role in rescuing over 100 women accused of witchcraft, knows the pain because she too, was targeted as a witch. She survived and embarked on a mission to help others. But why is the onus only on survivors? NCRB data shows that since 2000, over 2,500 women have been killed for being witches. How many more women need to die before action against such inhuman acts is given the priority it deserves? *(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)*



## IN BRIEF



### RBI sets up panel on ethical use of Artificial Intelligence

The Reserve Bank on Thursday announced the setting up of an eight-member committee to develop a framework for responsible and ethical enablement of artificial intelligence (FREE-AI) in the financial sector. Headed by IIT Bombay professor Pushpak Bhattacharyya (Department of Computer Science and Engineering), the panel will assess the current level of adoption of AI in financial services, globally as well as in India. It will also review regulatory and supervisory approaches on AI with focus on the financial sector globally. The panel will also identify potential risks associated with AI, if any, and recommend an evaluation, mitigation and monitoring framework and consequent compliance requirements for financial institutions, including banks, NBFs, FinTechs, PSOs, etc. The committee will recommend a framework including governance aspects for responsible, ethical adoption of AI models / applications in the Indian financial sector, the RBI said.



### Gold rises Rs 250 to Rs 78,850/10g; silver climbs Rs 300

Gold prices increased Rs 250 to Rs 78,850 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a firm global trend, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 78,600 per 10 grams on Tuesday. Silver extended its rally for the third straight session by climbing Rs 300 to Rs 90,800 per kg on Thursday. The metal had ended at Rs 90,500 per kg in the previous close. The commodities market was closed on Wednesday on the occasion of Christmas. The price of 99.5 per cent purity advanced Rs 250 to Rs 78,450 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,200 per 10 grams. Traders attributed the climb in gold prices to firm trends in the overseas markets which aided in bullion prices. In futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCE), gold contracts for February delivery advanced Rs 442 or 0.58 per cent to Rs 76,712 per 10 grams. "Gold prices edged higher on Thursday, supported by a slightly weaker dollar as markets resumed trading post-Christmas."



### HC stays AGM of Religare Enterprises

Madhya Pradesh High Court has stayed the annual general meeting of Religare Enterprises Ltd (REL) scheduled for December 31 amid a tussle between the company's Chairperson Rashmi Saluja and the Burman family over the open offer. "Till further orders, the notice dated December 9, 2024 and the Annual General Body Meeting of Respondent No. 7 (Religare Enterprises) which is scheduled to be held on December 31, 2024 shall remain stayed," Madhya Pradesh High Court said in its order. Religare Enterprises in a regulatory filing on Thursday said, "The company is in receipt of an email forwarding letter dated December 26, 2024 from the Counsel for the petitioner in Writ Petition (WP 40618/2024) (Vijayant Mishra vs RBI & Others) before the High Court of Madhya Pradesh at Jabalpur, forwarding an order dated December 18, 2024. Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) approved the open offer of the Burman family -- the promoters of FMCG major Dabur -- to acquire an additional 26 per cent stake in NBFC firm REL."

## 'New manufacturing golden age for India beckons'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With global supply chains continuing to shift in India's favour as the world's largest businesses strike a new balance between resilience and efficiency, manufacturing has the potential to transform the country's economy, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said on Thursday.

In his New Year message to employees of the salt-to-software conglomerate, Chandrasekaran termed it as "a new manufacturing golden age for India" and said he was looking ahead to 2025 "with a sense of hope and optimism" after 2024, a year marked by the loss of Tata Group Chairman Emeritus Ratan Tata.

"While AI-led breakthroughs in healthcare and mobility can help the whole of humanity, manufacturing has the potential to transform our economy in India," he wrote.

Elaborating, he said, "Global supply chains continue to shift in India's favour as the world's largest businesses strike a new balance between resilience and efficiency. What might have seemed like a

## Sustaining growth requires deeper commitment: Finmin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sustaining growth will require a deeper commitment from all economic stakeholders as newer uncertainties mostly driven by global factors have emerged, a finance ministry report said on Thursday.

India recorded a moderation in GDP growth to 5.4 per cent for the second quarter ended September 2024.

After a moderation in Q2 of FY25, the outlook for Q3 appears bright, as reflected in the performance of High Frequency Indicators (HFIs) for October and November 2024, the finance ministry said in its Monthly Economic Review for November.

An increase in Minimum Support Price (MSP) for rabi crops, high reservoir level and adequate fertiliser availability bodes well for rabi sowing, it said, adding, industrial activity is likely to gain traction.

"There are good reasons to believe that the outlook for growth in H2 of FY25 is better than what we have seen in H1.

At the same time, the possibility that structural factors may also have contributed to the slowdown in H1 should not be ruled out," it said.

The combination of monetary policy stance and macro-prudential measures by the central bank may have contributed to the demand slow-

down, it said.

It is good news that the central bank lowered the cash reserve ratio from 4.5 per cent to 4 per cent in its policy meeting in December 2024, it said.

"That should help boost credit growth, which has slowed a little too much and pressure.

In turn, it said, that will make monetary policymakers in emerging economies think more deeply about the path of policy rates.

"Recent exchange rate movements may have lowered their degrees of freedom. In sum,



quickly in FY25. Hiring and compensation practices in the corporate sector have also played their part in slowing urban consumption growth," it said.

Looking into FY26, it said, newer uncertainties have emerged and global trade growth is looking more uncertain than before.

Elevated stock markets continue to pose a big risk, it said, adding, the strength of the US dollar and a rethink on the path of policy rates in the United States have put emerging market currencies under

sustaining growth will require a deeper commitment from all economic stakeholders to growth," it said.

With regard to PMI, the report said, the October and November indicators remained firmly in the expansionary range, supported by new business growth, strong demand, and advertising efforts.

The conclusion of the monsoon season and the expected increase in government capital expenditure are expected to support the cement, iron, steel, mining, and electricity sectors, it said.

### Rupee depreciation may push import bill by \$15 bn: GTRI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The depreciation of Indian rupee against the US dollar is expected to push the country's import bill by about USD 15 billion, think tank GTRI said on Thursday.

Compared to December last year, the Indian Rupee (INR) has depreciated 2.34 per cent against the US dollar, moving from Rs 83.25 to Rs 85.20, while the Chinese Yuan has weakened by 0.06 per cent, the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said.

It added that this depreciation of the INR will negatively impact gold imports, especially as gold prices have surged 27 per cent from USD 2,066.26 per ounce in December 2023 to USD 2,617.11 per ounce in December 2024.

India's oil imports, mostly

priced in USD, could have been significantly costlier due to the rupee's depreciation, however, the impact has been mitigated by a 5 per cent drop in Brent crude prices, from USD 77.6 per barrel in December 2023 to USD 73.7 per barrel in December 2024, it said.

"Overall India's import bill will increase by about USD 15 billion due to the INR depreciation impact," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said, adding that the most significant effect of the INR's depreciation will be on India's USD 100-billion worth of industrial goods imports from China.

Since both the INR and the yuan have weakened against the US dollar, the dual depreciation amplifies the cost of these imports, further straining trade balances, he said.



### Unimech Aerospace IPO subscribed 174.93 times

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offer of Unimech Aerospace and Manufacturing Ltd received a whopping 174.93 times subscription on the last day of bidding on Thursday.

The Rs 500-crore initial share sale got bids for 82,28,93,040 shares against 47,04,028 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) garnered a mammoth 317.63 times subscription while the portion for non-institutional investors got subscribed 263.40 times.

The category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) received 56.16 times subscription. The IPO has a fresh issue of up to Rs 250 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to Rs 250 crore.

Price range for the offer has been fixed at Rs 745-785 per share.

## Exporters seek Rs 750 cr to tap \$25 bn export potential

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Exporters on Thursday sought a fund of Rs 750 crore for three years to tap USD 25 billion export potential in the US, aiming to seize potential opportunities that may arise as the US President-elect, Donald Trump, has threatened to impose high tariffs on Chinese goods.

In a pre-budget meeting with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) President Ashwani Kumar has also demanded extension of the five per cent Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES).

"A marketing scheme to focus on the US with a corpus of Rs 250 crore per year (Rs 750 crore overall) for three years may be launched to generate additional exports of USD 25 billion," Kumar said.

He said that higher tariffs on China can create a significant opportunity for Indian exporters,



particularly in sectors where China has previously been a dominant supplier.

Based on a study undertaken by FIEO, India can replace China in sectors like electronics and electrical equipment (USD 10 billion additional export potential), textiles and garments, toys, chemicals, auto components, footwear, furniture and home decor.

He added that India's marketing strategy for exporting products to the US should focus on several key areas, particularly on marketing and forming strategic partnership.

"We have already started contacting key trade associations to present India's sourcing opportunity," Kumar said, adding, "We should focus on participating in a large number of exhibitions in these sectors".

On interest rates, the President said that the IES is currently available only till December 31, 2024, and that too to manufacturers in MSME (micro, small and medium enterprise) with an annual cap of Rs 50 lakh per IEC (import-export code) holder, which is insufficient for many MSMEs.

He said India experiences higher domestic interest rates compared to its competitors, especially advanced economies or countries with export-driven economies like China, Japan, South Korea, Euro Zone, Thailand or Malaysia.

This makes financing for Indian exporters more expensive than for exporters from these countries.

## Stock markets close flat amid lack of global triggers

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended flat in listless trading on Thursday amid a lack of near-term triggers and unabated foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex dipped 0.39 points to settle at 78,472.48 in a muted trade. During the morning trade, it had jumped 425.5 points or 0.54 per cent to 78,898.37.

The NSE Nifty eked out gains of 22.55 points or 0.1 per cent to 23,750.20 on the monthly expiry day.

From the 30 blue-chip stocks, Titan, Asian Paints, Nestle, Tech Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Zomato, Larsen & Toubro and Bajaj Finserv were among the lag-



gards.

Adani Ports, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti, Sun Pharma, Bharti Airtel and Tata Motors were among the gainers.

"On the last expiry day of the year, the domestic market remained flat throughout the day amidst holidays in peer markets and a lack of major domestic or global triggers.

Auto shares saw gains from recent corrections.

"However, concerns over FII outflows and the depreciating rupee persist, given the strengthening US dollar index and worries about potential adverse tariffs and concerns over rate cuts in 2025, held the muted market trend," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.24 per cent while midcap index went up marginally by 0.11 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, the BSE services jumped 1.80 per cent, auto climbed 0.81 per cent, power (0.45 per cent), healthcare (0.45 per cent), realty (0.39 per cent) and consumer discretionary (0.23 per cent).

BSE commodities dipped 0.30 per cent, industrials (0.12 per cent), telecommunication (0.16 per cent), metal (0.14 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.04 per cent) and bankex (0.04 per cent).

In Asian markets, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the positive territory while Seoul ended lower. US markets were closed on Wednesday for Christmas.

## FUEL TANKS IMPORTS FROM CHINA

### India initiates anti-dumping probe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has initiated a probe into alleged dumping of LNG fuel tanks from China following a complaint by a domestic player, according to a commerce ministry notification.

The commerce ministry's investigation arm, Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), is probing the dumping of liquefied natural gas (LNG) fuel tanks as imports are allegedly hurting the margins of the domestic industry.

Inox India Ltd has filed an application seeking the imposition of anti-dumping duty, stating that the cheap imports are causing material injury to the domestic industry.

The tanks are used to contain and carry methane gas in large vehicles such as trucks.

"On the basis of the duly substantiated written application submitted by the domestic industry and having reached satisfaction based on the prima facie evidence submitted by domestic industry about dumping of subject goods...the Authority, hereby, initiates an anti-dumping investigation," the DGTR has said in a notification.



If it is established that the dumping has caused material injury to domestic players, the DGTR would recommend the imposition of anti-dumping duty on these imports. The finance ministry takes the final decision to impose duties.

Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports.

As a countermeasure, they impose these duties under the multilateral regime of the Geneva-based World Trade Organization (WTO). The duty is aimed at ensuring fair trading practices and creating a level-playing field for domestic producers vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters.

India has already imposed anti-dumping duty on several products to tackle cheap imports from various countries, including China.



short-term reaction to the pandemic has proved much more enduring."

Amid relentless geopolitical instability, Chandrasekaran said, "The equation has tilted firmly toward resilience and India, with our vast talent pool and growing manufacturing capacity, is poised to benefit."

Reiterating Tata Group's plans to create 5 lakh manufacturing jobs over the next half decade, he said these will come in part from investments in facilities across India's "factories and projects that will produce batteries, semiconductors, electric vehicles, solar equipment and other critical hardware destined to play a central role in the economy of tomorrow".

He said ground-breaking ceremonies and construction began at over seven new manufacturing plants, including India's first semiconductor fab in Dholera, Gujarat, and a brand new semiconductor OSAT plant in Assam.

"There is the electronics assembly plant in Narasapura, Karnataka, an automotive plant in Panapakam, Tamil Nadu, and new MRO facilities in Bengaluru, Karnataka," Chandrasekaran said.

He further said, "We also have new battery cell manufacturing factories in Sanand, Gujarat, and in Somerset, UK. We inaugurated the C295 final assembly line (FAL) in Vadodra, Gujarat, and began solar module production in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu."

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# Arjun Kapoor falls victim to online scam, warns fans



Bollywood actor Arjun Kapoor recently took to his social media to warn his fans about an online scam involving someone impersonating his manager. The actor shared a post on Instagram, cautioning his followers about a fake account that had been reaching out to people, claiming to offer opportunities to connect with him. The scammer had been targeting unsuspecting fans, using the actor's name to build credibility and trick people into sharing personal information or clicking on malicious links.

Arjun shared a post that read, "It's come to my attention that a random account is reaching out to people claiming to be my manager and offering opportunities to connect with me. Please know that these messages are not legitimate and I have no association with them. I would never anyone to click on links or share personal details through such means. Please don't fall for these scams—stay safe and alert. If you come across such messages, kindly report the account immediately. Have a safe and merry Christmas."

Meanwhile, the *Gunday* actor had also extended his best wishes to the team of *Baby John*. Taking to his Instagram stories, Arjun shared the poster of Varun Dhawan starrer and wrote, "Wishing the entire team massive success!!! Are you going to reflect on the year or deflect from reflection?" Dhawan dropped heart emojis as the reaction.

# BANITA SANDHU DISMISSES TALKS AROUND HER RELATIONSHIP WITH AP DHILLON



Banita Sandhu, the talented actor known for her captivating performances in *October* and *Sardar Udham*, is charting a new course in her Bollywood journey. An Indian-origin actor who grew up in Wales, Banita decided to relocate to India—a move that she believes underscores her dedication to the Indian film industry.

"I think me just even shifting here shows my commitment and focus to this industry," says Banita, reflecting on her decision. "My mindset hasn't changed since the beginning of my career. I've always been clear—I just want to do good work and give it my all. India feels like a second home to me. That's why even this move doesn't feel like I'm jumping into the deep end. It feels like I'm coming home."

While her film roles earned her recognition for their depth and emotional resonance, Banita recently surprised audiences with a fresh, playful side in AP Dhillon's music video *With You*.

The video marked a significant shift in how she was perceived, presenting her in a more light-hearted and carefree light.

"With this industry, it's so quick-paced and transitory. I think people forget that it takes a long time to shoot a project, so you can't always be on screen every other week," Banita explains. "That music video was the first time I was presented in a different way. It was more fun and flowy, whereas my previous work in India has been emotionally intense and raw. This felt like a fun new avatar of me and I'm so glad it was received well. I was honestly worried that people might react like, 'Wait, what?'"

The video's success also sparked public interest in Banita's rapport with AP Dhillon, leading to speculation about their relationship. However, Banita remains steadfast in keeping the focus on her work. "My focus is work and everything else is just noise," she states, with quiet determination.

# CHER REVEALS THE TRUTH BEHIND HER QUICK MARRIAGE TO GREGG ALLMAN

In her memoir *Cher: The Memoir, Part One*, Cher opens up about her impulsive second marriage to Gregg Allman, just months after ending her marriage to Sonny Bono in 1975. The music icon reflects on the whirlwind relationship with the celebrated Allman Brothers Band singer, which began less than a week after her separation from Bono. Despite the rapid development of their relationship, Cher admits she wasn't sure it would last. However, when she discovered she was pregnant, the couple quickly made the decision to marry.

"I didn't know whether my relationship with Gregory would last or not. I was living each day as it came. Then I found out I was pregnant and we decided to get married," Cher writes in her memoir. The wedding, which took place in Las Vegas, was hastily arranged, with Cher's sister and a friend in attendance. Reflecting on the day, she acknowledges that the ceremony was far from romantic, describing it as a brief



affair before they returned to California.

Cher continues, "There was nothing romantic about our wedding day," painting a picture of a rushed decision driven by the circumstances. Despite their rocky start, the couple briefly reconciled after filing for divorce just nine days later and welcomed their son, Elijah Blue Allman, in 1976. Their marriage lasted until 1979.

Looking back, Cher shares her pragmatic approach to life during this time, saying, "I just kept putting one foot in front of the other. The future is never written in stone. I did what I thought was the right thing to do." Gregg Allman passed away in 2017 at the age of 69 from complications related to liver cancer. Cher's reflection on their time together provides an intimate glimpse into a chapter of her life marked by uncertainty, love and personal growth.

# Kylie Jenner's 'magical' Xmas celebrations with Timothée Chalamet

Kylie Jenner and Timothée Chalamet recently celebrated an early Christmas together, making special memories before spending time with their respective families on Christmas Day. According to a source close to the couple, they enjoyed a cozy dinner with Kylie's family, followed by a festive drive around the block to admire Christmas lights. The gathering was described as "magical," with Jenner's children, daughter Stormi, 6 and son Aire, 2, included in the fun. The kids were said to have had a delightful time and the couple shared some special moments, making the holiday season even more memorable.

The source also revealed that Chalamet went above and beyond by giving thoughtful gifts to Kylie and her children, which Jenner found "very sweet and considerate." Despite being apart on Christmas Day, the couple remained closely connected, planning to keep in touch through FaceTime, texts and calls. Their relationship, which first began to gain attention in April 2023, has reportedly grown stronger. The insider shared that when the two first started dating, their connection was on and off, largely due to Timothée's filming commitments for the Bob Dylan biopic in New York. However, the relationship has since blossomed and now they are in constant communication, even when physically apart. "Their relationship is stronger than ever and they deeply care for one another," the insider added, highlighting the deepening bond between the reality star and the actor.



## FUN

### ARCHIE



### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



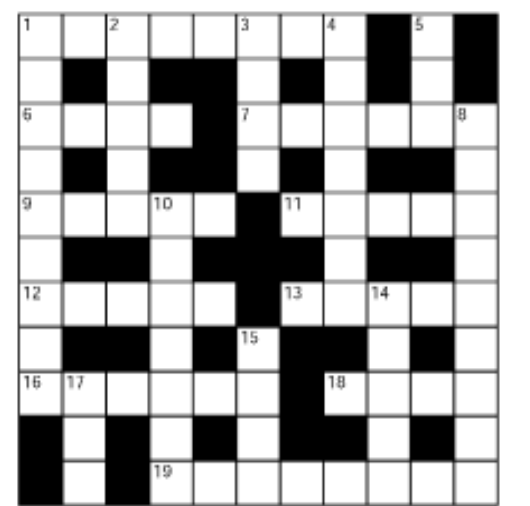
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

### ACROSS

- Squashes completely
- A red gemstone
- Make tea in this
- Words by which people or places are known
- A striped animal
- Donates
- Defeats
- A red fruit for sandwiches
- A song performed by one
- Sick or injured people are cared for in this place

### DOWN

- Two weeks
- A book for photographs
- Has a meal

- A breed of cat with blue eyes and pale fur
- Animals are on show here
- This looks like a mushroom but might be poisonous
- A hair near your eye
- Approximately
- Things to play with
- This bird hunts at night





## 'Walking down the streets of Paris feels like stepping into a movie'

**IMMERSING HERSELF IN ITS RICH CULTURE, HISTORIC STREETS AND ARCHITECTURAL MARVELS, AISHA SHARMA OPENED UP ABOUT HOW PARIS HAS DEEPLY INSPIRED HER, LEAVING A LASTING IMPACT ON HER JOURNEY AS BOTH A TRAVELLER AND AN INDIVIDUAL**

PNS| HYDERABAD

For Aisha Sharma, travelling isn't just about visiting new destinations—it's about immersing herself in different cultures, drawing inspiration from unique experiences, and returning home with a new perspective. "Walking down the streets of Paris feels like stepping into a movie," she says, recounting her trip. "The most exciting thing about Paris for me is its culture. It's so multicultural. There's inspiration in every corner of the city and every work of architecture has a story to tell."

For Aisha, visiting Paris was a long-cherished dream. She wanted to take her time exploring the city like a local, savouring its beauty and rhythm without rushing through it. Her journey took her to some of Paris' most iconic and charming spots. Among her favorites was La Maison Rose, a picturesque café known for its rosy façade and cozy atmosphere. She also highly recommends the Bateaux Parisiens cruise, which offers a unique perspective of Paris from the Seine River. "Dining at La Société in Saint-Germain des Prés was another highlight," she shares, mentioning the escargots as a must-try. Her explorations also led her to Location de Barques du Lac Daumesnil, where she enjoyed renting a boat to experience a more tranquil side of Paris. And, of course, Aisha couldn't resist the



allure of Parisian bakeries. "You can't beat the boulangeries of Paris! My favourite is La boulangerie du Chef Christophe Michalak," she says.

Aisha believes that every destination has the power to change you if you're open to the experience. "Places change you forever if you allow them to. Paris has impacted me greatly, and I think once I get back, I won't be the same individual. That's the beauty of travel—it fills you with inspiration and helps you grow like never before."

As someone who loves to travel, Aisha is always prepared for her adventures. Her travel essentials include sunscreen, skincare products, perfume, a travel adapter, her journal, a credit card and medicines. For her, these items are non-negotiable, ensuring she feels comfortable and confident wherever she goes. When asked about her dream destinations, Aisha mentions Tahiti as a place she'd love to visit, especially for a passion project. Though she hasn't been there yet, the island's serene beauty and unique culture have captured her imagination.

Aisha describes herself as an easygoing traveler who prefers to experience places like a local. "I like to explore, slow down and soak in as much as I can," she explains. She enjoys picking up a few phrases in the local language and connecting with people on a deeper level. For her, travel is not about ticking off tourist attractions but about truly understanding and appreciating the essence of a place.

While she loves exploring new destinations, Aisha also dreams of settling down in the countryside someday to embrace the simplicity of slow living. "At some point in my life, I'd love to move somewhere quiet and enjoy the slow life," she says. As for how she chooses her travel destinations, Aisha shares that it's a mix of spontaneity and planning. Annual trips to the United States to visit family are pre-planned, but other destinations are chosen based on her need for inspiration and rejuvenation.

Aisha Sharma's approach to travel is a reflection of her personality—thoughtful, inspired, and deeply curious about the world around her. Her journeys remind us of the transformative power of exploration and the endless stories waiting to be discovered in every corner of the globe.



## Bone loss in women athletes

In athletes, osteoporosis is a common anomaly and is attributed to certain underlying factors or medical conditions that may contribute to both low bone mass and fertility issues in some cases. Hormones play a crucial role in both bone health and reproductive function. Hormonal imbalances lead to compensatory mechanisms that in turn increase the risk of bone fracture. Endurance athletes often experience reduced food intake which results in reduced energy leading to decreased levels of sex hormones, which can cause physiologic changes that lead to relative osteoporosis despite the loading of the bone during exercise, which would normally increase bone mineral density. Inadequate intake of essential nutrients like calcium and vitamin D, which are crucial for bone health, is also a major contributor to low bone mass. Athletes may have higher nutritional needs due to increased energy expenditure.

### Where does anabolic steroids play a part in it?

Anabolic steroids, which are synthetic variations of the male sex hormone testosterone, can have both positive and negative effects on bone health, depending on various factors such as dosage, duration of use, and individual susceptibility. Androgen primarily stimulate bone forming osteoblasts causing an increase in bone formation through androgen receptors in bone tissue.

### Consequences and other risk factors?

Anabolic steroids cause elevated Renal parameters. It also causes acute renal failure, focal segmental glomerulosclerosis and membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis. Anabolic steroids can cause hypertension and cardiac hypertrophy. These steroids also may adversely affect serum lipids and increase the coagulability of blood, which may lead to a high incidence of myocardial infarction (heart attack) due to spasms, coronary thrombus and coronary atherosclerosis. Lastly, the use of anabolic steroids has been indicated to develop dependency due to feelings of well-being leading to withdrawal symptoms such as depression and fatigue when they stop taking the same.

### How can they manage it?

Nutrition counselling, exercise counselling and psychological therapy may all be necessary aspects of treatment. Athletes at risk for bone loss, such as those with a history of stress fractures or hormonal imbalances, may benefit from regular bone density monitoring. This can help identify potential issues early on.

To optimise bone health, adequate nutrition, appropriate weight-bearing exercise, strength training and adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D are necessary throughout life. Dairy products, leafy green vegetables and fortified foods are good sources of nutrition. In females, addressing the hypoestrogenic state by considering estrogen replacement has to have beneficial effects on bone mass. Maintain a healthy hormonal balance through proper nutrition, adequate calorie intake and regular menstrual cycles. It is important to avoid the non-medical use of anabolic steroids, as they can disrupt hormonal balance and negatively impact bone health. For stress fractures with delayed healing adjunctive medications like nasal calcitonin, bisphosphonates and recombinant parathyroid hormone are used to address low Bone mineral density. For athletes engaging in high-impact activities, wearing proper footwear with shock absorption can help reduce the stress on bones and joints. Anabolic steroid abuse can be managed by psychological therapies, endocrine therapies, antidepressants, pharmacological and psychosocial treatments, and overall awareness.

### Surge in pectoralis major muscle injuries linked to sports and steroids

Rupture of the pectoralis major muscle used to be a rare injury. But recently we have seen an increase in the same with the majority needing surgical intervention. It is stated that this increase in incidence can be attributed to the increased participation in competitive-contact sports and weightlifting training in combination with the use of anabolic steroids, which probably resulted in stiffer tendons with less collagen elongation, increased vascularisation and cellularity and associated microdamage of collagen fibers following repetitive loading stress.

### Nutrition and mental well-being

Our eating habits have an impact on our mental well-being. According to the American Dietetic Association, depression or other mental health issues cause people to eat excessively or insufficiently. Eating too little can result in low energy levels. Low energy levels in the body can be harmful to both bones and the ability to perform long-term tasks. Energy is required for bone formation and remodeling. An athlete requires adequate energy levels to support optimal body functions, macronutrient and micronutrient intake and body composition maintenance. Women experience mood swings during menstruation or in the days leading up to menstruation, which are caused by hormonal fluctuations and can hurt a female's appetite control and eating behaviour. Athletes who eat too little or improperly may lose bone density. Athletes use the majority of their energy from eating to push their bodies through various exercises and activities. To maintain proper bone health, energy is required and some of the energy obtained from eating will be used for this purpose. Aside from menstruation, another factor contributing to improper eating is women's perception of maintaining a healthy body weight. Women who participate in sports that emphasise leanness, weight class, or endurance are more likely to eat too little. However, to maintain body weight, only a small proportion of food is required; thus, diet intake should be carefully planned so that, in addition to small proportions, it meets nutritional requirements. Foods high in vitamin D and calcium are essential for maintaining strong bones. A menstruating woman athlete should ensure that she consumes enough vitamin D and calcium. Inadequate energy intake, due to eating disorders can cause suppression of the normal hypothalamus pituitary axis leading to low bone mass and amenorrhea, commonly referred to as female athlete syndrome. Early detection and multimodal treatment with focus on nutrition is required to maintain the bone health of women Athletes and should be given priority by woman athlete coaches and health care providers as well as educating female athlete on early detection and correction should be given utmost importance.

(The author, Dr. Ayyappan V Nair, is a consultant - shoulder surgery, sports medicine and Aarthoscopy, at Manjula Hospital Whitefield, Sarjapur and Jayanagar.)

## Women in uniform lead the charge in 2024

As 2024 comes to an end, a defining trend in Bollywood has been the rise of female actors taking on powerful roles in uniform, portraying police officers, soldiers, and other resilient characters. These performances shattered stereotypes, placing actresses at the forefront of action-packed narratives and highlighting their strength and determination. With commanding portrayals both on OTT platforms and the silver screen, these roles not only showcased their versatility but also brought inspiring stories of courage and perseverance to life, marking a significant shift in how women are represented in Indian cinema.



Saiyami Kher- Agni

Saiyami Kher added another remarkable achievement to her career with her portrayal of a firefighter-turned-action heroine in *Agni*. Known for her versatility, Saiyami embraced the physically demanding role with immense dedication, delivering a performance that radiated strength and resilience. The high-octane action drama highlighted her ability to perform daring stunts while portraying a character marked by bravery and determination. Her rigorous preparation, including intense fitness training, was evident on screen, making *Agni* one of the standout films of 2024. Saiyami's powerful performance reinforced her reputation as a dynamic and talented actor in Bollywood.

Kajol-Do Patti



Kajol delivered a compelling performance as a determined police officer in *Do Patti*, a riveting investigative drama delving into themes of justice and morality. The film followed her character through a high-stakes case intertwined with political intrigue, showcasing Kajol's exceptional ability to embody both strength and emotional depth. Known for her commanding presence, she brought nuance to the role by seamlessly por-

traying the professional and personal challenges faced by her character. Her performance added complexity to the narrative, solidifying *Do Patti* as one of the year's standout films and reaffirming Kajol's status as one of Bollywood's most talented actors.

Shilpa Shetty-Indian Police Force



Shilpa Shetty made an impressive comeback as a fearless and committed police officer in Rohit Shetty's web series *Indian Police Force*. The action-packed series showcased her executing intense stunts and hand-to-hand combat scenes, setting a new benchmark for female actors in Bollywood's action genre. Her exceptional fitness and agility were evident, earning widespread acclaim from critics and audiences. Beyond the adrenaline-pumping sequences, Shilpa's performance captured the emotional challenges of law enforcement, making her character both relatable and inspiring. With *Indian Police Force*, Shilpa reaffirmed her ability to evolve and take on bold, dynamic roles, further solidifying her versatility as an actor.

Deepika Padukone-Fighter



Deepika Padukone made a spectacular return to the big screen with *Fighter*, portraying an Indian Air Force pilot alongside

critic Hrithik Roshan. Her character embodied the spirit of breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated field, delivering a powerful message of empowerment. From executing rigorous flight training scenes to depicting the emotional challenges of serving in the defense forces, Deepika showcased remarkable versatility. She prepared intensively for the role, including working closely with real-life pilots to grasp their discipline and commitment. *Fighter* not only reaffirmed her position as one of Bollywood's top stars but also paid tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of women in uniform.

Kritika Kamra-Gyaarah Gyaarah



Kritika Kamra delivered a standout performance as a no-nonsense police officer in *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, a gripping time-bending thriller that unraveled a series of mysterious crimes spanning past, present and future. Renowned for her commanding screen presence, Kritika seamlessly embodied the role of a dedicated law enforcement officer, undergoing extensive combat training and a significant physical transformation to bring authenticity to her character. Her portrayal masterfully balanced the resilience and vulnerability inherent in the profession, earning her widespread acclaim. With *Gyaarah Gyaarah*, Kritika showcased her ability to tackle complex and challenging roles, solidifying her position as a versatile and compelling actor.

Manushi Chhillar-Operation Valentine

Manushi Chhillar delivered a captivating performance as Wing Commander Aahna "Eva" Gill in *Operation Valentine*, marking a significant milestone in her career. Portraying an accomplished fighter pilot, Manushi brought strength and grace to the role, capturing the essence of courage and dedication synonymous with the armed forces. Her character navigates the high-stakes world of aer-



Kangana Ranaut-Tejas

ial combat and personal challenges, showcasing resilience and emotional depth. Manushi's rigorous preparation for the role, including understanding military protocols and undergoing physical training, added authenticity to her portrayal.



Kangana Ranaut delivered a riveting performance as IAF officer Tejas Gill in *Tejas*, embodying the valour and determination of a fighter pilot serving the nation. Her portrayal of Tejas Gill was both inspiring and authentic, capturing the grit and emotional fortitude required in the defense forces. Kangana brought her trademark intensity to the role, seamlessly transitioning between high-octane action sequences and moments of profound emotional depth. With *Tejas*, Kangana not only celebrated the heroism of women in uniform but also reaffirmed her position as one of Bollywood's most fearless and talented actors.



# Top order helps Australia score 311/6, Bumrah keeps battle alive

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Jasprit Bumrah's knack of coming up with magic deliveries in crunch situations kept India alive after Australia's top-order, headlined by teen debutant Sam Konstas' stroke-filled half-century, guided the hosts to 311 for 6 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Thursday.

If Konstas' audacious 60 off 65 balls enthralled the near sell-out crowd of over 80,000 at the MCG during a humid morning session, Bumrah's (3/75 in 21 overs) deception of length to dismiss Travis Head (0) also had its takers as chants of 'Boom, Boom, B o o o m r a a a a h' reverberated through the stands.

Coming into the Test with back-to-back hundreds, Head couldn't judge the length of a Bumrah delivery that was pitched slightly fuller than what the batter expected. He shouldered his arms trusting the bounce but the 66.2 overs old Kookaburra nipped back to clip the off-ball.

In the next over, he removed an out-of-form Mitchell Marsh (4), having got Usman Khawaja (57 off 121 balls)

with the half-tracker in the post-lunch session.

The first two sessions, however, belonged to Australia with senior players Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne (72 off 145 balls) and Steve Smith (68 batting, 111 balls) scoring half-centuries.

The final session was all about Bumrah magic. The Indian spearhead didn't let the hosts completely walk away with the game which they threatened to do at one stage.

He now has 24 wickets in the series. With Mohammed Siraj (0/69 in 15 overs) off-colour, Bumrah didn't have much support save off-spinner Washington Sundar (1/37 in 12 overs), who bowled a containing line.

Akash Deep (1/59 in 19 overs) though got Alex Carey with the second new ball at the fag end of the day. Even Ravindra Jadeja (1/54 in 14 overs) leaked runs despite getting Konstas out and Nitish Reddy, the batting all-rounder, was only used before the second new ball was taken.

'Sam Jams at the G' The morning was owned by the precocious 19-year-old



from New South Wales. Konstas didn't show any nerves during his scintillating knock, which comprised of two sixes off Bumrah. He also didn't mind a good scrap with India's superstar Virat Kohli, whose shoulder

brush with the 19-year-old led to a brief confrontation. In fact, Bumrah was hit for a six for the first time in a Test since Cameron Green hit him for one back in 2021. The gap between Konstas' first six, which was a lap scoop, and

the one that Green hit three years ago was 4000 legal Test match deliveries. After a conventional lap scoop for maximum, Konstas also hit a reverse lap scoop towards third man for another boundary. The

second six was pummeled over mid-on. The way he attacked the Indian bowling with gusto gave his veteran opening partner Khawaja a chance to get back to form with a patient half-century.

But Khawaja would be really annoyed with himself as he couldn't time a pull shot off a Bumrah half-tracker, which went straight into KL Rahul's hands in the post-lunch session.

The duo added 89 runs in such quick time that Labuschagne and last match's centurion Smith didn't need to show any urgency.

For Konstas, it all began with a few play and misses off Bumrah's opening over but as soon as the teenager got his first couple of runs, things changed dramatically.

The fearlessness of youth stood out on the big stage as Konstas pulled off the lap-scoop against Bumrah before smashing him over mid-on for another maximum.

The fans and experts alike were forced to think the last time Bumrah (1/50 in 15 overs) was hit for two sixes in his first spell of a Test match. They couldn't because it never happened in a first spell.

The stump mic caught Bumrah saying "Beginner's Luck" but Konstas seemed to have enough wares to answer his probing queries. And it was laced with a lot of spunk as he got into a verbal duel

with Kohli after their shoulders brushed while crossing each other. He often shuffled towards leg-stump to make room and on one occasion, crunched Bumrah past cover.

Mohammed Siraj was welcomed into the attack with a loud round of boos as he sledged the youngster due to his unconventional hitting style.

In all, Konstas hit six fours apart from the two maximums. Only Akash bowled a good channel among the pacers as Siraj was guilty of going too full or too short.

As Australia scored at more than a fair clip, skipper Rohit Sharma had to introduce Ravindra Jadeja (1/33 in 11 overs) in the 16th over to at least stem the flow of runs before it went out of hand.

The decision did pay dividends as the seasoned spinner got an arm ball to skid through with the angle to trap Konstas in front.

Khawaja and Labuschagne then added 65 for the second wicket with the Pakistan-born opener hitting Akash for a couple of boundaries to complete his first fifty of the series.



## Indian women on course for clean sweep against West Indies

PTI ■ VADODARA

India would aim to push their boundaries in the batting department when they face a down-and-out West Indies in the third and final Women's ODI here on Friday.

Following another series loss against the mighty Australia, India have been able to dominate the West Indies in home conditions.

What has stood out is their ability to put scores in excess of 300 consistently in the series, something they must do against the likes of Australia to get themselves out of the doldrums.

Pratika Rawal, who has been opening the innings alongside Smriti Mandhana, did not set the stage on fire in her maiden international appearance but improved her play considerably in the second ODI to raise hopes for the future.

The Delhi-based cricketer was able to clear the ropes once, which is expected considering she has replaced Shafali Verma in the team.

Harleen Deol has been around for a long time but it was only in the previous game that she was able to record her maiden ODI hundred. She stuck at a 100 plus strike rate batting at number three and she would like to carry the momentum in the final game of the series.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur has looked good since regaining full fitness but is yet to get a big knock. With series in the bag, the skipper will have another reason to play freely and get a substantial knock under her belt.

On the bowling front, Renuka Thakur has once again led the pace attack well with the young Titas Sadhu also chipping in with the wickets.

Leg-spinner Priya Mishra has impressed in her fledgling career and would be eyeing another productive outing.

With the game being a dead rubber, India can also afford to test a few fringe players including Tanuja Kanwar

and Tejal Hasanbis. West Indies will need to pull something out of the bag to upset India. Having conceded 300 plus run in both the games, the Hayley Matthews-led side needs to improve on all fronts.

Matthews is the lone West Indies batter who has made an impact. That will need to change on Friday.

**Squads:**  
**India:** Smriti Mandhana, Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Deepti Sharma, Saima Thakor, Titas Sadhu, Renuka Thakur Singh, Priya Mishra, Uma Chetry, Minnu Mani, Tejal Hasanbis, Tanuja Kanwar.  
**West Indies:** Hayley Matthews (c), Qiana Joseph, Rashada Williams, Deandra Dottin, Nerissa Crafton, Shemaine Campbelle (wk), Aaliyah Alleyne, Zaida James, Karishma Ramharack, Shamilia Connell, Afy Fletcher, Shabika Gajinabi, Chinelle Henry, Mandy Mangru, Ashmini Munisar.

## Arjun Erigaise looking to qualify for next Candidates through World Rapid and Blitz

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Grandmaster Arjun Erigaise will have to tackle obstacles to retain his chances of becoming the first Indian to enter the 2026 Candidates' tournament when he opens his campaign at the World Rapid and Blitz chess tournament here.

Erigaise, who currently trails Fabiano Caruana of the United States in the list of players slated to qualify from 2024, will have a tall order to win the World Rapid chess championship that gets underway here.

It may be noted here that the last time an Indian won the crown here was in 2019 when Koneru Humpy triumphed and in 2017 Viswanathan Anand had defied all odds to win the



United States is easier said than done, given the proficiency of the trio in quick chess.

The participants list is a virtually who's who of the chess world and the only big name missing is D Gukesh, who withdrew after winning an exhausting world championship match against Ding Liren of China just a

couple of weeks back in Singapore.

From India, much can be expected from R Praggnanandhaa as well. He is well rested and must be looking for this event to end the year on a high note.

Apart from Erigaise and Praggnanandhaa, Raunak Sadhwani and Aravindh Chithambaram are the other two Indians to take note of in the open section.

In the women's section, Humpy will start yet again as favourite amongst the Indians. R Vaishali and Divya Deshmukh are the two emerging stars and have been doing pretty well in the last one year.

Vaishali, in fact, had taken the chess world by surprise by qualifying for the Women's Candidates in 2023.



## Andy Pycroft completes 100 Tests as match referee

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Zimbabwe captain Andy Pycroft on Thursday became only the fourth official in the history of men's Test cricket to complete 100 games as a match referee with the Boxing Day contest between India and Australia that began here on Thursday. The exclusive list is led by former Sri Lanka player Ranjan Madugalle as the most experienced match referee with 225 Tests, followed by New Zealand's Jeff Crowe (125) and England's Chris Broad (123). The 68-year-old Pycroft played three Tests and 20 ODIs for Zimbabwe from 1983-1992.

'Pycroft, who has also officiated in 238 men's ODIs, 174 men's T20Is and 21 women's T20Is since 2009, said he has enjoyed every minute of the journey to 100 matches as a match referee,' the ICC said on its website.

Pycroft said touching the mark is a great honour and he is thankful to have been afforded the opportunity to officiate all over the world, 'embracing different cultures.'

'It has been a rewarding journey and I have treasured every moment of it,' he added.

## India needed Rohit to open, Washington's variation at MCG, says Nayar on axing Gill

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

India's assistant coach Abhishek Nayar on Thursday defended axing Shubman Gill from the Boxing Day Test, saying it was in team's best interest to not only have Rohit Sharma back to his usual opening slot but also add some sting to the attack by drafting in spin all-rounder Washington Sundar.

Gill, who missed the first Test due to a finger injury, scored 31 and 28 in the Pink Ball Test and looked the most assured among Indian batters. He, however, got out for a duck in Brisbane. With Rohit Sharma opening the innings and KL Rahul coming at No. 3, Gill had to make way for a third specialist all-rounder in Washington.

'Yes, Rohit will come up in the order and more likely than not, he will open the innings. That was the thought process. Unfortunately for Gill, just how things



spanned out, he had to miss out,' Nayar said at the end of the day's play.

'I just feel for a young player in a position like that, a big day, he wants to make his mark. He understands it's the team's requirement and it's unfortunate, but I wouldn't say that he's been dropped per se. It's just unfortunate that he couldn't find

his place in this game,' the former Mumbai stalwart said but the explanation lacked conviction.

He elaborately explained why playing Washington at the MCG made sense ahead of Gill.

'A lot of the decisions when they are made, and the process of it being made, the communication is always there and transparency is there. It's pretty obvious that we felt in these conditions, looking at the pitch, having Washy in the bowling attack will give us that variation, especially towards the end once the ball gets old,' he said.

'Post the 50 overs, we felt that was an area that we wanted to get better at. We felt Washy could give us that solidarity with Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja), especially the way Travis Head and Alex Carey were getting runs lower down. So we felt having an offie in the ranks will provide us with that.'

## Virat Kohli fined 20 per cent match fees for altercation with Sam Konstas

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Virat Kohli and Australian youngster Sam Konstas were on Thursday involved in a physical altercation because of which the Indian superstar was fined 20 per cent of his match fee and handed a demerit point even though it was played down as an accidental bump by the 19-year-old debutant.

The brief showdown took place after the 10th over of the Australian innings on the opening day of the fourth Test here when the players were crossing over. Kohli and Konstas bumped shoulders while moving across the pitch in the face off that was initiated by the travelling star.

Kohli was eventually charged with breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct by on-field umpires Joel Wilson and Michael Gough, third umpire Sharfuddoula Ibne Shahid and fourth umpire Shawn Craig.

He accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Andy Pycroft at the end of day's play.

'Virat Kohli has been fined 20

percent of his match fee and awarded one demerit point for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct,' the ICC said in a statement.

'No formal hearing was needed as Kohli accepted the sanctions proposed by Match Referee Andy Pycroft,' it added.

After the physical contact, both players quickly turned around to glance at each other and engage in a heated exchange of words before Konstas' teammate Usman Khawaja stepped in to separate them. The on-field umpires also had a word with the two and things cooled down rather quickly.

Speaking to reporters after stumps, Konstas said Kohli bumped into him but it wasn't deliberate.

'I was just doing my gloves and I think he accidentally bumped me. I think that's just cricket and can happen with tension,' said the teenager.

'I think the emotions got to both of us,' Konstas had told 'Channel 7' during the second session.

The ICC's Code of Conduct states



that 'any form of inappropriate physical contact is prohibited in cricket. Without limitation, players will breach this regulation if they deliberately, recklessly

and/or negligently walk or run into or shoulder another player or umpire.'

Kohli's match fee for the game was to be Rs 15 lakh but that amount

would be reduced to Rs 12 lakh owing to the fine. This is the first demerit point that Kohli has logged since 2019. Four demerit points over a period of two years

lead to a suspension of one Test.

Konstas, who was batting on 27 at the time, went on to hit Jasprit Bumrah for two boundaries and a six in the next over. The teenager scored a stunning fifty on debut before Ravindra Jadeja trapped him leg before wicket.

India assistant coach Abhishek Nayar, who addressed the media in the end-of-day press conference, also brushed aside the incident as nothing big.

'When you play a game, there will be emotions but it is not as big as it seems. I wasn't aware of what happened and don't know what was said,' he said in response to queries.

Kohli criticised for his actions Konstas might have dismissed it as routine but former Australian skipper Ricky Ponting blamed Kohli for instigating the exchange. He went to the extent of saying that Kohli could face disciplinary action for it.

'Have a look where Virat walks. Virat's walked one whole pitch over to his right and instigated that confrontation. No doubt in my mind whatsoever,' Ponting

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# 'Mana Cinema First Reel' is a must read: Trivikram Srinivas

Renowned journalist-writer and Nandi Awardee, Dr Rentala Jayadeva, the man who unearthed the correct release date of the first full-length Telugu talkie *Bhakta Prahlada* with his meticulous research, has now authored the book, *Mana Cinema... First Reel*. The book represents his 25 years of research and presents the history of South Indian cinema. The book launch was held at the ongoing Hyderabad Book Fair.

Eminent director Trivikram Srinivas launched the book and handed over the first copy to IRS officer Krishna Koundinya. On this occasion, Trivikram Srinivas speaks and remembers the time when he met Rentala Jayadeva for the first time in Chennai. He loved the way Jayadeva passionately wrote about the movies and articles when he worked

for India Today. He remarked that their friendship remained intact from such a long time despite the differences in opinions. "It is said that the first reel, interval and climax are very important for a movie. The book is titled *First Reel*, because it talks about the early days of Telugu Cinema. This book is as interesting as the first reel of a film, like how the first reel takes you into the story within ten minutes of the movie, this one also takes into the history of cinema within the first ten pages. Hats off to Jayadeva for such a gripping narrative," said Trivikram. He further stated, Jayadeva has proved how authentic a person who loves cinema can write a book about cinema. "I sincerely wish he spends more time writing books before he becomes a film writer.

Jayadeva told the story of the first talkies in South Indian languages like Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. This book is like a novel," he said. Talking about writer Jayadeva, Trivikram said that he definitely has all the qualities a writer should have. Such a person never tried to become a writer like his father and sister. "Jayadeva's father Rentala Gopalakrishna was a great poet. He wrote more than 200 books. Jayadeva's elder sister Kalpana Rentala is an author. I have read *Tanhai* and other novels and stories written by her. I just wish Jayadeva will write more books like *First Reel* further too," said Trivikram. Author, Nandi awardee Dr Rentala Jayadeva said, "My third elder sister Kalpana, my third elder brother Rentala Ramachandra, who supported me like a mother after mother, patted me on the back and encouraged me to come out with this book. Although I have been writing about movies for over three and a half decades, this is my first movie book. There were many teachers who taught me alphabets. I am very happy that our Master Chandrasekhar Reddy is here," said Jayadeva. He thanked everyone present at the event and bowed to them with respect. 'Emesco' Vijay Kumar, Mamidi Harikrishna, Director of Telangana Language and Culture Department, Acharya D Chandrasekhar Reddy, noted poet-critic Afsar, writer Kalpana Rentala, director Dasharath, senior journalist Indira Parimi and others participated in this event.

## SHRUTI HAASAN ON PARENTS' DIVORCE: 'Learnt the importance of standing on my feet'

Actor-singer Shruti Haasan, known for her candidness and introspection, recently shared insights into how her parents' divorce shaped her understanding of independence and resilience. In an interview, Shruti reflected on growing up in a creative and privileged household with her parents, legendary actors Kamal Haasan and Sarika and how their eventual separation in 2002, followed by their divorce in 2004, became a turning point in her life. Opening up about the emotional and practical challenges she faced, Shruti revealed how these experiences instilled in her the importance of self-reliance and independence, especially as a woman. Born into a family that celebrated art and creativity, Shruti acknowledged the privileges she grew up with. "I was born in a very beautiful family—artistic, intelligent parents and by the grace of God, lots of comforts," she shared. However, life took a different turn when her parents decided to separate in 2002, eventually divorcing in 2004. For Shruti, this pivotal moment was an eye-opener. "When my parents split up, everything changed," she reflected. "That's when I realised the value of financial independence and personality-driven independence. Especially being a daughter and seeing that my mum walked out of a marriage, it taught me an important lesson on why it is crucial for a woman to stand on her own feet." The divorce wasn't without its emotional toll and Shruti didn't shy away from discussing the pain it caused. "It hurts. Not just the children but parents feel the pain, too," she explained. "This is a normal part of many homes today. It's not just about parents getting divorced or separated and feeling the pain—there are homes where, for the sake of society, parents stay together and sometimes there is even more pain in those homes because it is hidden." Shruti's reflections serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of emotional and financial independence, as well as the resilience required to navigate challenging family dynamics. Through her honesty, she continues to inspire many by shedding light on the complexities of relationships and the lessons they bring.



## Naveen Polishetty makes his hilarious return with Anaganaga Oka Raju

Naveen Polishetty, one of the most promising young actors in the industry, is back with a fresh and exciting project, *Anaganaga Oka Raju*. Known for choosing a variety of scripts, Naveen has delivered three consecutive blockbusters, making him one of the most in-demand stars in the current generation. After a brief hiatus due to multiple fractures, he has recovered and is now ready to entertain audiences once again. On the occasion of his birthday, the makers of *Anaganaga Oka Raju* unveiled a unique pre-wedding video teaser that highlights Naveen's signature comic timing

and charming personality. The video introduces Raju, played by Naveen Polishetty, as he prepares for his wedding. During a photoshoot, he shares screen space with the lively and talented actress Meenakshi Chaudhary, who plays his bride. The teaser showcases their adorable chemistry, with their hilarious and fun-filled photoshoot poses adding to the charm. The film, produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya, is directed by debutant Maari. Music for the film is composed by Mickey J Meyer. *Anaganaga Oka Raju* promises to be another entertaining addition to Naveen Polishetty's filmography.

## Venky revives his singing talent in Sankranthiki Vasthunnam

Senior actor Venkatesh, who first showcased his singing talent with the hit song *Ingidi* from the film *Guru* in 2017, is returning as a playback singer after seven years. This time, he lends his voice for a song in his upcoming film *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*, directed by Anil Ravipudi and composed by Bheems Ceciroleo. The film is set to release on January 14, during the Sankranti festival, aiming to capitalise on the Pongal holiday season. In a behind-the-scenes video shared by the team, director Anil Ravipudi, actors Venkatesh, Aishwarya Rajesh, Meenakshi Chaudhary, producer Shirish and music director Bheems Ceciroleo spoke about this exciting development. Originally, Ravipudi had planned to hire a popular Bollywood singer for the film's special festival track. However, Venkatesh himself expressed a strong desire to per-



form the song. Known for his charisma and versatility, the actor's enthusiasm convinced the team to go ahead with his idea. The third track of *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam* is currently being filmed at Ramoji Film City (RFC). It is a vibrant festival number, choreographed by Bhanu Master, promising high energy and captivating visuals. In the film, Venkatesh takes on the role of a former police officer. Aishwarya Rajesh plays his wife, while Meenakshi Chaudhary portrays his ex-girlfriend, adding layers to the film's intriguing storyline. The film is being produced by Dil Raju and his brother Shirish under their banner. With the festival season fast approaching, Venkatesh's return as a singer, paired with the film's star-studded cast and team, has heightened anticipation among fans.

## Dooradarshini is a period drama set in 90s

Suvikshith Bojja and Geethika Ratan are playing the lead pair in the upcoming film *Dooradarshini*. Directed by Karthikeya Kommi and produced by B Sai Pratap Reddy and Jaya Shankar Reddy, the film promises a heart-warming love story that resonates with the audience. Renowned music director RP Patnaik unveils the teaser of this film and talks positively about the film. "I have known Suvikshith for a long time. The film carries a lot of positive vibes and will take everyone back to the 90s, stirring memories of their own love stories," said RP Patnaik about the film. The female lead actress Geethika expressed her excitement and said that this film is an incredible one that will undoubtedly remind everyone of their unforgettable days. "I am thrilled to have this opportunity in such a meaningful project. The love story between Vani and Hari is fascinating to watch," she said.

Lead actor Suvikshith emphasized the film's connection to the audience, saying the story unfolds against the backdrop of the 1990s. "It is a narrative that everyone can relate to. We all conducted extensive research, and the director has created a detailed portrayal. The emotions embedded in this movie are its strong point," said Suvikshith.



## Hit: The Third Case in cinemas on May 1

Crime thriller *Hit: The Third Case*, starring Telugu cinema star Nani, is set to be released in theatres on May 1, 2025. Directed by Suresh Kolanu, the upcoming film is the sequel to Adivi Sesh's *HIT: The Second Case* which released in 2022. Nani shared a new still of the film, reportedly set in Kashmir, on his official X page. "Merry Christmas to each one of you #HIT3," the actor captioned the poster in which he can be seen holding the reins of a black horse set against the backdrop of a snow-capped landscape. *Hit: The Third Case* is produced by Wall Poster Cinema and

Unanimous Productions. It also stars Srinidhi Shetty of *KGF* franchise fame. The first film in the franchise, *Hit: The First Case* was released in 2020 with Vishwak Sen in the lead. A Hindi remake of the movie of the same name, directed by Kolanu, was released in 2022 starring Rajkumar Rao.



## Another controversy surrounds Allu Arjun



Actor Allu Arjun and his *Pushpa 2* has been in the news since the time it has been released. Currently, the actor is surrounded by controversies with his comments on the Sandhya Theatre incident. Now, he is in another controversy and this time it is about a song *Dammunte Pattukora* from *Pushpa 2*. Though the film is doing well in the Hindi belt continuously, at the same time, the makers couldn't take the success as the actor is in legal trouble. To add more salt to the wound, controversy struck after the release of the song

*Dammunte Pattukora*. Devi Sri Prasad is the music director and the song was released by the T-Series on December 24. In the movie, Pushparaj played by Allu Arjun, challenged the police officer Shekhawat to see if he could catch him red-handed when he smuggled red sander. The song was released on the promotional part of the film, but shortly after they uploaded the song, they got trolled and negative comments about it. The time of the song release isn't the right, claimed netizens. Thus, the makers pulled down the song from their channel and other mediums.