www.dailypioneer.com Published From: VIJAYAWADA HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN

'Singh's reforms transformed India, unshackled economy

'WALKING DOWN THE STREETS OF PARIS FEELS LIKE STEPPING INTO A MOVIE'

Thammareddy slams Allu Arjun; holds him responsible for industry's APOLOGY TO CM revenue. Earlier, funds from TTD were allocated to temples and marriage halls in Telangana. This has now stopped. Andhra Pradesh should revive these contributions to help the development of Telangana's ancient Hindu temples and

QUOTE OF THE DAY

the pioneer

A large number of pilgrims from Telangana visit TTD, contributing significantly to Andhra Pradesh's

· Konda Surekha, Endowments Minister P4

facilities

DON'T MISS...

Property row behind 'body parcel' case

The sensational 'body parcel' case, which has been solved by the West Godavari district police, has exposed a shocking conspiracy. Addressing a press conference here on Friday, WG district SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi revealed chilling details after interrogating the three accused. According to the investigation, the case revolved around a property dispute within the family of one Ranga Raju, a resident of Yendagandi village in Undi mandal. Ranga Raju, who owned 2.5 acres of land and other assets, had two daughters, Tulasi and Revati, both..

US issued over 1 mn nonimmigrant visas

The US mission in India on Friday said it issued more than one million nonimmigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the US. Washington is also working to formally establish a US-based to renew H-1B visas in that country in 2025 that is expected to benefit a significant number of Indians. In the past four years,

-PAGE: 5

NCLT to proceed against Hero Electric

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has directed initiation of insolvency proceedings against Hero Electric after admitting a plea filed by Metro Tyres, an operational creditor ming a default of Re 1.85 o As per provisions of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), NCLT has appointed Bhoopesh Gupta as Interim Resolution Professional to run the company after suspending the board of Hero Electric. The Delhibased bench of NCLT rejected the contentions of Hero..

-PAGE: 8

India whitewash West Indies 3-0

Senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma did the star turn with career-best figures of 6/31 before doing her bit with the bat as India completed a 3-0 whitewash of the West Indies with a five-wicket victory in the final Women's ODI here on Friday. Having bowled out West Indies for 162 after Deepti's superlative performance and pacer Renuka Singh's (4/29) excellent show with the new ball. India recovered after a top-order wobble to reach the target of 163 in 28.2 overs. India were in a spot of bother at 73/4 but ...

EQUITABLE SHARING OF KRISHNA WATER

TG slams AP's 'delaying' tactics

PNS HYDERABAD

In a strongly worded rejoinder submitted to the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal, Telangana accused Andhra Pradesh of employing deliberate delay tactics to block the equitable distribution of Krishna River waters.

Telangana has called for the consolidation of evidence and simultaneous hearings under the two references currently before the tribunal, emphasizing that its people are suffering grave hardships due to the deadlock in water-sharing agreements.

The rejoinder, filed on December 27, was submitted in response to objections raised by Andhra Pradesh over Telangana's plea to combine proceedings under Section 89 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014 (APRA), and the broader "Further Terms of Reference" under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.

Telangana asserted that adjudicating these references separately would waste judicial time, lead to duplicate arguments and risk contradictory outcomes.

"An equitable allocation of water is not just a procedural matter but a pressing humanitarian issue. The people of Telangana continue to suffer from inadequate water access due to historical inequities," the state

TG alleges AP diverts 72% of Krishna waters, including 200 TMC from Srisailam, and exploits lack of formal sharing arrangements.

AP's procedural moves, including appeals to the SC, criticised as obstructionist.

TG emphasises equitable water allocation as a pressing issue, urging the tribunal to treat evidence under both references as common.



Telangana said the equitable allocation of Krishna waters remains unresolved after the bifurcation of AP in 2014. Despite filing a formal complaint in July 2014, it took nearly a decade for the matter to be referred to the tribunal under the "Further Terms of Reference," issued in October 2023.

Telangana said the equitable allocation of Krishna waters remains unresolved after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014. Despite filing a formal complaint in July 2014, it took nearly a decade for the matter to be referred to the tribunal under the "Further Terms of Reference," issued in October 2023.

Telangana contends that these references cannot be meaningfully adjudicated in isolation, as the issues and evidence overlap signif-

The state stressed that Andhra Pradesh has no objection to using documents and evidence from Section 89 proceedings in hearings under the broader terms. However, AP opposes the reverse approach, which Telangana claims is a clear attempt to delay and derail the resolution process.

Moreover, Telangana accused Andhra Pradesh of exploiting the lack of formal water-sharing

arrangements to its advantage.

It said that Andhra Pradesh diverts over 72 per cent of Krishna waters, including 200 TMCs from the Srisailam reservoir, far more than its share.

Telangana critici\sed Andhra Pradesh for continuing unauthorized constructions and diverting water outside the basin, actions that undermine the equitable distribution of resources.



Naidu leads AP in paying tribute to Manmohan

Says nation has lost a great economic reformer

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu has expressed deep sorrow over the passing of former prime minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, describing him as a great economic reformer.

The CM visited Delhi to pay his respects to the late leader's mortal remains and offer condolences to his family on Friday. Along with Naidu, Union Ministers Rammohan Naidu and Dr. Pemmasani Chandrasekhar, TDP MPs Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) and Sabari also paid their tributes.

Speaking to the media, Naidu praised Dr Singh for his tireless service to the nation and his visionary economic reforms.

"His death is a great loss," Naidu

said, recalling the former Prime Minister's many contributions.
"Dr. Manmohan Singh was a leader who brought about crucial economic reforms with foresight and served the nation in various capacities with great efficiency," he added.

"Deeply saddened by the demise of Dr. Manmohan Singh, an intellectual statesman. His humility, wisdom, and integrity were his hallmarks.

From his economic reforms in 1991 as Finance Minister to his leadership as Prime Minister, he uplifted millions. His passing is a huge loss to the country. My heartfelt condolences to his family, loved ones, and admirers," Naidu expressed.

Continued on Page 2

Allu Arjun appears before court virtually, bail plea posted to Dec 30

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Top Telugu actor Allu Arjun, an accused in the case booked over the death of a woman in a stampede here during the premiere of his latest film 'Pushpa-2', appeared a local court on Friday. The regular bail petition filed by the actor, who was named as accused no 11 in the case, came up for hearing on Friday, and the police sought time on the matter after which the court posted it to December 30.

Allu Arjun was arrested on December 13 in connection with the incident and produced before the Nampally court, which remanded him to a 14-day judicial custody. Shortly after Allu Arjun was shift-



ed to jail, the Telangana High Court granted him interim bail for four weeks and he was released from the jail on December 14.

Since Nampally court's 14 day remand was ending on Friday, Allu Arjun appeared in the court through video conference citing security reasons and to avoid any inconvenience to the public coming to the court.

Continued on Page 2

YSRCP stages protests against power tariff hike in State

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) organised protests across the State on Monday, opposing the increase in electricity tariffs and demanding an immediate rollback. Party leaders alleged that the hike, amounting to Rs 15,485.36 crore, had imposed an undue financial burden on consumers during Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu's tenure.

Protests were held in all 175 constituencies, with YSRCP leaders submitting memorandums to local electricity offices.

In Vizianagaram, constituency incharge Dr Rajesh and ZP Vice-Chairman Siripurapu Jagan Mohan Rao led a rally to the Electrical ADE office. Similarly, in Visakhapatnam South, former MLA Vasupalli Ganesh and senior leader Konda Rajiv Gandhi trict, Markapuram coordinator Anna



spearheaded a protest.

Konaseema district saw constitueny in-charge Vipparti Venugopala Rao leading a rally, while in Eluru, Puppala Vasu Babu mobilised significant public participation. In Nandyal, district president Katasani Rambhoopal Reddy led a robust demonstration, and in Prakasam dis-

Venkata Rambabu submitted a memorandum at the D.E.E. office.

Prominent leaders such as Devineni Avinash in NTR district, Donthi Reddy Vema Reddy in Mangalagiri, and Gopireddy Srinivas Reddy in Narasaraopet led similar protests. In Sri Sathya Sai district, former minister Ushashri Charan highlighted residents' hardships during a protest.

Gottipati blames Jagan for power sector collapse

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Kumar strongly criticised former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, holding him responsible for the steep rise in electricity tariffs and the collapse of the state's power sector. Minister Ravi Kumar clarified that the coalition government has not increased electricity charges since taking office and attributed the current burden to the decisions made during Jagan's

TDP gears up for 'Praja Vedika' from Dec 30 to Jan 11

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) has announced the schedule for its 'Praja Vedika' programme, set to take place at the party's central office, NTR Bhavan, in Mangalagiri. Under the directions of TDP chief and Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, the programme aims to facilitate direct interaction between party leaders and the public to address grievances and strengthen ties with the cadre.

The schedule begins on Monday, December 30, 2024, with Minister

Vasamsetti Subhash, TTD Board Member Mallela Rajasekhar Goud, and AP Warehousing Corporation Chairman Ravi Venkateswara Rao participating in the programme. On January 2, 2025, MLA Arimilli Radha Krishna and MLC Bhoomireddy Ramgopal Reddy will engage with the public, followed by TDP State President Palla Srinivas, Minister Kollu Ravindra, and TDP National General Secretary Kambhampati Rammohan Rao on January 3.

Minister Ponguru Narayana, NTR Medical Services Chairman Seetharama Sudhakar, and Palla Srinivas will partic-



ipate on January 4, while Minister Vangalapudi Anitha, MLC Kancherla Srikanth, and AP Settibalija Corporation Chairman Kudipudi Sattibabu are scheduled for January 6. Other key participants include Minister Nimmala Rama Naidu,

MLC Vepada Chiranjeevi, and Swachh Andhra Pradesh Mission Chairman Kommareddy Pattabhiram on January 7; Minister NMD Farooq, AP Tourism Development Corporation Chairman Nukasani Balaji, and Consumer Protection Council Chairperson Peethala Sujatha on January 8; and Minister Mandipalli Ramprasad Reddy, Government Chief Whip Panchumarthi Anuradha, and Women Cooperative Finance Corporation Chairperson Kavali Grishma on January 9.

The programme will conclude with sessions on January 10 and 11.

Drones to enhance greenery in capital Amaravati

Govt to build memorial to Singh

PNS NEW DELHI

The Union government has decided to make a memorial to former prime minister Manmohan Singh in the national capital, official sources said on Friday, as they accused the Congress of doing politics over the

The sources said the decision on the memorial has been conveyed to the Congress, but added that it will take a few days to find an appropriate venue for building a memorial. "The government's decision to build



a memorial in honour of Manmohan Singh has been conveyed to the

Nepal, AP sign historic tourism pact

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a historic move to enhance tourism ties, the Embassy of Nepal and the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) have signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This is the first-ever agreement between Nepal and an Indian state, marking a new chapter in

tourism collaboration. Nepal's Ambassador to India, landmark in tourism diplomacy. remarked.

"This MOU creates a strong foundation for cultural exchanges and tourism promotion between Nepal and Andhra Pradesh," he said. The partnership will focus on joint marketing of tourist destinations, cultural attractions, and eco-tourism, benefiting both regions. APTDC Chairman, Nukasani

Balaji, highlighted the importance of such international partnerships. "This collaboration with Nepal will open new tourism opportunities and strengthen Dr Surendra Thapa, called it a ties between the two regions," he landmark in tourism diplomacy. remarked.

Continued on Page 2

Under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Amaravati is taking strides towards becoming a lush green capital. The Amaravati Development

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Corporation (ADĈ) has introduced innovative measures, including the use of drones, to promote greenery and ensure the healthy growth of trees in the city.

As part of a pilot initiative, drones were deployed to spray nutrients along a one-kilometre stretch of the Seed Access Road on Friday. ADC Chairperson and Managing Director D Lakshmi Parthasarathy, along with Horticulture Department Head V Dharmaja and other officials, supervised the opera-



tion. The project primarily targets flowering plants and trees, enhancing their health and

appeal to visitors. A specialised 13-0-45 (Multi K) nutrient formula is being applied to these

nutrient spraying even on tall trees, a task that traditionally posed significant challenges. Each drone can operate for about 25 minutes, covering 36 kilometres per hour and servicing hundreds of trees in a short period.

species. Currently, the focus is

on a 10-kilometre stretch along

the Seed Access Road, with

Drones have proven to

be a game-changer,

allowing efficient

plans to extend the initiative across Amaravati's greenery

Drones have proven to be a game-changer, allowing efficient nutrient spraying even on tall trees, a task that traditionally posed significant challenges.

Each drone can operate for about 25 minutes, covering 36 kilometres per hour and servicing hundreds of trees in a short period.

This method also reduces nutrient wastage and water usage, making it 20 times more cost-effective than conventional techniques. Encouraged by these results, the ADC plans to utilise drones for maintaining greenery along 35 major roads in Amaravati in the coming

BRS then, Cong now: a familiar remake for Tollywood

try, represented by its bigwigs, met Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Thursday to work out ways 'to have a healthy atmosphere further' between the state government and the film industry. The meeting occurred in the backdrop of the Sandhya theatre stampede, which saw a child being hospitalized with critical injuries, took his mother's life and led to the arrest of actor Allu Arjun. The electronic media beamed visuals of the film industry bigwigs felicitating the Chief Minister and exchanging pleasantries in a cordial environment for everyone to see, prompting the perception that the 'stampede issue' has finally been amicably 'settled' by both parties.

Revanth Reddy finally got what he wanted: acceptance by the film industry that he is the

Minister's victory was not an easy one. Earlier attempts to target Akkineni Nagarjuna and his family couldn't produce the desired results. He had to remind the industry of his 'power' and ability as the Chief Minister to create an 'unhealthy atmosphere' for the film industry before it surrendered. Learning from the earlier attempt, he, his government and his party deployed a barrage of legal, physical, social media and verbal assaults against one of the industry's prominent stars, Allu Arjun. When even that did not produce the desired results, he had to threaten the entire industry, reminding the industry of his discretionary powers to decide on cinema ticket prices and hit it where it hurt - financially.

For Telangana, the entire episode was a déjà vu moment.

The extrajudicial hounding of Allu Arjun after his arrest and bail, culminating in the film industry bigwigs' meeting for reconciliation, is more representative of a society where raw power trumps the law

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, led by its chief Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR), had deployed similar tactics earlier for the same outcomes. It, too, started with Akkineni Nagarjuna and ended with the infamous 'drugs case'. The police summoned multiple film industry personalities for interrogation in the case, and their attendance was live-streamed. Once an 'amicable settlement' was reached, the case was shelved,

not to be heard again. Like the BRS government under KCR, the Congress government under Revanth Reddy started with the real estate industry and then targeted the film industry. While KCR made a show of sending bulldozers to 'Ayyappa Society and 'N Convention', Revanth Reddy instituted HYDRAA and demolished a few buildings. Both put the threat on the backburner once the industry bigwigs fell in line.

While BRS leveraged the 'Telangana sentiment' as a cover for its actions, the Congress used the tragedy of



KISHORE POREDDY

Revathi's death and her son's injuries. The Congress's nonexistent reaction to the deaths and hospitalisation of hundreds of children studying in government residential schools due to food poisoning - children whose wellbeing and safety are the direct responsibetrays their hypocrisy and

No one argues for a free pass to the accused-theatre owners, management, Allu Arjun or his bouncers-or that the police shouldn't have filed a case. When serving Chief Ministers like Arvind Kejriwal, former Union Ministers like P Chidambaram can be arrested on corruption charges and held in judicial remand, and leaders like Narendra Modi, Amit Shah, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi can be called for questioning by investigative agencies, it would be ridiculous to argue that the law should not apply to a movie star.

In any society where the rule of law is supreme, the expectation is that the government will let the law take its course and allow the courts to determine the culpability or

The extrajudicial hounding of Allu Arjun after his arrest and bail, culminating in the film industry bigwigs meeting for reconciliation, is more representative of a society where raw power trumps the law.

Only a week ago, the city's Police Commissioner pointed to an alarming law and order situation in the capital. Hyderabad saw a 41% increase in overall crimes, a 65% increase in bodily crimes, and, more concerningly, a 21% rise in crimes against children. If anyone doubted the priorities of the Congress government, the TG Police Department's Annual Report on deteriorating law and order in Hyderabad provided a rude awakening.

Yet, it would be naive to assume that the Congress government's actions stem from the Chief Minister's ego or his need to assert his power. Nine and a half years of the earlier BRS government's loot left the state coffers empty and burdened with massive debt. At the same time, Congress is in power in only three states across the nation-Himachal, Karnataka, and Telangana. Naturally, the burden of financing Congress' election expenditures everywhere in the country falls on the party units from Telangana and Karnataka, which have large economies. Since the Congress cannot divert public monies from empty coffers, it focuses on private pockets. What better way than to remind everyone of the damage the government can inflict on them and to demand protection money?

> (The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

'Revenue Sadassulu to continue until all issues are fully resolved'

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Special Chief Secretary for Revenue, RP Sisodia, announced that 'Revenue Sadassulu' will continue until all revenue-related issues across the State are fully resolved. Speaking at the Kaikaluru constituency-level 'Revenue Sadassulu' event in Pedapalaparru village, Eluru district, Sisodia highlighted that in certain areas, land had been incorrectly recorded under Section 22A, and the government would take steps to address these errors.

Sisodia also revealed that 1.35 lakh applications have been received so far through Revenue Sadassulu from across the state. During the event, he reiterated that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy recognised the challenges faced by the public in revenue-related matters and had directed that these summits provide com-

1.35 lakh applications received across the State



prehensive solutions.

The Special Chief Secretary clarified that legal issues would not be addressed at the revenue summits. He pointed out that certain errors had occurred in some villages due to faulty surveys, and a clear action plan was in place to rectify these mistakes. He advised the public to always obtain receipts when submitting applications at the summits and assured them that no fees would be

charged for the process. Kaikaluru MLA Kamineni

Srinivas urged the public to take full advantage of the Revenue Sadassulu, which are designed to provide permanent solutions to revenue problems. He also called for a permanent resolution to issues related to Vyavak lands in the constituency, where people who have paid taxes for years have not been recognised as landowners. He stressed the need to address ongoing protests concerning Kolleru lands.

Several villagers raised con-cerns with Sisodia, pointing out conflicts arising from joint Land Possession Acknowledgments (LPAs) issued during the previous government's re-survey, which had led to disputes among landowners. They also highlighted issues stemming from the merging of village lands with common lands, causing problems for landowners.

Eluru Joint Collector Dhathri Reddy, Eluru RDO Ambareesh, Mudinepalli Tahsildar Subani, MDO Y. Ramakrishna, Eluru DIO TVVS Ramana, Mandal Surveyor Rajasekhar Reddy, former Chairman of Gudivada Market Yard Ch. Sobhanadri Chowdary, and others were

AP poised to become IT hub under Minister Nara Lokesh's leadership

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh has embarked on a mission to transform Andhra Pradesh into a leading IT hub within the next five years. Over the past six months, Lokesh has introduced progressive strategies and policies to attract global IT and electronics giants while focusing on deep-tech development to create employment opportunities for the youth.

As the Chairman of the IT, Electronics, and Employment Generation Sub-Committee, Lokesh has facilitated significant investments. Notable among them is a recent MoU with Physics Wallah to establish an innovation university in the state. Industry leaders such as Google Cloud, TCS, and Foxconn have expressed interest in setting up operations in Andhra Pradesh. HCL, which

Govt to build...

But they have engaged in pol-

Singh, who headed the

Congress-led UPA government

reforms, passed away on

Thursday at 92. He was India's

prime minister for 10 years

itics over the issue," a govern-

Continued from Page 1

ment source said.

is credited w

Beyond IT, Minister Nara Lokesh has secured commitments from major industries. Tata Group plans to invest Rs 40.000 crore in renewable energy, Reliance Energy will set up 500 compressed biogas units with Rs 65,000 crore, and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel aims to invest Rs 1.4 lakh crore in a two-phase project. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to lay the foundation stone for the latter in January at Anakapalli.

already employs 5,000 individuals, plans to create 15,000 additional jobs.

In a bid to attract investments, Lokesh conducted roadshows in the United States, visiting Silicon Valley, Seattle, and New York to meet senior executives from top companies like Tesla, Google, Apple, Microsoft, and Salesforce. These efforts aim to generate 5 lakh jobs in the IT and electronics sectors over the next

To revitalise the IT sector,

Coastal Local Area Bank (CLAB)

marked its silver jubilee celebra-

tions with grandeur on Friday.

Managing Director and CEO B Venu Gopal Reddy announced

plans to transform the bank into

a Small Finance Bank shortly, reaf-

firming its commitment to deliv-

ering enhanced services to cus-

tomers. A commemorative sou-

venir showcasing the bank's 25-

year journey was unveiled during

Recalling the bank's inception

in 1999, Reddy highlighted its

steady growth from a small

regional bank to a financially

robust institution. He stated that

CLAB currently operates 50

the event.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Electronics Manufacturing Policy (2024-29) and the Semiconductor & Display Fab Policy. These policies offer unique incentives to investors, aligning with the vision of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for "Simple Governance, Effective Governance." An MoU with Google was also signed to enhance G2C (Government to Citizen) services, enabling easier access to

Beyond IT, Lokesh has secured commitments from Lokesh introduced policies major industries. Tata Group such as the Andhra Pradesh plans to invest Rs 40,000 crore growth in the coming years.

Coastal Local Area Bank celebrates Silver Jubilee

ATMs. The bank plans to expand

He also emphasised the bank's

role in supporting small and

medium enterprises (SMEs)

through MSME loans, providing

agricultural loans to farmers, and

facilitating loans for housing and

vehicle purchases to foster soci-

its network to 120 branches with-

in the next five years.

etal development.

government services.

in renewable energy, Reliance Energy will set up 500 compressed biogas units with Rs 65,000 crore, and ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel aims to invest Rs 1.4 lakh crore in a two-phase project. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to lay the foundation stone for the latter in January at Anakapalli.

Minister Lokesh's proactive leadership and innovative policies are paving the way for Andhra Pradesh's transformation into a hub for IT, electronics, and renewable energy,

lee Combration

YSRCP leader Imtiaz quits party, politics

PNS KURNOOL

Former IAS officer and YSRCP announced that he has quit the YSRCP and politics as well.

AMD Imtiaz took Voluntary Retirement as an IAS officer and joined the YSRCP before the 2019 elections. The YSRCP fielded him from the Kurnool Lok Sabha constituency in the elections.

However, he was defeated by the TDP candidate in the elections in the Kurnool constituen cy. In a statement here on Friday, he said: 'I have decided to quit the YSRCP and distance myself from politics. However, as a retired IAS officer, I am ready to serve the society. I am ready to extend my mite to build a better society," he revealed. He thanked the people of the Kurnool for extending their support.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Trayodashi:

Month & Paksham:

Immediate release of NSP water sought to save crops

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a significant appeal to protect standing crops in the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal Third Zone, Vice-Chairman of the Nagarjuna Sagar Left Canal Project Committee, Alla Venkata Gopalakrishna Rao, urged Engineer-in-Chief of the State Water Resources Department, Venkateswara Rao, to release water from the Sagar Reservoir without further

Speaking to the press after a meeting at the Water Resources Department office in Vijayawada, Gopalakrishna Rao highlighted that farmers in the unified Krishna district rely on this critical water supply to cultivate crops such as mangoes, tobacco, chilli,

Continued from Page 1

as a common record.

tional protocol would depend on resolving

Section 89 matters first, as suggested by

Telangana warned that adjudicating

the broader distribution issues first.



groundnuts. These crops are spread across 2.36 lakh acres in constituencies like Gannavaram, Nuzvid, Denduluru, Thiruvuru, Mylavaram, Nandigama, and Jaggaiahpet.

TG slams AP's 'delaying'...

He expressed concern over the delay in water release despite assurances cotton, jowar, maize, and

and January. He attributed Telangana Venkateswara

by the Krishna River Management Board on December 5 to allocate 12 TMC of water for December for Andhra Pradesh farmers.

the delay to officials of the Irrigation Department, who have not released any water since December 20. Following his discussion with M Gopalakrishna Rao stated that Telangana Engineer-in-Chief G Anil Kumar was contacted to expedite the release of water specifically

between 2004 and 2014. The Congress on Friday said that not finding a location for the crema-

tion and memorial for Singh is a deliberate insult to the country's first Sikh prime minister. The Congress raised the issue after the Union home ministry said in a statement that Singh's last rites will be held at New Delhi's Nigambodh Ghat at

Allu Arjun appears...

11.45 am on Saturday with full

Continued from Page 1

A 35-year-old woman died and her eight-year-old son was injured on December 4 during a stampede-like situation at the Sandhya Theatre in Hyderabad when fans jostled to have a glimpse of the actor at the premiere of 'Pushpa 2'

movie.

Following the incident, the city police registered a case against Allu Ārjun, his security team, and the theatre management under different sections of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Chikkadpally police station based on the complaint lodged by the deceased woman's family.

Continued from Page 1

The Minister pointed out that the Telugu Desam Party had handed over a power-surplus state in 2019. However, under Jagan's leadership, the state incurred a loss of Rs 1.20 lakh crore in the power sector and citizens faced an addition-

branches across five districts in Chairman K Venkata Raman Andhra Pradesh and manages 45 outlined the bank's five-year

Naidu leads AP in... Continued from Page 1

Minister for Education, Electronics, IT, and RTGS, Nara Lokesh, said, "I am deeply saddened by the passing of Dr. Manmohan Singh, a visionary leader who spearheaded India's economic transformation. As a renowned economist-turnedfinance minister, he implemented policies that significantly boosted the economy and fostered growth. While we mourn his loss, we celebrate his lasting legacy that continues to propel India forward." Deputy Chief Minister K. Pawan Kalyan said, "I was shocked to learn about the passing of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. I pray that his soul may rest in peace. Dr. Singh was a pioneer of revolutionary

economic reforms. Having served as the Governor of the Reserve Bank and Chairman of the UGC. he later took charge as Finance Minister, ushering in reforms that elevated our economy. His contributions will always be remembered. My deepest condolences to

his family. Former chief minister and YSR Congress president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed his grief over Dr Singh's death, offering condolences to his family. "Dr. Singh's service as Prime Minister, Finance Minister, RBI Governor, and Finance Secretary has been commendable. His role in shaping India's economic reforms marks him as a pivotal figure, and his passing is a great loss to the nation," Jagan

Nepal, AP sign... Continued from Page 1

strategic plan, focusing on incor-

porating technological innova-

needs. The plan includes intro-

ducing internet banking, and

NRI banking services, and

expanding operations to serve

government sectors. The bank also aims to achieve scheduled

bank status and broaden its geo-

graphical reach as part of its trans-

formation into a Small Finance

tions to meet evolving customer

The agreement also includes business-to-business (B2B) meetings, offering a platform for travel industry professionals to create innovative tourism packages. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Forum President, K. Vijay Mohan, emphasised the potential of the partnership, stating, "With Andhra Pradesh's beaches and cultural heritage and Nepal's natural beauty and spiritual significance, this collaboration can offer tourists a unique and enriched experience."

The MoU aims to boost tourism, foster cultural exchanges, and drive mutual growth in the sector, showcasing the best of Nepal and Andhra Pradesh to the world.

Gottipati blames Jagan for power...

35,000 crore.

renewable energy generation, not utilising the electricity.

severely damaging investor

Furthermore, Jagan's government purchased power at inflated rates to favour associates, exacerbating the financial strain. The Minister also accused

Jagan of supplying substandard coal to the Krishnapatnam power plant, resulting in inef-

to Dec 29 03:32 AM The letter also detailed Andhra Pradesh's Chaturdashi repeated attempts to involve the Supreme to Dec 30 04:01 AM Court to stay or influence the tribunal's pro-Nakshatram: ceedings. Telangana noted that while the Dec 27 08:28 PM Supreme Court issued notices on a related to Dec 28 10:13 PM writ petition, it deliberately refrained from Jyeshta: Dec 28 10:13 PM staying the tribunal's hearings. Andhra's recent efforts to secure an early hearing of the Rahukalam: 9:33 AM to 10:55 AM writ petition were also dismissed by the apex Yamagandam: 1:40 PM to 3:02 PM court. "The pendency of a writ petition can-

Krishna Paksha

Dec 28 02:26 AM

Varjyam: 04:05 AM to 05:46 AM 6:48 AM to 8:10 AM Gulika: 11:04 AM to 12:46 PM Amritakalam: Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:55 AM to 12:39 PM VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy **Temp:** 31°

Humidity: 68%

Sunrise: 6:34 AM Sunset: 5:44 PM **Updated:** December 27, 2024 5:00 PM

jurisdiction under Section 89 to gain an unfair advantage in ongoing disputes before the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). The state backed its plea with a table outlining overlapping issues between the two references, annexed to its submission. Telangana stressed that a simultaneous hearing of both references would ensure consistency, save judicial time and provide a holistic resolution to the long-standing dispute. Telangana's plea not dictate the tribunal's proceedings," comes amid growing frustration over the Telangana said, accusing Andhra Pradesh of decade-long impasse. The state reiterated its launching procedural manoeuvers to delay commitment to resolving the dispute fairly justice. In its application, Telangana urged the and transparently while accusing Andhra tribunal to consider the evidence, pleadings Pradesh of perpetuating inequities through and documents filed under both references its obstructionist approach. The tribunal's decision on whether to consolidate the pro-The state emphasized that the equitable ceedings or hear them separately is expectallocation of water must precede project-speed to have far-reaching implications for watercific allocations, as any meaningful operasharing policies and inter-state relations.

As the dispute enters a critical phase, the spotlight remains on the tribunal's ability to balance legal complexities with the urgent need for equitable resource allocation.

Andhra Pradesh, would prejudice its case.

Andhra could exploit the tribunal's limited

al electricity burden of Rs

Ravi Kumar highlighted that Jagan's cancellation of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) led to a substantial loss in

confidence. Complaints were filed by foreign bankers and investors with the central government, leading to penalties being imposed on the state for

ficiency and losses. Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any

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Minister Sandhyarani criticises YSRCP stand on power charges

YSRCP spreading propaganda against TDP-led government's initiatives

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Women & Child Welfare Gummadi Sandhyarani has come down heavily on the YSRCP for crying foul over the increase in electricity charges. Speaking at a press conference at the Telugu Desam Party head-quarters on Friday after receiving grievances from the people, she accused the YSRCP of spreading false propaganda against the TDP-led government's initiatives.

"The developmental strides made by N Chandrababu Naidu's administration within just six months of governance have left Jagan and his party seething with jealousy. It is evident in their baseless criticisms," she remarked. She pointed out that during the previous YSRCP rule, electricity charges were raised 10 times, imposing a burden of ?32,000 crore on consumers.

Minister Sandhya Rani stressed that Andhra Pradesh

transitioned from a 22.5-million unit electricity deficit State in 2014 to an electricity surplus State by 2019 under the TDP's gover-

She alleged that meanwhile, the YSRCP government mismanaged the electricity sector during their tenure. "The YSRCP cancelled Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) with solar and wind energy producers, disrupted renewable energy projects, and failed to effectively utilise thermal power plants," she said. These actions, she claimed, resulted in financial losses for the State and discouraged invest-

exorbitant bills, creating unnecessary financial strain," she added. The Minister also showcased the TDP government's welfare schemes as a testament to their commitment to the people. "We are providing ?4,000 monthly pensions to the elderly, which is unmatched by any other State. Differently-abled individuals receive ?6,000, and those who are

> are ensuring these benefits reach the needy," she stated. Sandhya Rani further criti-

bedridden are supported with

?10,000. Despite inheriting a

financially strained system, we

ments in renewable energy. Sandhya Rani also accused the

previous YSRCP government of

imposing financial burden on the

public through repeated hikes in electricity charges. She high-

lighted that over five years, elec-tricity tariffs were raised 10 times, affecting residential, com-mercial, and industrial con-

sumers. "The YSRCP's misman-

agement left consumers with

cised the YSRCP's actions during their tenure. She accused the party of engaging in corrupt practices, including allocating land and funds worth ?14,000 crore to Hindujas for questionable purposes. "Despite multiple allegations and evidence of misconduct, YSRCP leaders remain untouched by the law," she alleged. She also criticised their misuse of public funds, pointing to unnecessary expenditures like painting public properties in party colours and excessive

The Minister reiterated Chandrababu Naidu's commitment to ethical governance and people-centric policies. "Under TDP, we aim to provide quality electricity, free solar installations, and uninterrupted power supply while reducing the financial burden on the public. Unlike the YSRCP, our focus is on constructive governance and delivering tangible benefits to the people," she concluded.

spending on personal luxuries.

Congress leaders pay tributes to ex-PM Manmohan Singh



PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Congress party leaders paid rich tributes to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who passed away in New Delhi on Thursday.

APCC vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji and other leaders paid tributes to Manmohan Singh by garlanding his portrait in the Congress office here on Friday. Kolanukonda Sivaji recalled that Manmohan Singh introduced and implemented economic reforms when the country was facing a financial crisis.

The death of Manmohan Singh is an irreparable loss to the country. He will remain in the hearts of millions of people as he is the architect of modern India. How he led the country from 2004 to 2014 as the Prime Minister is unforgettable and it will remain in history," he stat-

Shivaji reminisced that the 3G and 4G services began when he was the Prime scheme and Direct Cash Transfer were also introduced by him, he extolled.

Before he became the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh held many key portfolios including RBI Director, Director of Industrial Bank and Secretary in the financial department, The Congress leader recalled. Kolanukonda Shivaji emphasized the need to teach students about Dr. Manmohan Singh's life story and his services to the country

Jagan solely responsible for power tariff hike: Savitha

PNS VIJAYAWADA

BC Welfare, EWS, Handlooms and Textiles Minister S Savitha has accused former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of being solely responsible for the increase in electricity tariffs due to his incompetence and corruption. Speaking at a press conference at the Velagapudi Secretariat on Friday, she claimed that the public no longer

trusts Jagan's 'Tughlaq drama'. Challenging Jagan to a debate, she said, "Let's settle the blame for the power tariff hike, if he has the courage, let him come for a

discussion." She accused Jagan of imposing an additional burden of ?17,000 crore in power tariff hikes. "The agreements you made then are the reason for the current tariff hikes. Wasn't it you who instructed the Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) to increase power charges after the elections," she asked. Minister Savitha criticised Jagan for protesting against the tariff hike, calling it ironic and bizarre. She claimed that Jagan's corruption and inefficiency have led to a debt burden of ?1,29,503 crore on the State and power distrib-

GVMC gears up for stricter single-use plastic ban from Jan 1

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Buoyed by the success of its 'Eco-Vizag' campaign, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is set to reinforce its ban on single-use plastics starting January 1, 2025. This renewed push comes after a brief lull following elections and administrative changes, with a focus on public awareness and stricter enforcement.

The GVMC has been actively engaging the public through various awareness campaigns, including rallies, walks, and celebrity endorsements, high-

lighting the detrimental effects of plastic pollution. This renewed effort builds upon previous initiatives and aims to solidify sustainable practices within the city.

This isn't our first attempt at eliminating single-use plastics, but we are more determined than ever," stated GVMC Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar. "We've launched a 45-day action plan to spread awareness and ensure the public is fully prepared for the implementa-

The GVMC's fight against



2022 with the innovative 'Cloth Bag Challenge,' which garnered significant traction even receiving recognition C.M. Saikanth Varma, expanding its focus to encompass Modi during his Mann Ki Baat program. This success paved the way for the 'Eco-Vizag' campaign, launched in June 2022 under former Commissioner G Lakshmisha, who implemented strict enforcement measures and promoted alternatives like paper and jute bags.

Citizens responded positively, with many adopting sustainable practices such as using steel containers for groceries and meat purchases. The campaign continued cleanliness, greenery, water conservation, and pollution

Recognising the need for a renewed push, the GVMC has enlisted the support of prominent figures, including Olympic medalist PV Sindhu and actors Allari Naresh and Anasuya Bharadwaj, to amplify their message and inspire citizens to embrace eco-friendly practices. "Plastic pollution is a pressing issue that affects us all. I urge everyone in Vizag to support the GVMC's

PV Sindhu remarked in a recent campaign video.

Environmental organiza-tions, GVMC staff, and Sachivalayam teams have been conducting targeted outreach programs in schools, public spaces, and commercial establishments. Despite previous successes, plastic usage has seen a recent resurgence. "The challenge lies not just in enforcement but in changing mindsets," noted a GVMC official. "We are committed to tackling this issue through continuous education and strict penalties for

DC: High prevalence of anaemia in Parvatipuram linked to poor nutrition

Emphasising the importance of nutritious food through Anganwadi centres to combat anaemia, officials confident of mitigating the issue.

District Collector A Shyam Prasad has expressed concern over the high prevalence of anaemia in Parvathipuram district, calling for a concerted effort to address this public health issue. During a meeting of the anaemia prevention committee at Panasabadra village in Makkuva mandal, the Collector emphasized the need for coordinated action by various departments. He attributed the high prevalence of anaemia in the district to poor nutritional intake, stressing the importance of consistent consumption of nutritious food provided through Anganwadi centres. He expressed confidence that by identifying and addressing anaemia cases, the issue can be significantly mitigated.

To combat anaemia, the Collector assured that necessary medical interventions, including injections and medications, would be made available to those affected. He also highlighted the dedicated shelter for pregnant women in Salur, where they receive balanced nutrition and regular monitoring by healthcare pro-

The Collector instructed



Collector A Shyam Prasad outlines strategies to prevent anaemia in pregnant women

ANMs to ensure pregnant women in the village fully utilize the Salur shelter and recommended bi-monthly tests to assess the adequacy of food provided by Anganwadi centres. "No pregnant woman should suffer from anaemia, and every delivery should be a joyful occasion," he emphasized, urging Asha workers, ANMs, and doctors to continuously monitor women and ensure their daily consumption of green vegetables, milk,

In addition to addressing anaemia, the Collector also announced various initiatives to support the villagers, including the provision of homes under the PMAY scheme, construction of toilets, and employment opportunities under government schemes including lamb breeding, cow farming, oil palm cultivation, check dams, and sheds. He mentioned that farmers who collaborate could benefit from a 50:50 funding scheme from ITDA for the

construction of borewells to irrigate their fields. Later, the Collector made a

visit surprise Parvathipuram Pedabondapalli Zilla Parishad High School to assess academic standards. He expressed satisfaction with the students' responses and encouraged teachers to strive for excellence. He also inspected the school's kitchen garden and commended the school for adhering to the governmentprescribed menu for meals.

Vizag CP issues guidelines for New Year's eve celebrations

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

As the city gears up to welcome the New Year, the Visakhapatnam Police Shankhabrata Bagchi, has issued a set of stringent guidelines on Friday to ensure the safety and security of citizens. These guidelines, effective from December 31, 2024, to January 1, 2025, aim to minimize potential risks and ensure a peaceful and responsible cel-

Dr. Bagchi emphasized that the primary goal of these guidelines is to ensure that festivities are conducted in an orderly and secure manner. "Our primary focus is to ensure that the New Year's Eve celebrations are conducted peacefully and responsibly," he stated.

Under the new rules, all establishments planning to host events that extend beyond midnight are required to seek prior permission from the Police Visakhapatnam Commissioner's office. This permission is crucial for police to effectively monitor and regulate events, ensuring that they do not pose safety risks. In addition to obtaining permission, event organizers are mandated to install CCTV cameras at all entry and exit points, as well as in parking areas, to enhance security surveillance. This is aimed at



With a focus on security, crowd control, and responsible celebrations, the guidelines mandate event permissions, CCTV surveillance, and noise regulations from December 31, 2024, to January 1, 2025

ensuring that every aspect of the event is closely monitored. A strong police presence will

also be deployed at major city iunctions to assist citizens, manage traffic, and maintain law and order.

The guidelines further maintaining robust security measures at event venues Organizers are instructed to provide adequate security personnel for crowd control, traffic management, and supervision at entry points. Multiple entry and exit points are required to prevent overcrowding and ensure smooth and safe movement of attendees.

In a bid to reduce disturbances and potential hazards, the guidelines set clear regulations regarding noise pollution, alcohol consumption, and ticket sales. Noise levels during events must not exceed 45 decibels, ensuring a quieter and more controlled environment for all. Alcohol consumption must strictly follow the timings established by the Excise Department, and organizers are prohibited from overselling tickets beyond the venue's official capacity to avoid dangerous overcrowding.

Additionally, the Visakhapatnam Police have deployed 'SHE-Teams' across key locations to offer immediate support to women in distress or facing issues during the celebrations. Citizens are also urged to be cautious with their valuables in crowded areas to avoid thefts or accidents.

Appeals invited on categorisation of SCs

PNS VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha announced on Friday that the one-man commission, headed by retired IAS appointed by the government to examine the sub-categorisation of Scheduled Castes (SC) as per the Supreme Court's directives, will visit Machilipatnam on Saturday.

The Commission will hold a session at the ZP Convention Hall in Machilipatnam from 11 AM to 2 PM. During this session, individuals and organisations from the newly formed districts, carved out of the erstwhile Krishna district, can directly present their opinions, memorandums and appeals related to SC sub-categorisation. The Collector stated that organisations, public representatives, employees and leaders of various caste associations from the NTR district can submit their views and requests. Those unable to attend in person can send their submissions to the one-man Commission's office at the Tribal Welfare Department Headquarters, 1st Floor, Koneru Lakshmaiah Street, Moghalrajpuram, Vijayawada -520010. Submissions can also be sent via registered post with acknowledgment, or emailed to omcscsubclassification@gmail. com. The deadline for submissions is January 9, 2025, the Collector added.

Panchayati Raj teachers seek 20 pc promotions in govt depts

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Navya Andhra Teachers Association has formally requested the State government to allocate 20 per cent of promotions available in the Panchayat Raj Department and other government sectors to Panchayati Raj teachers. In a letter addressed to the Chief Secretary of the State, the association's State president Karanam Harikrishna and general secretary Maganti Srinivasa Rao emphasised the need for equitable promotional opportunities in line with recent government decisions favouring non-teaching staff. The association leaders

pointed out that among the six lakh employees in the State, many Panchayat Raj teachers possess notable qualifications, including professional degrees. They stressed the importance of recognis-ing these dedicated educators, who collectively represent 25 per cent of the total workforce, especially considering their lack of promotional opportunities over the past 30

PNS PADERU

District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar emphasized the need for a collective effort to eradicate child marriages in the district, citing alarming numbers of teenage pregnancies and child marriages, particularly among PVTG communities and school

dropouts.
During a District Level Child Marriage Committee meeting on Friday, Collector Kumar expressed concern over the issue. "We have identified 357 teenage pregnancies and 174 other minor pregnancies in the past two years, despite preventing 25 child marriages," he



Call for community campaigns to prevent child marriages Collector emphasises role of police and village associations in

said. "It's crucial that we work together to address this critical

To tackle the problem effectively, Collector Kumar instructed officials to conduct villagelevel meetings to identify the root causes and challenges contributing to child marriages. He also issued a stern warning, emphasizing that both the state government and the Supreme Court have implemented strin-

marriages. "I urge authorities, including ICDS, to take these matters seriously," Collector Kumar said. "Show-cause notices will be issued to committee members if child marriages occur in their respective

To raise awareness and prevent child marriages, Collector Kumar suggested community campaigns and active involvement of law enforcement agencies. He highlighted the impor-

tance of registering all marriages within the village and ensuring that village associations pass resolutions against child marriages. The Collector also directed special attention towards school dropouts, particularly in grades 8 and 9. A pilot training program will be launched in GK Veedhi Mandal, a region with a high dropout rate, starting on January 3.

To monitor progress, the Collector mandated monthly reports on child marriages from every secretariat. Women police officers will be responsible for data collection. Additionally, hostel students will be closely monitored, and special squad teams will be formed to oversee these initiatives. The meeting was attended by key officials, including DRO Padmalatha, DEO Brahmaji Rao, DMHO Dr. Jamal Basha, DSDO Dr. Rohini, and Police Inspector Deenabandhu, among others.

he pioneer



Property row surfaces in WG 'dead body parcel' case

PNS BHIMAVARAM

The sensational 'body parcel' case, which has been solved by the West Godavari district police, has exposed a shocking conspiracy.

conspiracy.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, WG district SP Adnan Nayeem Asmi revealed chilling details after interrogating the three accused. According to the investigation, the case revolved around a property dispute within the property dispute within the family of one Ranga Raju, a resident of Yendagandi village in Undi mandal.

Ranga Raju, who owned 2.5 acres of land and other assets, had two daughters, Tulasi and Revati, both married. Tulasi's husband, Sagi Srinu Babu, went missing in 2012, and she had been living with her parents since then. Disputes over land and property between Tulasi and Revati had escalated in recent years.

On December 19, Tulasi received a parcel from the Kshetriya Foundation.' Suspecting something amiss due to a foul smell emanating from the parcel, she alerted the police. Úpon opening it, the

AP aims to become global

tourism destination:

APTDC Chairman

develop world-class tourism infrastructure

New tourism policy to guide efforts to

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

The Chairman of the Andhra

Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC), Dr Nukasani Balaji, has reaffirmed

the State government's com-

mitment to positioning Andhra

Pradesh as a premier global tourism destination. During a

two-day visit to various tourism

projects in Visakhapatnam, Dr.

Balaji emphasised the signifi-

cance of the newly formulated

tourism policy, envisioned by

Chief Minister N Chandrababu

"This policy will guide our

efforts to develop world-class

tourism infrastructure and

attract international visitors,"

Dr. Balaji stated. He assured

that capable stakeholders will

be carefully selected to drive the

success of these ventures, focus-

ing on enhancing facilities at

the Rishikonda Blue Flag Beach

to meet international stan-



police discovered the decomposed body of a middle-aged

A special team led by DSP RG Jayasurya and CI V Jagadeswara Rao was constituted to probe the case. Their investigation led to the arrest of Tirumani Sridhar Varma, Penumatsa Sushma, and Chekuri alias Tirumani Revati.

The trio had conspired to intimidate Tulasi into relin-

Dr. Balaji highlighted the

Chief Minister's vision, saying, "Each tourism unit should

operate at its full potential

while achieving financial self-reliance for the corporation."

He also participated in a pro-

gramme organised by the

AP Tourism's commitment to

providing necessary facilities to

previous administration's mis-

management of funds, partic-

Rushikonda Palace project. He

assured that the current gov-

ernment will carefully consid-

er the best utilisation of this

asset to maximise its potential.

visited several key sites, includ-

ing the Pema Wellness Centre,

Rishikonda Palace, and the

Mangamaripeta Visakhapatnam Transport

During his tour, Dr. Balaji

regarding the

The Chairman criticised the

Nepalese tourists.

Ĕmbassy

quishing her share of the property. They targeted Parlaiah, a middle-aged man estranged from his family, and lured him to an agricultural field, where they strangled him with a wire while he was in an intoxicated state. They placed his body in a wooden box and sent it as a parcel to Tulasi, accompanied by a threatening letter warning her of similar consequences if

she did not cede the land.

After dispatching the parcel, Sridhar Varma fled to Manginapudi beach near Machilipatnam, frequently changing SIM cards-reportedly over 40—to evade detection. However, the special team tracked him down, and all three accused confessed to the

In a surprising twist, police discovered over Rs 2 crore in Sridhar Varma's bank account.

SEX DETERMINATION TESTS

Programme Officers directed to inspect scanning centres





PNS GUNTUR

District Collector S. Nagalakshmi has instructed Programme Officers to inspect scanning centres to prevent sex determination tests.

district-level meeting of the Authority Committee on Friday to discuss measures against sex determination tests. She directed the Programme Officers to inspect online-registered scanning centres and take strict action if any violations of rules are

The Collector also ordered Programme Officers to conduct decoy operations at scanning centres and gather feedback from pregnant women visiting these centres regarding the determination of the

DM&HO Dr. Vijayalakshmi informed the Collector that

decoy operations had been carried out at 24 scanning centres in the district, but no violations were found during these operations.

Dr Vijayalakshmi further reported that there are a total The Collector convened a of 296 fetal sex determination testing centres in the district, ch four have appli online for registration renewal, nine centres for modification, and one for cancellation.

She also updated the Collector on the registration of three new scanning centres, which had been inspected by the committee members and Programme Officers. The committee approved the new scanning centres, along with those for renewal, modification, and cancellation.

Second Additional Judge Dr Y. Nagaraju, committee members Dr Sujata, Dr Nageswara Rao, Dr Ravindra Naik, and ICDS PD Umadevi were present at the meeting.

Woman harassed by loan app agents

PNS TIRUPATI

The police arrested two persons who are the recovery agents of a Non-banking Financial Company (NBFC) for harassing and threatening a woman for not paying loan

Superintendent of Police L Subba Rayudu told the media here on Friday that a woman software engineer, who is working in a firm in Bangalore, took a loan from a Loan App in Hyderabad for her financial needs. She failed to pay the six instructions of her loan.

The recovery agents of the Finable Technology Loan App Company abused her, her mother and her brother for not review the learn instalment. paying the loan instalment. They morphed the photos of the woman in an objectionable manner and sent them to her via WhatApp. The recovery agents threatened her to send



the morphed photos to all her

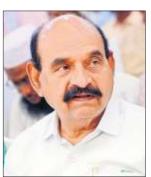
friends and contacts. However, she paid the instalment for her loan. The women SWE complained to the Sullurpet police on December 25 about the harassment and sending of morphed photos to the police.

The police team supervised by DSP G Chenhubabu and led by CI Muralikrishna arrested Finable Techolology branch college team manager Maraka Bharat Yadav and Collection team member Puttamshetti Ramakrishna. The SP warned of taking stringent action against NBFC or Loan APP recovery agents for their resort harassment of loan recovery.

SEEDAP to provide free training for minority youth

The Minister for Law and Minority Welfare, NMD Farook, has urged the youth from minority communities across the State to apply for free training programmes aimed at enhancing employability and self-employment opportunities in the industrial sector. The Minister said that this initiative is being organised under the aegis of the Society for Employment Generation and Enterprise Development in Andhra Pradesh (SEEDAP).

Speaking to the media, Minister Farook said the gov-ernment is committed to empowering youth through industry-based skills training, which aims to provide suitable employment opportunities in organised sectors. "Our efforts are directed towards creating industrialists and self-employment scenarios by equipping



young individuals with the necessary skills required by

various industries," he stated. The Minister stated that the SEEDAP initiative will include a variety of skill development programmes tailored for unemployed youth. It will also facilitate connections between skilled youth and industry employers. He pointed out that the training will address skill

gaps by offering high-quality

residential training free of charge to those lacking the necessary qualifications.

Minister Farook said, "Participants of the free training programmes will benefit ing programmes will benefit from various support services, including transport, career counselling, uniforms, accom-modation, food, study materi-als, and job training. Additionally, certification will be provided through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), along-Corporation (NSDC), alongside support for job placements and post-employment

assistance? The Minister encouraged minority youth to submit their applications (biodata) at the Minority Welfare/Minority Finance offices located in all district headquarters across the State. "I urge the youth to take advantage of this valuable opportunity," Farook concluded

New land registration policy causes backlog, confusion

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

A recent overhaul of land registration policies in Andhra Pradesh has thrown the system into disarray, particularly in Visakhapatnam. The new rules mandate the District Registrar approval for all property sales involving government-owned land, effectively halting numerous transactions.

The revised system, implemented through updated software and the uploading of government land records, automatically rejects registration attempts for properties under sections 22-A and 22-A-1-C (Endowment Department). This has created a backlog, with individuals struggling to navigate the new approval process amidst a lack of clear guidance. "I've been trying to register my property for days, but the system keeps rejecting it," complained a frustrated cit-

Minister lays stone for Rs 3 cr worth of works



PNS BHIMAVARAM

Minister for Water Resources Development Nimmala Ramanaidu laid the stone and unveiled the plaques for various development works to be carried out at a cost of 3 crore.

The Minister performed the bhoomi pooja at Pedamamidipalli Digamarru and Kothapet villages in Palakol mandal for various development works to be taken up at a cost of Rs 3 crore.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister revealed that 60 percent of the funds would be spent for the construction of protected drinking water projects at the three villages. All the development works would be completed by the Sankranthi

festival, he announced. He attributed the hike of power tariff to the inheritance of Rs 18,000 crore worth arrears to Discoms by the erstwhile YSRCP. The flawed power policy adopted by the YSRCP regime forced the incumbent government to impose charges

on the consumers, he slammed. Ramanaidu alleged that the power tariff was hiked nine times during the five years of the YSRCP regime. Moreover, the YSRCP put an additional burden of Rs 16,000 crore on the power consumers in the form of True up charges. When the Genco was offering power at Rs 5 per unit, the YSRCP purchased power by spending Rs 8 to Rs 14 from private companies, he lashed

Nimmala Ramanaidu listed out the achievements of the coalition government highlighting the hike of social security pension to Rs 4000, issuing notification for mega DSC to fill over 16,500 teacher posts and hiking of input subsidy from Rs 16,000 to Rs 25,000 per

SC SUB-CLASSIFICATION

Rajiv Ranjan Mishra holds meet with officials in Eluru dist

headed by retired IAS officer Rajiv Rajan Mishra held discussions with District Collector Vetri Selvi, Superintendent of Police KP Shiva Kishore, Joint Collector P Dhatri Reddy and other officials here on Friday.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh appointed Rajiv Ranjan Mishra as a man commission to enquire on the subclassification within Scheduled Castes following the Judgment of the Supreme Court.

He held a meeting with the Collector, JC, SP and other officials and discussed the matter of the sub-classification. He directed the Collector to con-



vene a special meeting with the officials of various departments and elicit their views.

He also ordered the Collector to send him the details on the implementation of welfare schemes for the Scheduled Castes and subcastes. DRO V Visweswara

Jayaprakash, ZP CEO K Subba Rao, DRDA PD R Viajayaraju, DEO Venkata Lakshmamma, DWMA PD Subba Rao and horticulture officer S Rammohan Rao were among those who attended the

Restore TTD's aid to TG temples: Konda Surekha

PNS HYDERABAD

Telangana Environment, Endowments Minister Konda Surekha has urged the Andhra Pradesh Government to address the difficulties faced by devotees from Telangana visiting the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD).

She expressed the hope that discussions would ensure a hassle-free experience for pil-

"A large number of devotees from Telangana visit TTD, contributing significantly to Andhra Pradesh's revenue. In the past, funds from TTD were allocated for temples and wedding halls in Telangana. This has now stopped. Andhra Pradesh should revive these contributions to help the development of Telangana's ancient temples and facilities," she said.

On Thursday, Minister Surekha, along with her family, visited the Sri Bhramaramba Mallikarjuna Swamy Temple at Srisailam, one of the 12 Jyotirlingas.

Speaking on the occasion, she said her family's vow was



fulfilled through their visit. "My daughter had prayed to Lord Mallikarjuna for a son

and had vowed to visit the temple if her wish was granted. Today, we have come as a family to fulfil that promise," the Minister said, reflecting on the steadfast faith in the deity's blessings. Surekha acknowledged that

while the Srisailam Temple is now in Andhra Pradesh, the faith and the regards of the people of Telangana remain unchanged. She emphasised

the need for Andhra Pradesh to actively resolve the problems faced by Telangana pilgrims at the TTD.

She said that a committee has already been set up to look into these matters, and the positive responses from both the Chief Ministers are a step in the right direction.

Surekha also prayed for good times for both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, with bountiful harvests, the wellbeing of farmers, and adequate funds for both governments.

Historical sculptures, inscriptions in utter neglect in Palnadu

Sculptures, including depictions of Mahishasuramardini, Brahma, Kumaraswamy, Bhairava and Nandi, belong to 10th century

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Several sculptures and inscriptions, dating from the 10th to the 14th centuries CE, are languishing in neglect at Rompicherla in Palnadu district of Andhra Pradesh. Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, an archaeologist and CEO of the Pleach India Foundation (PIF), highlighted the plight of these invaluable historical artifacts during a recent survey conducted as part of the 'Preserve Heritage for Posterity' cam-

paign.
Dr Reddy identified several sculptures, including depictions of Mahishasuramardini, Brahma, Kumaraswamy, Bhairava and Nandi, all of which belong to the 10th century. Additionally, inscriptions from different periods were found amidst roadside bushes and unkempt areas. Among them, one inscription dated 1245 CE, issued by Kota



Kakatiya rulers Ganapatideva and Prataparudra (dated 1320 CE), document historical donations of land for temple upkeep and religious offerings.

The Mahishasuramardini sculpture is a testament to the Vengi Chalukyan art style, while the remaining sculptures

Brahma, Kumaraswamy, Bhairava and Garuda are characteristic of the Kakatiya style. These artifacts were intended for the worship of deities in temples such as Ananta (Madana) Gopinatha and Kesavadeva.

Expressing concern over the neglect, Dr Sivanagi Reddy

appealed to temple authorities and local residents to take immediate steps to preserve these priceless relics. He recommended erecting the artifacts on pedestals with proper labelling to ensure their protection and to educate future generations about their cultural sig-

ACROSS THE STATES



Two held by Odisha Police for cyber fraud

he Odisha Police has arrested two persons from Jaipur and Jodhpur in Rajasthan for allegedly duping a resident of Rourkela city, a police officer said on Friday. The complainant, Arun Kumar Mandal, had alleged that the duo cheated him of Rs 23 lakh through online transactions, they said. A special team of the Rourkela Police visited Rajasthan and arrested the two, residents of Jaipur and Jodhpur, a police officer said. "After initial investigation, we found that this is the handiwork of an organised gang, which is operating all over India and internationally. In the first phase, we have apprehended two persons and the probe is underway," SP Nitesh Wadhwani said.



54-year-old man jumps to death at Delhi hospital

A 54-year-old man died on Friday after allegedly jumping from the window of a fifth-floor washroom at Jamia Hamdard Hospital in south Delhi, police reported. No suicide note has been recovered. The police received information about the incident at 1:21 am on Friday, an officer said. The victim, Mushtaq Ali, used to work at the hospital as a ward boy and was a resident of the staff quarters at the Jamia Hamdard campus, he added. Ali had been admitted to the orthopedic ward of the hospital on Monday due to a fracture in his foot, the officer said. Ali lived alone and his family members reside in Odisha, police said, adding that further investigation is underway.



Research positions: PM urged to suspend recruitment

ember of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research's (ICAR) Governing Body on Friday urged Prime Minister ANarendra Modi to suspend ongoing recruitment for research management positions, citing concerns over transparency and procedural irregularities. In a statement, Venugopal Badaravada questioned the sudden transfer of Srinivasa Rao from his position as Director of ICAR-NAARM to Director of ICAR-IARI, calling for the appointment to be revoked. Badaravada alleged recruitment rules were modified without Governing Body's approval, with the Agriculture Scientists Recruitment Board (ASRB) failing to object to the changes. He demanded suspension of ongoing research management position interviews and called for a Supreme Court judge or CBI-led investigation into recruitment practices over the past five years. "India's agricultural future depends on the integrity of institutions like ICAR. The current trajectory of corruption within ICAR jeopardizes national goals," Badaravada said.

ECONOMISTS HAIL EX-PM'S CONTRIBUTION

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 28, 2024

'Singh's reforms transformed India, unshackled economy'

"He was a brilliant economist with a

great vision of what India could be,

combined with a fine sense of what

was possible politically... the

liberalisation and reforms he

Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 1991 budget unshackled India's economy, significantly enhancing the economic prospects for hundreds of millions of Indians, first deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Gita Gopinath said on

In a social media post on X, Gopinath further said Singh's visionary reforms inspired countless young economists like her.

"Dr Manmohan Singh's 1991 budget unshackled India's economy, significantly enhancing the economic prospects for hundreds of millions of Indians. His visionary reforms inspired countless young economists like me. Rest in peace, Dr Manmohan Singh," she said.

Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms, died here at the age of 92 late on Thursday. He served as the prime minister for two terms -- from 2004 to

Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan said Singh was a brilliant economist with a visionary outlook on India's potential, combined with a fine sense of political feasibility.

undertook with the support of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao laid the foundations of the modern Indian economy."

Rajan described Singh as economy," he told PTI. understated and soft-spoken,

Rajan, the 23rd Governor of the Reserve Bank of India between September 2013 and September 2016, recalled that Singh was always curious.

Most persons with his experience and achievements would hold forth their views. Instead, Dr Singh heard others out and then tried to make use of what they conveyed, including criti-

"And he was a man of great integrity, never using any of his offices for personal gain," Rajan

Former World Bank chief economist Kaushik Basu said Singh, admired for his sharp intellect, innate modesty, and personal integrity - qualities rarely found in politics, will be remembered as one of the greatest political leaders not only in India but also globally.

Basu, who was Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) to the government in 2009-12, further said Manmohan Singh's modesty came from a deep sense of courage and self-confidence.

'As PM, I cannot let any Indian go without food': recounts Manmohan Singh's agriculture secretary

PNS NEW DELHI

As the nation mourns the loss of one of its most respected statesmen Manmohan Singh, his former food and agriculture secretary T Nanda Kumar on Friday shared his memories of working with the former prime minister during some of India's most challenging times.

Manmohan Singh, whose leadership was defined by compassion and intellect, passed away in New Delhi on Thursday night at the age of

Recalling his first one-onone meeting with Singh in 2006, Nanda Kumar said India was facing a shortage of what at that time and it was decided to import it, sparking criticism from several quarters.

Nanda Kumar said he went to the prime minister to talk over the issue.

"He heard me patiently and explained, like the professor he was, the need to augment supplies when demand outstripped availability. He told me, 'as prime minister, I cannot let any Indian go without food'. That summed up the basis of his decisions," Nanda Kumar recounted to PTI.

"This ethos guided Singh's leadership during crises," Kumar said. "In 2007, when I raised concerns about recurring shortages, Prime Minister Singh encouraged me to develop solutions.

The outcome was the launch of several key initiatives such as the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana to boost agricultural productivity, the National Food Security Mission to enhance rice and wheat yields, and an increase in buffer stock norms by five million tonnes to prepare for emergencies, he added.

During the 2008 global food crisis, Nanda Kumar had to propose a ban on non-basmati rice exports to secure domestic supplies. He said PM Singh firmly supported the move despite resistance. "I have to take care of the needs of my countrymen and women before sending food to other countries," Nanda Kumar recalled the prime minister having said.

According to Kumar, this decision proved critical during the 2009 drought, ensuring food security without resorting to imports.

Nanda Kumar also fondly remembered Singh's discussions with C Rangarajan, who was the Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the PM, on food and agriculture policy.

Skipped meals at times or ate sixpence bar of chocolate

PNS NEW DELHI

While studying in Cambridge University on a scholarship in the mid 1950s, money was the only real problem for Manmohan Singh and there were times when he had to skip meals or live on a sixpence bar of Cadbury's chocolate, according to his daughter Daman Singh.

Singh earned a First Class Honours (Tripos) degree in Economics in 1957 from University of Cambridge.

qualities that enabled him to

attract some of the brightest

minds to his team, including

Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Č

Rangarajan and Rakesh Mohan.

with a great vision of what India

could be, combined with a fine

sense of what was possible polit-

ically... the liberalisation and

reforms he undertook with the

support of Prime Minister

Narasimha Rao laid the founda-

tions of the modern Indian

"He was a brilliant economist

Daughter Daman Singh came out with a book "Strictly Personal: Manmohan and Gursharan", published by HarperCollins in 2014, to tell the "story of her parents".

She also mentioned that her father often spoke about his early years, of the hard life in the village as well as the charm of a simpler existence. Singh was born in Gah in Punjab province's western region, which now falls in Pakistan.

Daman recalled that when once her sister Kiki asked Singh if he wishes to go back to Gah, he replied mildly, "No, not really. That is where my grandfather was killed.'

Writing about her father's days at Cambridge, Daman said money was the only real problem that bothered him as his tuition and living expenses came to about 600 pounds a year while the Punjab University scholarship gave him about 160

"For the rest he had to depend on his father. Manmohan was careful to live very stingily. Subsidized meals in the dining hall were relatively cheap at two shillings sixpence. He never ate out, and seldom indulged in beer or wine,'

Yet he would be in crisis if money from home fell short or did not arrive in time. "When this happened, he skipped meals or got by on a sixpence bar of Cadbury's chocolate. He would

Two injured in gunfight in Manipur

closest to doing so. The only person he could think of turning to was Madan (close friend Madan Lal Sudan)," the book

After the results of the firstyear Tripos examination were declared and Singh came first, he wrote to Madan asking not to send him any money from then on. "I think I will get some prize worth about 20 pounds and if I press I might get an

never borrow money his entire Exhibition (an allowance or life, but this was when he came scholarship), but I am not so greedy. I prefer to wait till next year," Singh wrote.

Daman also mentioned how her father used to sing at famly get-togethers and picnics. "Whenever we went on a picnic, people used to sing. He knew a couple of songs. He sang 'Lagta nahin hai ji mera' and Amrita Pritam's poem

'Aakhan Waris Shah noon, kitey kabran vichon bol'," she



Ropeway project protestors launch hunger strike

PNS REASI/JAMMU

A shutdown in Katra, the base camp for the Vaishno Devi pilgrimage in Jammu and Kashmir, against a proposed ropeway project entered its second day on Thursday, with the protesters sitting on a hunger strike to press for the release of those detained by police the day before.

The Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Sangharsh Samiti has called for a 72-hour shutdown, which commenced on Wednesday, announcing that all activities in Katra would remain suspended during the bandh. "The bandh will continue until the government shelves the ropeway project. It is an assault on the livelihoods of most Katra residents,

who are dependent on the pilgrimage economy," a samiti spokesperson said Last month, the board decid-

ed to install the ropeway to facilitate access to the temple for senior citizens, children and others who find it difficult to climb the 13-km-long track to the cave shrine. The samiti which claims to represent shopkeepers, pony operators and palanquin owners, claimed that the ropeway would destroy the livelihoods of local business owners and demanded that the project be scrapped. For the second consecutive day on Thursday, all shops, restaurants and business establishments remained closed and traffic was off the roads in the holy town.

PNS VIJAYAWADA

At least two persons, including a policeman, were injured in a gunfight with armed men in Manipur's Imphal East district on Friday, police said.

launched gun-and-bomb attacks in Sanasabi and Thamnapokpi villages in the district, to which security forces retaliated, leading to a fierce encounter, a senior police

officer said.

Two persons suffered injuries in the gunfight in Sanasabi village. The policeman, identified as 37-year-old K Haridash, suffered bullet injuries on his left shoulder and was rushed to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences around 3.30 pm, the officer said.

He will undergo a minor surgery, officials at the hospi-

Another 'village volunteer' suffered minor injuries on his hands during the gun battle was also taken to a private hospital, where his condition is out of danger. The village volunteers had joined the security

the armed men from the hills.

"Armed men from the hilltops started firing indiscriminately and hurling bombs around 10.45 am at Sanasabi village and adjacent areas, forcing security personnel to retaliate," the officer said.

Locals ran helter-skelter as the gunfight broke out. "Armed men also launched

attacks at Thamnapokpi village around 11.30 am, creating officer said.

Security forces, including CRPF personnel, rescued several women, children and elderly people, who were caught in the crossfire.

Punjab: Eight killed, many injured in Bathinda bus accident

PNS ■ BATHINDA

Eight people died and many were injured on Friday when a private bus crashed through the railing of a bridge here and plunged into a drain a few feet below, police said. The bus had over 45 pas-

sengers and it fell in Lasara drain at Jeewan Singhwala village, officials said.

The accident occurred when the bus was enroute to Bathinda from Talwandi Sabo. Locals rushed to the spot immediately to help the passengers, they said, adding that eight people lost their

Police and district administration also launched a rescue operation and took the injured to a hospital. A team

of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) also reached the spot to provide assistance, they added.

Expressing condolences, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X "Saddened by the loss of lives in the bus accident in Bathinda, Punjab. Condolences to those who lost their loved ones. May the injured recover soon.

He also announced an exgratia of Rs 2 lakh from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF) to the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for the injured.

According to officials the weather was inclement in the area however the exact cause of the accident is yet to be

those who are not conscious

and aware and concerned

Singh said the state govern-

When the bench wondered

ment was "very earnestly" fol-

if the Centre could offer assis-

tance to the state government,

solicitor general Tushar Mehta

said its interference might lead

lowing up on the issue.

about his life.

to complications.

Issued over 1 million nonimmigrant visas to Indians for 2nd year: US embassy



The US mission in India on Friday said it issued more than one million nonimmigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas, underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the US.

Washington is also working to formally establish a USbased to renew H-1B visas in that country in 2025 that is expected to benefit a significant number of Indians.

In the past four years, visitor numbers from India have increased by five times, and more than two million Indians travelled to the US in the first 11 months of 2024, a 26 per cent increase over the same period in 2023, it said.

Over five million Indians already have a nonimmigrant visa to visit the US and each day the mission issues thousands more, the embassy said.

The US mission to India issued more than one million nonimmigrant visas for the second year in a row, including a record number of visitor visas,

underscoring the huge demand of Indians for travel to the United States for tourism, business, and education," it said in a readout. The embassy noted that the

successful pilot programme to renew H-1B visas in the US States this year. This allowed many specialty occupation workers from India

State Department completed a

to renew their visas without leaving the US. "This pilot program stream-

lined the renewal process for thousands of applicants, and the Department of State is working to formally establish a US based renewal program in 2025," it said.

The US mission to India issued tens of thousands of immigrant visas, facilitating legal family reunification and the migration of skilled professionals, according to the read-

These immigrant visa holders became permanent residents upon their arrival, adding to the already rich and sizable Indian diaspora community in the US, it said.

FARMER LEADER SINGH DALLEWAL ON HUNGER STRIKE

SC directs Punjab govt to ensure medical aid

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday expressed concern over the condition of farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on an indefinite hunger strike, and directed the Punjab government to ensure he was given medical assistance.

A vacation bench of Justices Surva Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia issued a notice to the Punjab government on a contempt petition against its chief secretary and the director general of police (DGP) for noncompliance of an order direct ing medical aid to Dallewal.

If there is a law and order situation, you have to deal with it with iron hands. Somebody's life is at stake. You need to take it seriously. Medical aid has to be given and the impression is that you are not following it," the bench

The apex court directed the state government to file a compliance report by December 28, when it would again hear the matter and ordered the Punjab chief secretary and the DGP to



virtually remain present during the hearing.

During the hearing, Punjab advocate general Gurminder Singh submitted a delegation of eight cabinet ministers along with the Punjab DGP visited the protest site to convince Dallewal to move to a hospital

but the farmers resisted it. "We have provided every-thing on site. If there is physi-cal jostling, we cannot take that risk," he added.

The bench however responded, "We have serious doubts about those farmers,

"Few people cannot keep him (Dallewal) hostage. One man's life is in danger. The state government can take measures," said Mehta

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

A silent crusader

Dr Manmohan Singh a reluctant politician yet a resilient leader and a gentleman is no more but his legacy lives on

he man with the vision and selfless dedication to the nation, Dr Manmohan Singh is no more. Dr Singh passed away on December 26, 2024, at the age of 92. Dr Singh, a towering figure in Indian politics and economics, breathed his last at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences. His demise marks the end of an era defined by humility, intellect and steadfast dedication to nation-building. Dr Manmohan Singh's contributions to India's economic and political landscape are unparalleled. Widely regarded as the architect of India's 1991 economic reforms, Singh's tenure as Finance Minister under Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao was transformative. At a time when the Indian economy teetered on the brink of bankruptcy, Singh introduced a series of bold measures that liberalised the economy, dismantled the license raj and opened the doors to foreign investment. These reforms not only rescued India from an economic crisis but also set the stage for decades of robust growth and development. During his tenure,



Singh's policies prioritised the devaluation of the rupee, moderation of taxes, privatisation of public sector enterprises and encouragement of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). These initiatives catalysed India's transition into a globally integrated economy and solidified his reputation as one of the nation's most accomplished econ-

Known as a reluctant politician, Dr Singh's foray into politics was driven by a profound sense of duty rather than ambition. When he assumed the role of Prime Minister in 2004, heading the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, he brought the same commitment and vision that had defined his

career as an economist. Serving two consecutive terms until 2014, Singh's leadership was marked by both humility and resolve. One of the most defining moments of his tenure was the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008, a landmark agreement that underscored his courage and conviction. Despite staunch opposition from the Left Front, which led to their withdrawal of support, Singh's government survived a vote of confidence, thanks to the support of the Samajwadi Party. The deal elevated India's status on the global stage and symbolised his unyielding dedication to the nation's strategic interests. Dr Singh was often described as a 'gentleman leader,' a man of integrity who preferred dialogue over confrontation. His humility was legendary, yet he was resolute when it came to principles. Throughout his career, he commanded respect across party lines, not just for his intellect but for his moral rectitude. His tenure as Prime Minister may have been criticised for perceived passivity, but his calm demeanour and quiet determination left an indelible mark on Indian governance. A seven-day period of mourning is a fitting tribute by the nation to a great visionary. His last rites will be conducted with full state honours. While his absence leaves a void, his contributions to India's progress and his example of selfless service will continue to inspire generations. Om Shanti.



Tourists enjoy paragliding after fresh snowfall, in Solang valley in Manali

Why RSS chief's push for large families is out of step_



By advocating outdated solutions to demographic trends, Bhagwat's vision risks deepening societal divisions and ignoring the socio-economic realities of today

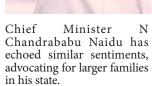
ashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent appeal for larger families, framed as a response to perceived demographic challenges, reveals a worldview rooted in traditionalism. This perspective clashes with the progressive social, cultural, and economic ethos of modern India. While presented as a solution to counter declining population trends, Bhagwat's remarks have ignited debates over their communal undertones, potential to deepen gender inequality, and disconnection from contemporary realities.

Bhagwat's remarks are part of a larger discourse on demographic imbalances, often aimed at minority communities. This rhetoric fosters fear, undermines social harmony, and contradicts India's pluralistic traditions. Today's youth prioritise quality of life over larger families, influenced by rising living costs, career aspitions, and financial stability. Bhagwat's appeal appears disconnected from these realities, highlighting a gap between traditionalist agendas and contemporary Indian values.

The RSS chief's observations clash with India's family planning efforts from the late 1960s and 1970s when the emphasis was on small families. Even former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, during her tenure, highlighted the dan-gers of unchecked population growth, stressing the need for planned families.

Bhagwat's outdated stance ignores this historical context and the progress India has made in population stabilisation through education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. Bhagwat's proposal for families to have more children is based on the argument that declining fertility rates threaten the survival and dominance of certain communities.

This narrative, often accompanied w alarmist rhetoric ab lation imbalances, underscores divisive politics. Although demographic trends warrant attention, his suggested solution disregards socio-economic realities and entrenches regressive norms. Interestingly, Andhra Pradesh



However, such approaches seem out of step with modern India's aspirations. India is not experiencing a population decline but rather a slowdown in growth.

According to the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5), the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped to 2.0, below the replacement level of 2.1. This trend reflects advancements in education, healthcare, and women's autonomy. While policymakers globally view such developments as markers of progress, Bhagwat's remarks frame this demographic shift as a cultural and religious issue, perpetuating communal narratives that risk deepening societal

Bhagwat's outdated stance ignores this historical context and the progress India has made in population stabilisation through education, healthcare, and women's empowerment. The RSS's vision aligns with traditional family structures, where women are expected to prioritise domestic roles.

By advocating for larger families, Bhagwat inadvertently reinforces these outdated norms, perpetuating cycles of



BHAGWAT'S **OUTDATED STANCE IGNORES THIS** HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND THE PROGRESS INDIA HAS MADE IN POPULATION **STABILIZATION THROUGH** EDUCATION, HEALTHCARE, AND WOMEN'S

EMPOWERMENT

dependency and limiting

women's agency. Central to Bhagwat's argument is a patriarchal notion that reduces women to their reproductive roles. His call for more children disregards women's aspirations, autonomy, and wellbeing, placing an undue burden on them.

Resource Constraints With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, India faces severe resource constraints, including food insecurity, water scarcity, unemployment. Increasing family sizes would exacerbate these issues, placing

further strain on public services and natural resources. India's youth population, often hailed as a demographic dividend, grapples with high unemployment rates. The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) reports that unemployment

among those aged 15-29 exceeds 20 per cent. Without job creation, additional population growth risks turning this dividend into a liability. India is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Global policymakers advocate making Bhagwat's vision seem misaligned with contemporary

Cultural and Ethical Disconnect

India's ethos is rooted in diversity, balance, and individual choice. Bhagwat's remarks dismiss these values, echoing authoritarian tendencies that clash with Indian democracy. Family planning decisions are deeply personal and should not be influenced by socio-

political agendas. Intervening in such choices undermines personal freedoms and contradicts the principles of modern India. In a country where maternal mortality remains a concern and reproductive healthcare is uneven, urging women to have more children intensifies existing vulnerabilities. Instead of alarmist rhetoric, India's leadership should focus on forward-looking policies to address demographic concerns constructively: Improved access to education, particularly for girls, is key to stabilising population growth. Educated women are more likely to make informed reproductive choices, contributing to sustainable demographics and enhancing Healthcare. Investing in maternal and child healthcare can reduce mortality rates and improve quality of life.

and enhancing employability can transform India's demographic potential into an asset. (Writer is a senior political

analyst and strategic affairs columnist; views are

Homeschooling: Affordable and holistic education option



Homeschooling is transforming its image from an unconventional option to a widely accepted educational route as many parents opt for this affordable choice

7ith the rising costs of living, an increasing number of parents are reevaluating the conventional approach to education. An increasing number of families nationwide are viewing homeschooling as a legitimate and empowering option compared to traditional education systems.

The choice is influenced not only by financial considerations but also by a commitment to nurture the child in a manner that aligns with their unique needs and the family's values. For many years, traditional educational institutions have been the cornerstone of childhood learning. However, nowadays, an ever-growing number of parents are questioning whether the significant expenses associated with private education, or even the costs of public schooling, truly justify the investment. The homeschooling movement presents a compelling argument: education can occur beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. The main factor driving this change is the expense involved. Education, particu-



presents a challenging list of costs: tuition, uniforms, transportation, extracurriculars, and supplies. Homeschooling greatly alleviates these financial burdens. Parents now have the opportunity to invest in essential resources such as top-notch educational materials, online courses, or tailored coaching—all designed to cater to their child's unique

Moreover, homeschooling encourages families to tap into their creativity and resourcefulness. Libraries, free online resources, and community programmes provide abundant learning opportunities with minimal or no expense. In a time filled with numerous digital resources, parents have the ability to craft a curriculum that is both cost-effective and thorough. In addition to reducing larly in private schools, often expenses, there are numerous practical knowledge, foster

the rising popularity of home-

schooling.
Parents hold the view that homeschooling can significantly enhance a child's personal and academic development. In contrast to conventional educational institutions, homeschooling offers remarkable flexibility, allowing lessons to align with a child's interests, learning pace, and preferred methods of engagement.

A student passionate about science, for instance, can dedicate additional time to experiments and practical activities, while those with a flair for the arts can unleash their creativity free from the limitations of rigid schedule. Another key factor is the importance of comprehensive development. Homeschooling transcends traditional textbooks and offers genuine, real-world learning experiences. Cooking transforms into a blend of maths and chemistry; gardening embodies principles of biology and sustainability; a visit to the museum or park imparts lessons in history and ecology. These activities, along with

other factors contributing to family connections—something that seems rare in today's world. Certainly, homeschooling comes with its drawbacks. Concerns have been voiced by critics regarding socialisation and the stress it imposes on parents. Nevertheless, families who choose to homeschool have found innovative ways to address these issues, including forming co-op groups, engaging in community sports, and coordinating group field trips.

This signifies a movement towards appreciating costeffectiveness, adaptability, and personal expression in education—a tendency expected to expand as households adjust to financial circumstances. Ultimately, homeschooling transcends being merely an educational option; it embodies a declaration of empowerment. For parents aiming to reshape education in a way that resonates with their values, this journey offers not just information but a profoundly rewarding experience for both themselves and their children.

(The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)

MANMOHAN SINGH PASSES AWAY

Madam — The sad demise of former PM Dr Manmohan Singh is an irreplaceable loss to the nation. Singh will be remembered as the statesman who saved the Indian economy from going over the edge. When he took over as finance minister in the minority government of Narasimha Rao in 1991, the Indian economy was very close to sovereign default. Foreign exchange reserves were barely enough to cover a month of imports, and the country had to suffer the ignominy of having to ship its gold reserves to England.

All of that would change with the famous 1991 Budget which Manmohan Singh presented, and the industrial deregulation that accompanied the Budget. Hailed as an architect of India's economic liberalisation, he served as Prime Minister from 2004 to 2014. During his tenure, he spearheaded transformative policies that shaped India's modern economic landscape. His leadership saw India achieve its highest GDP growth rates, and his role in the Indo-US nuclear deal significantly enhanced India's global stature. India is on its way to becoming the third-largest economy in the world in a couple of years, and the seeds of India's growth story were sowed during the economic reforms. More than three decades later, there is as big a consensus for reforms in India as there was opposition to it when the process started.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

DIPLOMATIC CHALLENGE FOR INDIA Madam— A formal request by Bangladesh to India to extradite former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India after she was ousted by mass student-led protests, poses a severe diplomatic challenge for India. Dhaka has chosen her path, and it does not seem to be interested in normalising ties with India; hence this extradition path. The extradition request and the political developments around Hasina's asylum in India have the potential to influence India-Bangladesh relations significantly, and it requires deft diplomatic han-

ICC fines Virat Kohli



situation when he was in the midst of a controversy over an altercation with Australian debutant Sam Konstas. It was a lucky escape for Virat Kohli on day 1 of the fourth test at Melbourne, which otherwise would have ended as a typical 'Boxing' Day episode. The 19-year-old teenager has not spared the Indian bowlers, including Jasprit

in India and her public statements against Societies (PACS). These societies not the interim government have strained relations between the two countries, which have further been worsened by the persecution of Hindus and other minorities in Bangladesh.

India is examining the request on legal grounds, but India can refuse extradition, citing political nature or justice-related concerns, but ultimately it is going to be for purely political reasons. The ball is firmly in India's court, and if India sends her back, we would seal her fate as she is bound to face the death penalty in Dhaka, and if it rejects this request, then we should be ready for more hostility from our neighbour, and our ties would go from bad to worse. Whatever India chose to do will have long-term ramifications on this whole region.

Bal Govind | Noida

EMPOWERING RURAL ECONOMY

Madam — The government is committed to revitalising the rural economy through cantly, and it requires deft diplomatic handling by both nations. Hasina's presence Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit

a treat to watch. It was an intentional act captured in-camera when Kohli appeared to be dashed against Konstas in the middle while walking across, which sparked an encounter. Watching this, the Aussie legend Ricky Ponting and England's Michael Vaughan were quick to voice their opinions, calling for ICC

Kohli has been slapped with a fine of 20 percent of his match fee and given one demerit point by the ICC as well. This is not the expected behaviour from a batter who played 121 tests, 295 ODIs, and 125 T20s. If Kohli was baffled by Konstas belligerence, he should have proved his worth as a batter in the middle rather than engaged himself with the intimidating tactics, which can be construed as cheap for all his calibre.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

only generate employment but also ensure optimal resource availability and connect farmers' produce to international markets, aligning with the vision of "Prosperity through Cooperation."

PACS, as the cornerstone of the cooperative three-tier structure, play a pivotal role in rural upliftment by addressing needs like credit, fertilisers, storage, and water management. The government aims to establish 2 lakh PACS in five years, strengthening rural infrastructure and promoting unity, harmony, and self-reliance. To revive dormant PACS and establish new ones, a detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has been developed, targeting the setup of PACS in 15,000 villages. These societies are evolving into hubs of multifaceted services, including digital amenities like ticket bookings and financial inclusion via RuPay Kisan Credit Cards and micro-ATMs

R K Jain | Barwani

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FIRST COLUMN

HUNGER FOR POWER

Lure for power is a universal phenomenon but in the capital, it is at next level



APS MALHOTRA

have come to seek your support and valuable vote, as I have decided to stand for re-election, declared the bespectacled, heavyset, middle-aged man–dressed in an off-white safari suit–rather pompously, as he stood with folded hands at the door of my house. surrounded by a bevy of churches and churches, who suitably nodded their head in unison. "Vote for which re-election?" I muttered under my breath, irritated at the uncalled-for intrusion into my privacy on a rather lazy Sunday morning." I am the President" he replied sheepishly, maybe taken aback at my nonchalant reply. "I had decided not to stand for this year's election due to increased professional and personal commitments-actually I had desired to give someone younger a chance to bear the responsibility, and take a backseat- but had to relent under the immense pressure from fellow residents, who want my leadership for a further period of three years" he continued, his voice a cocktail of benevolence and beneficence for his 'supporters', and the seasoned politician's chicanery. "But isn't Mrs. Draupadi Murmu the President?" I retorted, further trying to pull his leg. "Malhotra jee, I am the President of our Resident Welfare Association (RWA) for the past several years," he said, flabbergasted, a tad angry and certainly deeply offended at my failure to recognize him, and worse, acknowledge his self-perceived exalted status. Although I had recognised him the moment he pressed the doorbell of my house, and I opened the front door to face him,



my innate aversion to people who like to throw their weight around and flaunt uncalled-for appellations came forth with all its bitter-

Nonetheless, realizing that the man was getting increasingly exasperated at my manoeuvrings, I salvaged the situation by promising to cast my vote in his favour and profusely apologized to him for my failure to identify his 'Excellency', with the pretext that my better half is the face of our family for outside interactions, while I busy myself in mundane things, like reading and writing. Not too surprisingly, denizens of my beloved Dilli, sitting on the centre of power since the dawn of history, nave a deeply ingrained fascination for posts and titles- which proliferate dime a dozen- and take a macho and perverse pride in flaunting them, with the same exuberance with which a child displays his or her toy, albeit not with

This fact is borne out in the form of roadside boards and car number plates, which often bear vague titles- such as 'Secretary, Youth Media Cell, ABC party, B-block, Village XYZ'. A carryforward from the era of the Mughals and British imperialists, this is a desperate shot to seek the much-desired VVIP status, at least in the circle one operates in. Thus, it is not unknown to find members of RWAs who run virtual fiefdoms in their associations, maybe as recompense for the voluntary service rendered in serving the community. The perks could include a free car wash and laundry facility, use of funds near the residence where the self-styled Maharajas live,

One can only speculate as to what would happen if this maniac lure of titles and appellations invaded the next, and perhaps the last bastion of community living, the home. Then, it would be no surprise to see name boards outside individual residences read like this: 1/103, Beverly Park: APS Malhotra, President; Sonia Malhotra Vice President; Dr. Mehak Malhotra, Secretary (in absentia). In families with matriarchal tendencies, the designations could be reversed. Well, worth a thought!

(The author is a freelance writer; views are personal)

India must stand firm against Sheikh Hasina's extradition



India faces a pivotal decision as it considers Bangladesh's request to extradite Sheikh Hasina, former Prime Minister and a steadfast ally



heikh Hasina must not be sent back to Bangladesh in response to the note verbale received from that country's interim government calling for her extradition. Dhaka's move has followed the issue of an arrest warrant by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) against her and a number of her former ministers, advisers, military and civil officials. The allegation? "Crimes against humanity and genocide". There are two broad reasons why India should not send her back. As prime minister of Bangladesh, she has been a steadfast friend of India whereas other heads of that country's government, except her father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, have tended to be unfriendly. Second, she will, by no means, receive a fair trial in Bangladesh and perhaps even be lynched, given the intense hostility of the current rulers of Bangladesh harbour towards

There will be solid legal basis for India's stand. Article 8 (1) (a) of the 'Treaty Between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of Bangladesh Relating to Extradition, says that a person may not be extradited if "he satisfies the November 9, "The Awami League Requested State that it would, having regard to all the circumstances, be unjust or oppressive to extradite him" because, in the words of Article 8 (1) (A) (iii), the accusations against him "have not been made in good faith in the interests of justice." Besides Article 8 (2) reads, "A person who has been convicted of an extradition offence may not be extradited AGAINST HER HAD therefor unless he was sentenced to imprisonment or other form of detention NOT BEEN MADE IN for a period of four months or more." Sheikh Hasina has yet to be sentenced to any period of imprisonment or detention. Also, she can very well claim that it would be "unjust or oppressive" to extradite her because the accusation against her had not been made in "good faith in the interest of justice", and are a result of pure vindictiveness. That she would be justified in saying so becomes clear on considering the diatribes unleashed against her by the advisers of the interim government and the relentless persecution, including involving in hundreds of false cases, of

SHEIKH HASINA HAS YET TO BE SENTENCED TO OR DETENTION. power.

VERY WELL CLAIM OPPRESSIVE" TO EXTRADITE HER BECAUSE THE ACCUSATION "GOOD FAITH IN

JUSTICE", AND ARE A RESULT OF VINDICTIVENESS

Awami League's leaders and ministers in the party's government.

According to a report in The

Daily Star carried under the headline, "No option but to succeed: Yunus" on August 18, 2024, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus had said during a "Meet and Greet" session with foreign diplomats in Dhaka, "In their efforts to stay in power, the Sheikh Hasina dictatorship destroyed every institution of the country. Judiciary was broken. Democratic rights were suppressed through a brutal decade-and-a-half long crackdown. Elections were rigged blatantly. Generations of young people grew up without exercis-ANY PERIOD OF were robbed with full political IMPRISONMENT patronisation. And the state coffer was plundered by abusing

secretary, Shafiqul Alam, had "UNJUST OR in its current form is a fascist party. There is no way this fascist party will be allowed to hold protests in Bangladesh. Anyone who would try to hold rally, gathering and processions by taking orders from the mass murderer and dictator Sheikh Hasina will face full force of the law enforcing agencies."

Leaders of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM), formed on THE INTEREST OF July 1, 2024, to carry the students' struggle forward, and Jatiya Nagarik Committee (National Citizens Committee), formed on 8 September, 2024, to consolidate PURE the movement's message and political goals, have spoken in a similar strident and denunciatorv vein.

> According to a report by Ashibul Islam Rifat in the Dhaka Tribune (23 October, 2024) appearing announcing the plan, Hasnat

under the headline "Nahid: Awami League will never be allowed back into politics in our lifetime," Md Naĥid Islam, an ADSM leader who is now advisor, in charge of information and broadcasting and other min-istries, said at a discussion, that the Awami League's return to politics in the manner and ideology it previously adhered to would be tantamount to "a betrayal to the martyrs of the uprising. And certainly, as long as we are alive, we will not allow this to happen." Leaders of political parties like the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami (Jamaat) have also denounced the Awami League.

One can argue that the ICT, and any other court where Sheikh Hasina and other accused may be Referring to a proposed Awami tried, will ignore such vitupera-ALSO, SHE CAN League rally on November 10, tions and pronounce its judgement on the basis of the evidence and arguments placed before it. A horse would guffaw on hearing this. The judiciary has been brought to heel through forced resignations and dismissals. The process began as early as August 10, 2024, when chief justice Obaidul Hassan of the Supreme Court and five judges of the appellate division, resigned as hundreds of students affiliated to the ADSM gathered on the court premises demanding that they quit, and threatened to besiege their residences if they did not. On October 16, the new chief justice, Syed Refaat Ahmed, sent 12 High Court judges, appointed during the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League rule, on leave following a demonstration in the court premises by adherents of the ADSM led by Hasnat Abdullah and Sarjis Alam. According to a report in Bangladesh's The Business Standard on October 16 itself,

Abdullah, had written in a Facebook post on October 15, "In demand of the resignation of the fascist judges of the Awami League, we will besiege the High Court tomorrow (Wednesday) at 11am."

The ICT itself was reconstituted on October 15, 2024, with Justice Md Golam Mortuza Majumder from the High Court Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court as its new chairman, and Justice Md Shafiul Alam Mahmud and retired District and Sessions Judge Md Mohitul Haque Enam Chowdhury as members of the

The result is a pliant judiciary and the use of the justice system to persecute not only those associated with the Awami League but civil society activists, writers, journalists and human rights activists. A shocking example is the levelling of a false murder charge against a highly-respected senior : of Bangladesh's Supreme Court, ZI Khan Panna. Referring to the case, The Daily Star wrote in an editorial titled "This weaponisation of legal cases must stop" and published on October 21, 2024, "Over the two months and a half since August 5, we have published multiple reports and editorials on the indiscriminate filing of such murder cases without any evidence, mostly implicating the leaders, activists, and suspected supporters of the Awami League regime. Even journalists and rights activists were not spared. In many cases, fabricated FIRs were filed. There were also instances of the names of accused in cases predating August 5 being replaced. This is nothing but a weaponisation of the legal process for harassment and political vendettas." Will Sheikh Hasina get justice in such a situa-

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed

Unlocking economic potential: Bridging the gender gap in public procurement

In India, strides in gender budgeting and supportive policies are fostering greater opportunities for women entrepreneurs

ow much of the goods and services purchased by government depart-ments and public sector enterprises come from womenowned businesses? This crucial question is rarely asked, and it underscores the need for genture to reflect a greater emphasis on der-responsive procurement policies in India and across South Asia. With government procurement "accounting for an average of 12 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in OECD countries, and up to 30 per cent of GDP in many developing countries," the untapped economic potential for women entrepreneurs to contribute as suppliers of solutions to governments is immense.

enterprises still win only 1 per per cent increase over the cent of this significant public actual gender budget expendi more resources are being allo-

WEConnect International is actively working to bridge this gap. Our efforts are making headway, especially in countries such as India, where polgender inclusivity. The central government has

increasingly prioritised women-centric policies, evident from the substantial rise in gender budget allocations, which is another way to support women and girls in addition to buying their products and services. For example, in 2013-14, Rs 97,134 crore was earmarked for women's welfare and empowerment. By 2024-25, this figure had reached Rs Yet, globally, women-owned 3.27 lakh crore, marking a 19



ELIZABETH A VAZQUEZ

ture of 2023-24 and a 218.8 per cent increase since 2013-14. For 2024, the Gender Budget accounts for 6.5 per cent of the Union Budget, the highest since the Gender Budget Statement was introduced in

The Statement serves as a vital tool for ministries reviewing programmes from a gender perspective to ensure that

cated to benefit women and girls. In the last year (2023-24), the actual expenditure on gender budgeting was 16 per cent higher (Rs 2.75 lakh crore) than the total budgeted amount (Rs 2.38 lakh crore). The Indian government's Public Procurement Policy for Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) Order, 2018, exemplifies this progress. The policy mandates that every central ministry, department, and PSU must procure at least 25 per cent of their needs from MSEs, with 3 per cent specifically reserved for womenowned micro and small enterprises. There has been progress since the mandated 3 per cent procurement target for women-owned MSEs was introduced in 2018. Public procurement from these enter-



prises has risen from almost zero in 2017-18 to 1.8 per cent

in 2023-24. The number of women-owned (owned and controlled by women having the minimum financial interest of 51 per cent of the capital and with women constituting at least 51 per cent of generated employment) MSEs benefiting from public procurement grew from 1,410 (accounting for Rs 232.56 crore) to 21,128 (Rs 3056.4 crore) in six years.

While the evidence is encouraging, there are still gaps and

could help India achieve a more gender-inclusive public procurement ecosystem. For example, there is currently no independent body to resolve complaints in the procure-ment system, leaving unhap-py bidders with only two options: filing complaints directly with the purchasing entity or taking them to arbitration or court as outlined in the General Financial Rules

(GFR) 2017.

Generally, there is a pressing need for transparency, well-defined processes, and a robust mechanism for addressing grievances in tender and procurement procedures so that women-owned businesses receive constructive feedback if their bids are unsuccessful.

challenges that, if addressed, refine their future proposals and compete more effectively. Such measures would help mitigate biases in tendering and procurement processes that disproportionately disadvantage women-owned enter-prises. The government could also pass procurement legislation to standardise bidding processes using a central law that sets national standards and state laws that fit specific needs, with the central government providing comprehensive over-

Public authorities could also sensitise officials on the need to counteract gender biases that may influence the design of procurement processes. A strong starting point would be to appoint more women to oversee public procurement This would enable them to in government departments.

Public procurement from women-owned enterprises in India over the past six years has grown at an average annual growth rate of 70.5 per cent, while the number of beneficiary women entrepreneurs has increased at an average annual rate of 77 per cent because the baseline was close to zero. In 2023-24, total public procurement in India reached Rs 1.70 lakh crore, highlighting a growing opportunity for women to engage with the expanding public procurement market in the world's fastest-

growing economy. (The writer is CEO and Co-Founder of WEConnect International. With inputs from Eroshan Alagaretnam, Regional Director for South Asia, WEConnect International. Views are personal)

VIJAYAWADA | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 28, 2024

IN BRIEF



Gold jumps Rs 350 to Rs 79,200 per 10 gm

Gold prices jumped Rs 350 to Rs 79,200 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday on the back of continued buying by jewellers and depreciation in the rupee, according to All India Sarafa Association. Traders said the safe-haven asset is also strengthened by escalating geopolitical tensions stemming from the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and tensions in the Middle East. The yellow metal on Thursday settled at Rs 78,850 per 10 grams. Rallying for the fourth straight session, silver also surged Rs 900 to Rs 91,700 per kg. During the holiday-shortened week, the white metal soared Rs 3,550 per kg in the past four sessions. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity increased Rs 350 to Rs 78,800 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,450 per 10 grams on Thursday. Traders highlighted that weakness in the rupee boosted demand for safe-haven assets such as gold. The rupee fell steepest in almost two years to hit its lifetime intraday low of 85.80 before a suspected central bank intervention helped recover some of its losses and settled 23 paise lower at a record low of 85.50 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday due to a strong greenback.



Sanathan Textiles shares jump over 21 pc in debut

hares of yarn manufacturer Sanathan Textiles Ltd ended with a premium of over 21 per cent against the Sissue price of Rs 321 on Friday. The stock started the trade at Rs 419.10, up 30.56 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it surged 31.66 per cent to Rs 422.65. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 389, reflecting a jump of 21.18 per cent. On the NSE, it listed at Rs 422.30, rallying 31.55 per cent. The stock ended 20.98 per cent higher at Rs 388.35. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 3,283.32 crore. In terms of volume. 14.50 lakh shares of the firm were traded on the BSE and 137.04 lakh shares exchanged hands on the NSE during the day. Sanathan Textiles' initial public offering garnered 35.12 times subscription on the last day of bidding on Monday. The initial share sale had a price band of Rs 305-321 per share.



CAD moderates marginally to 1.2 pc of GDP in Q2: RBI

ndia's current account deficit (CAD) moderated marginally to USD 11.2 billion or 1.2 per cent of GDP year-on-year in the July-September guarter of 2024-25, according to Reserve Bank data released on Friday. The CAD, an indicator of the country's external payment scenario, was USD 11.3 billion or 1.3 per cent of GDP during the second quarter of 2023-24. "India's current account deficit (CAD) moderated marginally to USD 11.2 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) in Q2 2024-25 from USD 11.3 billion (1.3 per cent of GDP) in Q2:2023-24," the RBI said. During April-September 2024 (H1 2024-25), the current account deficit was USD 21.4 billion or 1.2 per cent of GDP compared to USD 20.2 billion (1.2 per cent of GDP) in the year-ago period. Merchandise trade deficit increased to USD 75.3 billion in the second quarter of 2024-25 from USD 64.5 billion in the comparable period of 2023-24, as per the RBI's data on Balance of Payments.

HOUSEHOLD CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE SURVEY RELEASED

Rural, urban consumption inequality dips over a year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

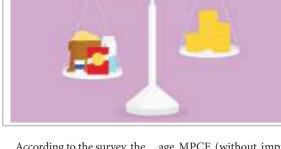
Consumption inequality in rural as well as urban areas declined during August 2023-July 2024 period as compared to a year ago, according to the latest Household

Consumption Expenditure Survey released on Friday. The Gini coefficient declined to 0.237 from 0.266 for rural areas and to 0.284 from 0.314 for urban areas during the period under review, a statement by Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation on the survey said.

The Gini coefficient statistically measures consumption inequality and wealth distribution within a society.

The "consumption inequality, both in rural and urban areas has declined from the level of 2022-23," stated the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) based on the fieldwork undertaken during August 2023 to July 2024.

The average MPCE (monthly per capital expenditure) in rural and urban India in 2023-24, without taking into account the social welfare schemes, has been estimated at Rs 4,122 and Rs 6,996 (at current prices), respectively.



According to the survey, the MPCE was Rs 3,773 in rural areas and Rs 6,459 in urban areas (at current prices) in

2022-23. The estimates of MPCE of 2023-24 are based on the data collected from 2,61,953 households (1,54,357 in rural areas and 1,07,596 in urban areas) in the central sample spread over all states and Union Territories in the coun-

try.
Considering the imputed values of items received free of cost through various social welfare programmes, these estimates of MPCE become Rs 4,247 and Rs 7,078 respectively, for rural and urban areas (2023-2024).

In nominal prices, the aver-

age MPCE (without imputation) in 2023-24 increased by about 9 per cent in rural areas and 8 per cent in urban areas from the level of 2022-23.

The urban-rural gap in MPCE declined to 71 per cent in 2022-23 from 84 per cent in 2011-12.

It has further come down to 70 per cent in 2023-24 that confirms sustained momentum of consumption growth in rural areas. Consistent with the trend observed in HCES:2022-23, non-food items remain the major contributor to the household's average monthly expenditure in 2023-24 with about 53 per cent and 60 per cent share in MPCE in rural and urban areas, respectively.

India's forex reserves drop by **\$8.478** billion to \$644.391 billion

PNS MUMBAI

The country's forex reserves dropped by a further USD 8.478 billion to USD 644.391 billion for the week ended December 20, the RBI said on Friday.

In the previous reporting week, the reserves had dropped by USD 1.988 billion to a six-month low of USD 652.869 billion.

The reserves have been declining for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation along with forex market interventions by RBI to help reduce volatilities in the

rupee.
The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September.

For the week ended December 20, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 6.014 billion to USD 556.562 billion, the data released on Friday showed.

Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves.

Gold reserves decreased by USD 2.33 billion to USD 65.726 billion during the week, the RBI said.

NCLT directs initiation of insolvency proceedings against Hero Electric

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) has directed initiation of insolvency proceedings against Hero Electric after admitting a plea filed by Metro Tyres, an operational creditor claiming a default of Rs 1.85 crore.

As per provisions of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC), NCLT has appointed

Bhoopesh Gupta as Interim Resolution Professional to run the company after suspending the board of Hero Electric.

The Delhi-based bench of NCLT rejected the contentions of Hero

Electric of a pre-existing dispute with the operational creditor saying that it was "not just a moonshine or feeble legal argu-The objections raised by

Hero Electric are not found 'tenable in law" and have been duly negated by Metro Tyres, which had supplied tyres and tubes to the company.

"In the facts and circum-

stances of the instant case, we are of the view that the corporate debtor has not been able to raise a plausible contention regarding the pre-existence of "dispute" between the parties. Hence, the present petition filed under Section 9 of the IBC,

2016 ought to be admitted," it

Besides, a two-member bench in its 16-page order passed on December 20, declared a moratorium, protecting the company from decree or order of any court, tribunal or arbitration panel and ban on transferring, encumbering, alienating or disposing of its

Electric had approached Metro Tyres, for the purchase of cycle tyres and tubes. Pursuant to that it supplied goods to Hero Electric and in lieu of that various invoices were raised from August 9, 2022 to

December 3, 2022 amounting to Rs 3.69 crore out of which Rs 4.27 lakh was paid.

However, Rs 1.85 crore was due on Hero Electric, and Metro Tyres submitted that despite its several requests, the payment was denied by Hero Electric taking a 'moonshine defence' stating that in 90/90x10 tyre and 90/90x12 tyre supplied by it, there was issue of tread separation', 'bubbles' and 'air leakage'.

It further contended that Hero Electric had never raised any quality issue or any sort of dispute in any manner and this was evident from the **Balance Confirmation Letters** by the corporate debtor.

India initiates anti-dumping probe into Chinese imports

PNS NEW DELHI

India has initiated investigations into alleged dumping of two Chinese products -- a chemical used in rubber industry and nylon filament yarn -- according to commerce ministry notifications.

The ministry's investigation arm, Directorate General of

Trade Remedies (DGTR), is probing the dumping of nylon filament yarn from China and Vietnam; and TDQ (trimethyl

dihydroquinoline). Gujarat Polyfilms, and Oriilon India have filed an application for the initiation of anti-dumping investigation on the yarn; NOCIL Ltd has submitted a

similar plea for TDQ. According to two separate notifications of the DGTR, the directorate has initiated the probes "on the basis of the duly substantiated written application submitted" by the appli-

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 coun-

termeasure, they impose these duties under 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.

FMCG entity Ganesh Consumer Products files draft for IPO

PNS KOLKATA

Ganesh Consumer Products Ltd, an FMCG player in eastern India, on Friday said it has filed its draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO) in the capital market. The proposed IPO comprises a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 130 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of up to 12.44 million equity shares by promoter and investors, according to filing documents, a company statement said. The face value of each share is Rs 10. The com-IPO placement of equity shares worth up to Rs 26 crore, which will be adjusted against the fresh issue, it said. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be utilised to prepay debt by Rs 50 crore and for capital expenditure for setting up a new manufacturing unit in Darjeeling, West Bengal at Rs 50 crore, and for general corporate purposes, the company stated.

Max Estates sells 67 luxury apartments in Noida for Rs 845cr

PNS NEW DELHI

Realty firm Max Estates Ltd has sold 67 luxury residential homes for Rs 845 crore in Noida amid strong demand.

In a regulatory filing on Friday, Max Estates said its subsidiary Max Estates 128 Pvt Ltd has successfully launched the second phase of its residential project 'Estate 128' in Noida.

"Building on the success of the first phase, the second phase has achieved a pre-sales booking value of Rs 845 crore within a week of its launch, and has surpassed the company's original guidance of Rs 800 crores as the booking Max Estates said.

The company did not disclose the number of units sold for Rs 845 crore and the price per apartment.

However, market sources said the company launched 67 units in one residential tower and sold all units at a price of Rs 25,000-26000 per square

The project, combining



units, spanning 10 acres and a total booking value of about Rs 2,700 crore.

very good for the second phase of 'Estate 128' project in Noida. "The net price realization in

Phase II is at a 40 per cent + premium to that of Phase I, and it clearly reflects the high demand for thoughtfully designed, end-user oriented residential developments," he

"Three back-to-back suc-

cessful launches in a span of 18 months — starting with Phase I of Estate 128, Noida, in July 2023, followed by Estate 360, Gurugram, in August 2024, Rishi Raj, Chief Operating and Estate 128-II, Noida, in Officer at Max Estates, said the December 2024—clearly affirm our ability to not o curate a good-quality product at the right location, but also our capability to bring it to the market...," Raj said.

Max Estates said it has already achieved a booking value of about Rs 5,000 crore in the first nine months of 2024-25. This performance is well within the company's full-year guidance of Rs 4,800-

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP

(Research), Mehta Equities Ltd,

caution ahead of the swearing

of US Republican Party admin-

istration continued to impact

the sentiment, Vinod Nair,

Head of Research, Geojit

a new low, weighed down by the

"While the rupee dropped to

Financial Services said.

A lack of major triggers and

Concord Enviro shares surge over 18 pc

CONCORDenviro

PNS NEW DELHI

Shares of Concord Enviro Systems Ltd jumped over 18 per cent in market debut trade on Friday against the issue price of Rs 701.

The stock listed at Rs 832, reflecting a surge of 18.68 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it soared 22.67 per cent to Rs 859.95. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 828.45, a jump of 18.18 per

On the NSE, shares of the firm began the trade at Rs 826, reflecting a jump of 17.83 per cent. The stock later ended at Rs 827.10, up 17.98 per cent. The company commanded a market valuation of Rs 1,714.58 crore.

In terms of volume, 6.74 lakh shares of the firm were traded on the BSE and 92.34 lakh shares exchanged hands on the NSE during the day. The Initial Public Offering

(IPO) of Concord Enviro

Systems Ltd received 10.67 times subscription on the final day of bidding on Monday.

The Rs 500-crore IPO had a price range of Rs 665-701 per The IPO had a fresh

issuance of equity shares worth Rs 175 crore and an Offer-forty shares valued at Rs 325.33 crore at the upper end of the price band, by promoters and an investor.

The proceeds from the fresh issue will be invested in Concord Enviro FZE (CEF) to set up a new assembly unit for water treatment systems as well as its working capital requirement.

Additionally, funds will be invested in Rochem Separation Systems (India) Pvt Ltd to expand its manufacturing facilities and support activities, payment of debt, technology and growth initiatives, working capital requirements, and general corporate purposes.

Sensex rises 226 pts on buying in bank, auto stocks amongst the investors",

PNS MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex rose by 226 points while Nifty settled above the 23,800 mark on Friday following gains in auto and banking shares even as investors turned cautious due to FII outflows and a record fall in the rupee.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 226.59 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 78,699.07. During the day, it

jumped 570.67 points or 0.72 per cent to 79,043.15. The NSE Nifty went up by 63.20

points or 0.27 per cent to 23,813.40. From the 30 blue-chip pack, Mahindra

Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, Bajaj Finance, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers.

State Bank of India, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Zomato, UltraTech Cement and HCL

Tech were among the laggards. Investors were cautious as foreign investors have not softened their stance on Indian equities with rupee's record fall against the dollar continu-

ing to create uncertainty

cuts, a widening trade deficit, and weak economic growth. The auto index outperformed, aided by an expectation of a pickup in volumes

expectation of

fewer Fed rate

December and comfort in valuation," Nair said. The BSE smallcap gauge

climbed 0.28 per cent while midcap index dipped 0.08 per

Among sectoral indices, auto jumped 0.86 per cent, healthcare surged 0.79 per cent, consumer discretionary (0.33 per cent), IT (0.22 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.20 per cent), teck (0.14 per cent) and financial services (0.14 per cent).

IN-SPACe link to experiments by start-ups in space PSLV Orbital Experiment EMI/EMC test and the with active thermal control as

PNS NEW DELHI

The fourth stage of the PSLV rocket, which will remain in orbit for some time after launching two satellites on Monday, will give an opportunity to start-ups and institutes to carry out experiments in outer space, with India's space regulator emerging as a common link in turning these projects to reality.

A record 24 experiments --14 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) laboratories and 10 by nongovernment entities (NGEs) will be carried onboard the

Module (POEM), including a demonstration of seed germination in outer space, a robotic arm to catch the tethered debris there and the testing of green propulsion systems. A common link among the

payloads of the start-ups and private universities is the technical centre at the Ahmedabad-based headquarters of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) -- India's regulator and promoter for the space

"We give them all the sup-



port, including the test facilities as well as help from mentors to address any problems,' Rajeev Jyoti, Director, IN-SPACe, told PTI

He said IN-SPACe also enables access to facilities at ISRO work centres for any specific test, such as the outgassing measurement test, the

philosophy and test specification specified by the PSLV. The technical centre also has facilities, such as a design

mechanical shock test, in

accordance with the model

lab, cleanroom, assembly and integration tools, which NGEs can utilise to prepare the hard-ware for flight and ship it for final integration on to the flight POEM platform," Jyoti

The ISRO plans to grow eight cowpea seeds from seed germination and plant sustenance until the two-leaf stage in a closed-box environment

spectra of science and engineering, such as the growth of spinach plant cells or callus in space from Amity University-Mumbai; green propulsion system thrusters from Bellatrix Aerospace-Bengaluru, another green propulsion using a hydrogen peroxide-based

part of the Compact Research

Module for Orbital Plant

Studies (CROPS) developed by

the Vikram Sarabhai Space

comprise a study of various

The 10 payloads from NGEs

thruster from Manastu Space Technologies-Mumbai.

what's brewing?



SHALINI PANDEY BEGINS DUBBING FOR DABBA CARTEL

halini Pandey, one of the most talented and Versatile actresses in Indian cinema, continues to win hearts with her incredible performances. After receiving widespread acclaim this year for her portrayal of Kishori in the critically praised series Maharaj, audiences and fans alike are eagerly anticipating her next project.

In a recent post, Shalini teased her fans with an exciting update regarding her forthcoming project *Dabba* Cartel. The actress shared a picture from a dubbing studio, hinting that she has already started work on the muchawaited project. Along with the image. Shalini wrote a caption that read, "Strangely like to dub now. And this one's special #dabbacartel." This simple yet intriguing

message has left fans buzzing with excitement as they look forward to seeing Shalini in a completely new and fresh avatar in *Dabba Cartel*. The picture has sparked a wave of anticipation, and many are eager to witness Shalini's performance in a role that promises to showcase her wide range of acting

abilities.

But that's not all—Shalini's slate is packed with more exciting ventures. She will also be seen in the upcoming film Bandwaale, which has generated a lot of buzz and there's even an unannounced project that is sure to keep fans on their toes. With her growing popularity and impeccable talent, Shalini Pandey is undoubtedly one of the most exciting names to watch out for in the Indian entertainment industry in 2024 and beyond.

The Secret of the Shieldars starring Rajeev Khandelwal on Jan 31

isney+ Hotstar on Friday announced that its upcoming series The Secret of The Shiledars, headlined by actor Rajeev Khandelwal, will start streaming on its

Helmed by Aditya Sarpotdar of Munjya fame, the series is touted as a first-of-its-kind treasure hunt-based series and also stars Sai Tamhankar, Gaurav Amlani and veteran actor Ashish Vidyarthi in pivotal roles.

The Secret of The Shiledars narrates the story of the Shiledars, who were members of military units in the Maratha Empire. Sarpotdar said it was his curiosity about stories of adventure and history that led him to The Secret of the Shiledars.

"The concept of 'Shiledars', The Guardians, hasn't been explored before, making it intriguing yet fulfilling. I believe that *The Secret of the Shiledars* is



the project that challenged me and made me move out of my comfort zone and I am so glad that I could embark on this journey with Rajeev Khandelwal as he has truly given his heart and soul to it and I am sure it will reflect on screen," the filmmaker said in a statement.

The upcoming series is produced by Nitin Vaidya under the banner of Dashami Creations LLP. Khandelwal praised the director for his "crafty and futuristic vision."

"I believe that The Secret of the

Shiledars chose me and not the other way round. I was a bit sceptical about playing such a different and evolving character... but (Aditya) made everything easy and lucid. Like most of us who are fascinated by history, I was left spellbound when Aditya narrated the script and it ignited the curiosity within me to be on board for such a fun and insightful proiect," said Khandelwal.

Junaid Khan & Khushi Kapoor's Loveyapa set for February 2025 release

→ he much-anticipated theatrical debut of Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor has finally been unveiled and fans are already buzzing with excitement. Produced by Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment and directed by the visionary Advait Chandan, the film is titled *Loveyapa*, a romantic comedy that promises to captivate audiences with its youthful energy, sparkling chemistry and heart-

warming storyline.

Loveyapa is a modern-day tale of love and its complexities, intertwined with humor and lighthearted moments that are bound to leave audiences in splits. With the rising stars Junaid Khan and Khushi Kapoor leading the charge, their on-screen chemistry is expected to be one of the highlights of the film. Both actors are set to bring fresh



ing Loveyapa to new heights within the rom-com genre.

Backing this promising project are two powerhouse production houses: Phantom Studios and AGS Entertainment. Phantom Studios, known for its critically acclaimed content, and AGS Entertainment, a name synonymous with commercial successes, bring their unique strengths to the table, ensuring a movie that balances artistic vision with mass appeal. The collaboration between these two studios has created an exciting synergy that has already raised expectations for the film. Set against the backdrop of modern romance, Loveyapa offers more than just a love story—it's a celebration of love in all its forms. With lively music, breathtaking visuals, and unforgettable performances, the film aims to strike a chord with audiences of all ages, making it a cinematic treat that promises to resonate deeply with viewers.

Slated for release on February 7, 2025, *Loveyapa* is shaping up to be one of the most exciting films of 2025. The combination of fresh talent, a compelling narrative and the expertise of its production team guarantees that this romantic comedv will be one to watch.



limmaker Sooraj Barjatya is preparing for → his next romantic drama, which will star Ayushmann Khurrana in the lead role. While the title of the film remains under wraps, casting for the leading lady is generating significant buzz. Reports suggest that Bollywood actresses Sara Ali Khan and Triptii Dimri are both being considered for the role, with Sooraj Barjatya aiming to find the perfect match for his vision of grace and charm.

A source close to the production revealed that Sara Ali Khan, known for her mainstream appeal and charismatic presence, aligns well with the



has the charm and mainstream appeal that could align with the Rajshri universe." Sara's proven success in commercial films makes her a strong candidate for the role.

On the other hand, Triptii Dimri's performances in Bulbbul and Qala have earned her critical acclaim for her ability to bring depth and nuance to her characters. The source added that Triptii could bring a more layered approach to the role, making her another strong contender. "Triptii's performances in Bulbbul and Qala make her a strong candidate to bring a layered approach to the character," the source noted.

A key consideration in casting is the chemistry between Ayushmann Khurrana and his costar. The source explained that Ayushmann has already worked with Sara in a previous film, whereas pairing him with Triptii would create a fresh dynamic. However, Triptii's packed schedule next year could complicate the casting decision. "Triptii is busy for a good part of next year with Vishal Bhardwaj's film on Hussain Ustara and two other projects," the source said. Sooraj Barjatya plans to meet both actresses in January, with a look test to help finalise the



decision. The chemistry between Ayushmann and the leading lady will also play a crucial role in the casting process. "Their chemistry with Ayushmann will also be another factor," the source added.

Once the lead actress is confirmed, filming is set to begin in the summer of 2025, marking an exciting new chapter in Sooraj Barjatya's career and bringing a fresh pairing to the big screen with Ayushmann Khurrana. Fans are eagerly awaiting further details about the project, which promises to be a heartwarming addition to the world of romantic Bollywood cinema.

ARCHIE









CALVIN AND HOBBES









GARFIELD

MY PAL SLUGGO ALWAYS KNEW HOW

TO MAKE THE BEST

GINGER MEGGS

SITUA-TION





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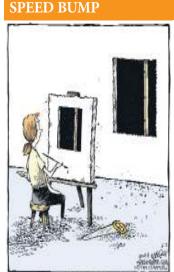
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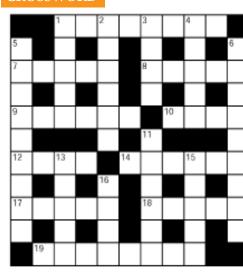
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CROSSWORD



ACROSS

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- 9 Required
- 10 Closed
- 12 Iranians live here

18 Liked very much

- 15 A body organ 14 A horse's fastest pace
- 16 The number nothing 17 By yourself
- 19 Someone who writes news for a newspaper



DOWN

- 1 Similar 2 Worked out the solution to
- 3 Jealousy

4 One of the planets

6 A small creature with

11 Carry your money in this

5 Exactly the same

many legs

13 Higher than



HOW'S YOUR

BAD BACK?



'THE CITY SUPPORTS **CREATIVITY LIKE NO OTHER'**

IN AN EXCLUSIVE **CHAT WITH THE PIONEER**, AWARD-**WINNING INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLER AND EDUCATIONALIST DEEPA KIRAN OPENS UP ABOUT HER ENDURING BOND WITH HYDERABAD-A CITY THAT HAS NOT ONLY SHAPED HER CRAFT BUT ALSO HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN HER HEART**

tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

yderabad is more than just a city; it's a feeling, a warm embrace of cultures, flavours and stories that leave an indelible mark on everyone who walks its streets. Known for its rich heritage, delectable cuisine and the iconic blend of tradition and modernity, Hyderabad is a city where diversity thrives. It's a place where Irani chai fuels endless conversations, where ancient rocks whisper timeless tales and where the warmth of its people makes you feel at home instantly.

feel at home instantly.

For Deepa Kiran, Hyderabad is more than a city; it's an endless source of inspiration that fuels her storytelling. The vibrant mix of cultures the conferting around of Irani shailand. fuels her storytelling. The vibrant mix of cultures, the comforting aroma of Irani chai and the shared warmth of its people have all found their way into her tales. From intimate gatherings atop ancient rocks to lively workshops filled with eager listeners, the city's charm and openness have shaped her journey. "Hyderabad has a way of making you feel seen, supported, and celebrated," Deepa says. With its rich history and modern vibrancy, Hyderabad continues to be the perfect backdrop for the stories she crafts and the memories she cherishes.

"I'm not a hig fan of birvani," she confess-

ories she cherishes.

"I'm not a big fan of biryani," she confesses with a laugh. "I can't include it on my list. But I loved waiting for boorelu—an Indian sweet made of rice flour stuffed with jaggery—and pulihora, offered by my neighbour aunty while I was in Hyderabad. She introduced me to some amazing local dishes."

Her exploration didn't stop there. "I absolutely loved sipping Irani chai in those cozy Hyderabadi cafes. And all the dosas, idlies, chutneys, and podis here are just

mouth-watering. The city's food has a unique

mouth-watering. The city's food has a unique way of staying with you."

Kiran's path to becoming a storyteller was anything but conventional. "Back then, courses weren't as accessible as they are today," she recalls. "I completed my B.Sc. in Nutrition and applied for M.Sc., only to be told that I couldn't be admitted without an MBBS degree. It was a turning point—I had to decide on the go."

This unexpected hurdle led her to literature. "A neighbour encouraged me to study literature. I applied to the University of Hyderabad and topped the entrance test," she shares with pride.

Storytelling came later, but it was a natur-

she shares with pride.

Storytelling came later, but it was a natural fit for her. "I wanted to bring something unique to my storytelling. I started incorporating jingles, shankh, ektara, duff and even a little bit of dance. My idea was simple: if I enjoy what I do, the audience will too."

She recalls a memorable moment when a senior storyteller praised her style. "They told me I had a unique way of telling stories and

me I had a unique way of telling stories, and the way I added dance made it all the more interesting. That encouraged me to keep evolving my craft."

evolving my craft."

One of her fondest memories is a story-telling session organised by Hyderabad's rock conservation team at Lotus Park in Banjara Hills. "The audience sat on the rocks and I stood below them, sharing my story. A month later, a parent approached me at another event. He told me his son, usually restless, had sat still for 45 minutes during my session. The child even developed a newfound love for rocks and started participating in conservation programs," she recalls with a smile.

Her love for Hyderabad extends beyond its food and events. "This city is one of the friendliest in India," she says. "People here are so open to experiences. In a profession like

so open to experiences. In a profession like

storytelling, I've found immense support from the theatre community."

She's also received exciting projects in the city. "People have asked me to perform stories about Dashavatara, Ithihasas and Puranas for children of NRIs. Workshops and commissioned projects keep coming my way here," she shares. Hyderabad's central location, rich cultural mix and pleasant weather add to its She's also received

tion, rich cultural mix and pleasant weather add to its appeal. "You find people here mingling easily, regardless of language or food preferences. It's such a beautiful intermingling of cultures," she remarks.

For Deepa, Hyderabad's safety is another standout feature. "This city allows me to

safety is another standout feature. "This city allows me to return home safely, even at 2 a.m.," she says. However, like every Hyderabadi, she admits to being frustrated by the traffic. "The roads can get really busy, but that's a small price to pay for living in such an incredible city."

for living in such an incredible city."

Deepa Kiran's journey from a nutritionist to a storyteller is a testament to embracing change and finding joy in one's passion. Hyderabad, with its warmth and vibrancy, continues to inspire her as tinues to inspire her as she weaves stories that leave a lasting impact.



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Saturday December 28, 2024

B'wood's fresh faces who stole the show

Abhay Verma, who previously

impressed audiences with his

performances in web series,



made a striking Bollywood debut this year. His lead role in the horror-comedy Munjya truly catapulted him into the limelight. Released in June 2024, Munjya became a commercial success, emerging as one of the highest-grossing Hindi films of the year. Verma's portrayal of the titular character was lauded for its charm and comedic timing, solidifying his status as a rising star in

Bollywood



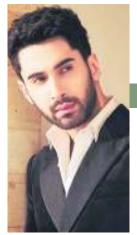
his first step into Bollywood with a compelling role that nahliahted his dedication to the craft in Maharaj. Steering away from the glitz of being a star kid, Junaid opted for a project that allowed him to prove his acting chops. His subtle yet mpactful performance resonated with audiences and critics alike, establishing him as an actor to watch.

PRATIBHA RANTA



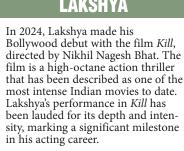
Pratibha Ranta made a remarkable breakthrough debut in 2024 with the film Laapataa Ladies, where she played the role of Jaya. This film, directed by Kiran Rao, has gained significant attention for its unique storytelling and Pratibha's portrayal has received praise for its depth and nuance. Her debut performance showcases her immense talent and sets the stage for a promising career

Carrying forward the Roshan legacy, Pashmina Roshan made her Bollywood debut with a heartwarming performance in *Ishq Vishk* Rebound. Hrithik Roshan's cousin brought grace, charm and a unique freshness to her role, leaving an impression on viewers. Her portrayal in her first film has sparked excitement about her potential and the roles she might take on in the future.



in the industry.

LAKSHYA





ANJINI DHAWAN



NITANSHI GOEL



Styles that endure

Platinum love band designs seam-lessly blend contemporary trends with timeless appeal. Sleek bands with brushed or polished finishes are perfect for those who prefer minimalist styles, while intricate designs featuring

styles to wear now and for always

add a touch of sophistication.

For couples seeking matching rings,

dual-tone platinum love bands with

complementing textures offer a mod-ern twist on tradition. Platinum's mal-

leability also makes it ideal for custom

designs, allowing wearers to create pieces that reflect their personal stories.

The ultimate choice for now and always

What makes platinum love bands

so special is their ability to remain rel-

evant across time. Platinum love bands are not only a reflection of the

wearer's present style but also a store

of value and meaning for the future.

As trends evolve, platinum's understated elegance and durability ensure it

continues to shine, making it the ultimate symbol of love and celebration.

(The author, Pallavi Sharma, is the Business Director – India, at Platinum Guild International.)

A shift in preferences: Why platinum? engraved patterns or pavé diamonds

The demand for platinum love bands has surged in recent years, driven by a new generation of buyers who value individuality and permanence. According to industry insights, platinum is increasingly favoured during not just weddings, but also to celebrate relationship milestones.

The reason for this is two-fold

Platinum is widely regarded as the ultimate symbol of love, celebrated for its rarity, purity and remarkable resilience. These qualities make it an exceptionally precious metal, often chosen to commemorate life's most significant milestones. Its natural white luster endures over time, maintaining its brilliance. This timeless appeal, coupled with the metal's intrinsic purity, makes platinum an ideal choice for rings that are worn daily, offering both luxury and practicality, while being gentle on the skin.

Further, its understated brilliance aligns perfectly with modern aesthetics

For weddings, platinum's strength and durability resonate deeply with the values of commitment and partnership. Many couples are choosing matching platinum wedding bands to symbolize their unity, while engagement rings set in platinum continue to be a popular choice for their abil-ity to enhance the brilliance of diamonds and gemstones.

Marking milestones with platinum

Platinum love bands are not just for weddings. They are increasingly chosen to celebrate significant milestones such as anniversaries, promotions, and personal achievements. The versatility of platinum allows for a variety of styles, from minimalist designs to intricate motifs, catering to every individual's taste. One of the key reasons behind this trend is the emotional value associated with platinum. Its rarity-30 times rarer than goldmakes it a unique and meaningful gift. Platinum also stands out for its purity, with most jewellery crafted from 95% pure platinum, a higher standard than other precious metals.

WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING JEWELLERY THAT IS AS ENDURING **AS THE MEMORIES IT** REPRESENTS. PLATINUM HAS BECOME THE PREFERRED **CHOICE FOR MANY.** FROM WEDDINGS AND **FESTIVE OCCASIONS TO EVERYDAY WEAR, PLATINUM LOVE BANDS OFFER UNMATCHED VERSATILITY AND** TIMELESS ELEGANCE. THE GROWING DEMAND **FOR PLATINUM IS A TESTAMENT TO ITS APPEAL AS A SYMBOL**

OF STRENGTH, RARITY

AND AUTHENTICITY

India collapse after Jaiswal's terrible run-out on day two of the fourth Test

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

familiar collapse unfolded After Yashasvi Jaiswal's inexplicable run-out as India stared down the barrel at 164/5 against a menacing Australia on day two of the fourth Test here on Friday.

Jaiswal, who was quite fluent during his 118-ball stay that yielded 82 runs, was way short of his crease after a mix-up with Virat Kohli (36) while attempting a quick single, handing Australia the breakthrough that could prove decisive.

India are still 310 runs behind Australia's first innings score of 474 and would need another 111 runs to avoid a follow-on that should never have been a consideration on a placid batting

It was 153 for 2 at one stage and in four overs, another three wickets fell with Gautam Gambhir's plan of sending a night watchman in Akash Deep turning out to be one of the many poor calls that the head coach has

taken in this game.
In a space of barely five minutes,

cricket showed its fickle nature as Jaiswal pushed towards mid-on and called for a quick single with an assured Kohli (36) at the other end. Kohli took a step and half before retreating.
Pat Cummins swooped the ball

and threw at the striker's end with a frustrated Jaiswal seen telling his idol "my call".

This moment will be one for posterity as Kohli looked down and perhaps felt that he could have at least said a loud "No" to allow Jaiswal to sprint back.

The run-out broke his concentration and for the first time after 85 balls, he poked a delivery bowled in the corridor of uncertainty and it was the end. Scott Boland repeated the dismissal that has been a norm for quite a while now. Akash Deep didn't have the technique to survive and the day ended in Australia's favour just like it started.

The Jaiswal-Kohli pair had added 102 runs and looked comfortable just like they did in the Perth second innings. The ball hardly did anything after Rohit Sharma (3) played a poor shot and KL



Rahul got a ripper from Pat Cummins. Jaiswal was in regal form, as he

cut, pulled, drove and lofted the

Australian bowlers stamping his authority as the next megastar of Indian batting. Kohli, at the other end, endured

boos for Thursday's run-in with debutant Sam Konstas

battled his demons This was after Steve Smith's 34th Test hundred ensured a very to be patient and waited for good total for hosts.

to be patient and waited for deliveries at the expense of

Starting the day at 311 for 6, Smith added 112 and 44 runs with Cummins (49) and Mitchell Starc (15) respectively, leaving the visitors searching for back-up

Jasprit Bumrah (4/99 in 28.4 oves) was once again brilliant despite the first spell thrashing from Konstas but Mohammed Siraj's ordinary showing (0/122 in 23 overs) was the primary reason for batters not being under any pressure.

Smith, who was unbeaten overnight on 68 off 111 balls, took another 56 deliveries in the second morning to complete a Test ton which placed him on even keel with the legendary Sunil Gavaskar (34).

The century came with a push drive through the vacant cover region and celebrations were pretty muted with a just vigorous head nod for his teammates in the dug-out.

played both days in contrasting styles. On Thursday, he was ready

looking ugly.
On Friday, the same batter was walking down the track to force the bowlers to alter their length. He was ready to pull and hook, getting two sixes off Bumrah and Siraj respectively.

Despite a significant drop in temperature and some nip in the air, Indians failed to make use of the semi-new Kookaburra, with lines going all awry and length being short enough to be punished. Cummins was allowed to settle down and hit seven boundaries.

The Indian ploy of playing two spinners backfired with Ravindra Jadeja (3/78 in 22 overs) and Washington Sundar (1/49 in 15 overs) never looking penetrative. For a change, Siraj didn't try and sledge an in-form batter, something that he did in Adelaide with some disastrous results.

But that didn't soften the Smith, who had a torrid run till Australian supporters, who the second Test of this series, constantly booed him and Kohli as and when the ball went to



India whitewash West Indies 3-0

PTI ■ VADODARA

Senior off-spinner Deepti Sharma did the star turn with career-best figures of 6/31 before doing her bit with the bat as India completed a 3-0 whitewash of the West Indies with a five-wicket victory in the final Women's ODI here on Friday.

Having bowled out West Indies for 162 after Deepti's superlative performance and pacer Renuka Singh's (4/29) excellent show with the new ball, India recovered after a top-order wobble to reach the target of 163 in 28.2 overs.

India were in a spot of bother at 73/4 but Deepti (39 not out in 48 balls) used all her experience to see the team through with plenty of overs

remaining.
S w a s h b u c k l i n g wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh was unbeaten on an 11-ball 23 when the winning runs were scored.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who eased nerves with two boundaries after last match centurion Harleen Deol's (1) dismissal left India at 23/2, blazed away to a 22-ball 32 before getting bowled by Afy Fletcher.

During her breezy knock, smashed seven Kaur boundaries and looked good for a big one before getting

dismissed. Mandhana (4) departed early Ashmini Munisar

completed a strange one-handed catch after appearing to have misjudged what should actually have been a straightforward catch off the bowling of Aaliyah Alleyne. Enjoying a good run of form in recent times, vice-captain Mandhana did not get to the pitch of the ball on the day

and paid the price.
One-down batter followed suit, nicking for a Deandra Dottin delivery way outside off-stump and got a faint edge that was taken by wicketkeeper Shemaine Campbelle.

Middle-order batter Jemimah Rodr chipped in with 29 off 45 balls.

Earlier, Renuka Thakur tormented West Indies with a fiery opening spell before Deepti got into the act to bowl out the visitors cheaply. Thakur and Deepti were relentless with the ball, taking all 10 wickets between them. Thakur's accurate line and length dismantled the top order, while Deepti deceived the West Indies batters with flight and guile, recording her third ODI fivewicket haul and second sixwicket performance.

West Indies fought back with a 97-run partnership between Chinelle Henry (61) and Shemaine Campbelle (46), helping them to cross 160. Without this stand, the visitors might have been bowled out for less than 100. In-form opener Smriti Both batted really well and were aggressive against the

Tendulkar, Sindhu among sporting stars to pay tributes to Manmohan Singh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Stalwarts of Indian sports paid rich tributes to former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who died on Thursday. describing him as a visionary, who had quiet strength and humility.
Singh died here after losing

consciousness at his home due to age-related ailments. He was

"Rest in peace, Dr. Manmohan Singhji. His quiet strength, wisdom, and humility were truly inspiring. I had a brief interaction with him in 2013 he was kind, gracious, and left a lasting impression. My heartfelt condolences to his family," wrote India's ace shuttler Sindhu on 'X'. Cricket great Sachin Tendulkar

termed Singh's demise as a huge loss for the country. "Dr Manmohan Singh ji's demise is a profound loss for India. His contributions to our nation shall always be remembered. My prayers are with his family and loved ones as we mourn his passing away." Legendary golfer Jeev Milkha



simplicity and humility, saying he was committed to national duty all his life.

"Dr Manmohan Singh was probably one of the most humble men I had met in my life - a simple and extremely intelligent man. His sense of duty and responsibility shone through. The world has lost a visionary," wrote Jeev. On Friday, both the men's and

women's cricket teams wore black armbands during their respective national assignments to pay homage to the former PM.

Earlier, World Cup-winning former cricketer Yuvraj Singh called Singh a "true statesman". A visionary leader and a true statesman who worked tirelessly for India's progress. His wisdom and humility will always be remembered. My heartfelt condolences to his loved ones," Yuvraj Singh posted on X.

Similar sentiments were expressed by his former teammate and Aam Aadmi Party's Rajya Sabha member Harbhajan Singh, who described Singh as a thorough gentleman and visionary leader.

What truly set him apart was his calm and steady leadership in times of crisis, his ability to navigate complex political

and landscapes. unwavering belief in India's potential," he wrote. It was during Singh's second term that India hosted the

2010 Commonwealth Games in the national capital. It was the first international multisport extravaganza to be held in the country after the 1982 Asian Games, also hosted by Delhi.

He had also inaugurated the National Football League's 11th edition in Kolkata back in 2005 when late Congress leader Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi was heading the All India Football Federation. Former wrestler Vinesh Phogat, who is now a Congress MLA in Haryana, called Singh a man of "extraordinary wisdom, simplicity and vision."

"Dr. Manmohan Singh was not just a Prime Minister, but he was a thinker, economist and a true patriot. His calm leadership style and economic vision gave the country a new direction, from the 1991 economic reforms establishing India's reputation on the global stage.



PTI ■ MELBOURNE

batting ustralian Amainstay Steve Smith always knew that he was "out of runs" but never "out of form" as he got back-to-back Test hundreds against India within a week of each other after 18 months of lull.

Having scored his 33rd ton in Brisbane, Smith equalled Sunil Gavaskar's then world record of 34 hundreds on the second day of the fourth Test at the MCG on Friday.
Asked how did he chug along

all these days when big runs were not coming that easily, Smith dived deep into his inner core.

"Sometimes you can be hitting the ball really nicely, which I think I said to all you guys when I wasn't scoring the runs. I actually felt like I was batting pretty well. And there's a difference, I think, between being out of form and out of runs. So, yeah, I thought I was hitting the ball nicely," Smith said at the dayend press conference here. "I mean, you've got to have

faith. You've got to have a bit of trust in what you're trying to do. I've played the game for long enough now to know that you can have your ups and downs. Having some

faith and confidence," said the man, who is expected to get to 10,000 Test runs before the five-match series concludes.

"I think you need a lot of luck on these wickets to get big runs as well, the ones we're playing at the moment. And last week I had my fair share. I think I got an umpire's call and got on numerous occasions as to on other days, I would nick

'So, yeah, you need a bit of luck. But you've just got to have faith that you're going to turn it around."

Australia's batting was a lot more aggressive on the second day after resuming on overnight 311 for six but Smith said that while batting with Pat Cummins, there was no "general plan" as such.

"There wasn't really a general plan. It was just go out there and play. Yeah, there wasn't a real plan. It was just go out and play and see what's going on. I thought Patty (Cummins) played really nicely. Really good, positive intent. "We were able to get a nice

partnership together and take a bit of the momentum of the game from that point, I suppose.

Chennaiyin FC aim to return to winning ways training after receiving knocks.

PTI CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC will be aiming to rebound to winning form and finish the year on a positive note when they face Bengaluru FC in the Indian Super league here on Saturday. In the day's other game, Hyderabad FC will host East Bengal FC with an aim to

recalled Singh's

turn things around and halt the visitors' momentum.

Chennaiyin and Bengaluru have played each other 15 times in the ISL, with the former winning four matches. This corresponding fixture last year produced a 2-0 win for the Marina Machans and head coach Owen Coyle will be eyeing the same this time.

However, the tactician will be without captain Ryan Edwards, who is suspended for the match, and is expected to field an all-Indian backline. Bengaluru come into the match as the



second-placed side in the league, and Coyle is wary of the threat they carry, especially with the team missing key personnel.

On the availability front, Coyle confirmed that he will take late calls on Wilmar Jordan Gil and Ankit Mukherjee, both of whom are back in

The head coach also revealed that Elsinho, who left the pitch under medical care in the previous home match, is recovering in his native Brazil and will be rejoining the squad in the new year. Task cut out for HFC in Hyderabad This will be the ninth ISL meeting

between the two sides, with East Bengal FC aiming to continue their recent dominance over Hyderabad FC. East Bengal FC have won their last two ISL matches against Hyderabad FC, including a league double in the 2023-24

season. Meanwhile, Hyderabad FC will look to bounce back after a disappointing run that has seen them lose their last five

matches in the league on a trot. The Red & Gold brigade has managed a turnaround in the previous five matches, winning four of those clashes.

Arjun Erigaisi tied fifth after first day of World Rapid Chess Championship in New York PTI ■ NEW YORK share the fifth spot on four points black pieces.

Indian Grandmaster Arjun Erigaisi opened his campaign with four wins and a solitary loss in the World Rapid Chess Championship to be tied fifth even as defending champion Magnus Carlsen endured a frustrating day, managing to log

just one victory here.
Carlsen of Norway could not find his mojo drew three games and a late loss against Russian Denis Lazavik. Another Indian to impress was 13-year-old Raunak Sadhwani, who provided glimpse of his promise by taking down one of pre-event favourites Alireza Firouzja of France on

Thursday.
With the first five rounds done and eight more still to come in USD 550,000 championship, Murzin Volodar of Russia, Shant Sargsyan of Armenia and the American duo of Daniel Naroditsky and Lenier Dominguez Perez share the lead

on 4.5 points apiece. Arjun and Sadhwani are in the next group of 11 players who

each. It is an impressive list that includes the likes of Hikaru Nakamura of United States, Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan and Anish Giri of Holland.

In the Women's section being played simultaneously, local star Alice Lee stole the opening day thunder with four straight

victories in as many games. The American is challenged by world champion Wenjun Ju of China, her compatriot Zhongyi Tan, Gunay Mammadzada of Azerbaijan, Nino Batsiashvili of Georgia and India's D Harika who all have 3.5 points to their

With seven rounds to come in the women's event, R Vaishali could also among the ones to watch out for from an Indian perspective as the Chennai-based is on three points.

Highest rated and former winner Koneru Humpy could manage only 2.5 points and has a lot of catching up to do in the remainder of the event. Arjun, if he wins this Currently the Indian stands



championship, will be the first player to go through to the Candidates, a cycle that started early this year and will continue till December 2025.

second behind Fabiano Caruana of United States who is on 3.5 points. He got things pretty much right except the sole defeat he suffered against Samuel Sevian of United States in the third round.

With four victories under his belt, Arjun can be a real threat. The day, however, belonged to Sadhwani who found his magical touch as early as in round two when he tackled Firouza with the section, 13 rounds will be played. In blitz, the top eight will qualify

The position seemed headed to

equal when Sadhwani punched his way back keeping an eye on a weak white pawn with his centralised knight. The knight darted through the board creating another hole on the king side that forced a resignation. Harika was the pick of the Indian

women as she came up with a crushing victory against Nataliya Zhukova of Ukraine with the white pieces in her fourth-round

Harika picked up pawns at will in a Queen and opposite coloured Bishops endgame and registered a smooth victory in a game that lasted 70 moves.

The rapid event has a time control of 15 minutes for the entire game with 10 seconds added after each move is played. This will be followed by the blitz championship that will have three minutes for both players with just two seconds increment. The women's event is spread over 11 rounds while in the open section, 13 rounds will be played.

and determine the medallists through a knockout stage.

Standings after round 5 open: 1-4: Shant Sargsyan (Arm); Lenier Dominguez Perez (Usa); Daniel Naroditsky (Usa), Murzin Volodar (FID); 5-15: Arju Erigaisi, Raunak Sadhwani (both Javokhir Sindarov, Ind); Javokhir Sindarov, Nodirbek Abdusattorov (both Uzb); Duda Jan-Kryzstof (Pol) Anish Giri (Ned); Levon Aronian, Hikaru Nakamura, Ray Robson, Samuel Sevian (All USA); NOgerbek Kazybek (Kaz) 3.5 each

Indians: V Pranav (3.5); R Indians: V rianav (3.5), Praggnanandhaa (3); Aravindh Chithambaram (2); Kartik Venkatramanan, Sandipan

Chanda (1.5) each; Standings after round 4 Women: 1. 2-5Alice Lee (Usa, 4); 2-6: D Harika, (Ind); Nino Batsiashvili (Geo); Gunay Mammadzada (Aze); Wenjun Ju (Chn); Zhongyi Tan (Chn) 3.5 each:

Indians: R Vaishali (3); Vantika Agarwal, Koneru Humpy (2.5 each); Sahiti Varshini, Divya Deshmukh (2 each); Padmini Rout (1.5).

Vijayawada | Saturday December 28, 2024

Thammareddy slams Allu Arjun; holds him responsible for industry's apology to CM

Producer and director. Thammareddy Bharadwaj. criticised Allu Arjun for the manner in which he went to watch *Pushpa 2*, accompanied by a huge convoy and waving to the public. He stated that because of this mistake, the entire industry is now bowing down before the Chief Minister with folded hands. He attributed the situation to one man's ego and

error.

PNS|HYDERABAD

roducer and director Thammareddy Bharadwaj, known for his straightforward approach to addressing issues, has now spoken about the incident involving Allu Arjun and its repercussions on the film industry. He heavily criticised the actor's actions and how they have allegedly led the entire industry to bow down before the Chief Minister.

"Who is responsible and what circumstances have led to the industry now bowing down to a Chief Minister?" questioned Thammareddy Bharadwaj. He specifically criticised Allu Arjun for the way he went to watch *Pushpa 2*. Thammareddy expressed disapproval of the actor's decision to visit the theater with a massive convoy of cars and to wave to the crowds, calling it unnecessary.

calling it unnecessary.

"Earlier, many stars like Chiranjeevi, Nagarjuna and Balakrishna watched films quietly in multiplexes and returned home without any fanfare. But now, I don't know who advised Allu Arjun to watch a film in such a manner, especially at Sandhya Theatre, which is very congested. He didn't go silently. Messages were circulated on social media about his visit, and he

created a huge commotion there," said
Thammareddy on his
YouTube channel.
The producer and
director also criticised the people
advising Allu
Arjun, stating,
"Even if they
advised him, he

thought for himself before making such a decision. If he wanted to watch the film, he could have gone quietly before the screening started and left silently. Such incidents could have been avoided."

Allu Arjun mentioned in a media briefing, not long ago that he aims to take Telugu cinema to an international level but lamented that some people are not supporting him. Thammareddy criticised these remarks, saying, "Don't claim you made this film for the country. You made it for yourself. Many great films, like *Dangal*, have achieved massive success because they were genuinely good films. If you look at the story of *Pushpa 2*, the police officer, who is actually a good person in the film, is projected as the villain. His role is to catch the thief (Pushpa), but the narrative turns him into a villain."

Thammareddy also criticised the people surrounding the actor, stating, "They are giving him wrong advice. Today, the entire industry is standing before the Chief Minister with folded hands and this is all because of Allu Arjun's mistake. He didn't commit a crime like murder, but knowingly or unknowingly, he made a mistake during his roadshow."

"Fans show their love for you. They spend a lot of money on your films despite their financial struggles and are willing to do anything for you. Yet, you end up making mistakes that harm them. Whether this mistake was made on his own or due to someone's influence, I don't know, but it was a mistake. To cover up this mistake, he lied and now, because of his ego, the entire industry is facing problems in front of the Chief Minister," said Thammareddy. "For a single person's mistake,

the entire industry is now suffering," he added.

Thammareddy further criticised the mentality of seeking publicity. "You earn money and if you want to help others, you can. If not, that's your choice. But you cannot harm people. When you feel the need to prove you are not a normal person through publicity stunts, these incidents occur. If you consider yourself a normal person,

these situations can be avoided," he stated. He also raised concerns about bouncers and their handling of the public.

"I don't know how many of these bouncers are genuine or who certified them," questioned Thammareddy.



n Thursday, Telangana Film Development Corporation
Chairman Dil Raju led a delegation of the Telugu film
industry to meet Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.
Prominent film personalities such as K. Raghavendra Rao, Suresh
Babu, Murali Mohan, K.L. Narayana, Shyam Prasad Reddy,
Nagarjuna, Venkatesh and many others attended this meeting.
However, the absence of Mega Star Chiranjeevi and any actor from
the Mega family raised many eyebrows.
Reports suggest that Chiranjeevi was in Chennai on Thursday and

therefore couldn't attend the meeting. There are also speculations that his absence was deliberate, as he chose not to be in Hyderabad to avoid attending the meeting. Adding to this, some reports claim that Chiranjeevi, rumoured to be leaning closer to the BJP, may have intentionally distanced himself from the Congress-affiliated Chief Minister of Telangana.

Interestingly, it wasn't just Chiranjeevi who was missing; no actor from the Mega family attended the meeting either. Sai Dharam Tej, known to have a good rapport with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, was notably absent. Similarly, Ram Charan, Varun

Tej, Vaishnav Tej and Nagababu were also missing, leaving the Mega family entirely unrepresented. Even Allu Aravind, who is no longer seen as part of the Mega compound, did not attend. This lack of participation from the Mega family has sparked intense debate within the industry since Thursday. Adding to the intrigue, Chiranjeevi was reportedly back in Hyderabad on the same day and was seen attending a wedding that evening. It's worth noting that this is not the first instance where the Mega family's absence has raised questions. When Allu

Arjun was released from
Chanchalguda Jail and
returned home, many industry
members visited him to show
their support. However, none
of the Mega actors were
among them, further
highlighting the ongoing
distance within the family.



ALLU ARJUN'S SUDDEN VISIT LEAVES CHIRU STUNNED

After his release from Chanchalguda Jail, Allu Arjun reportedly visited Chiranjeevi and Nagababu. "Chiranjeev had no prior knowledge of Allu Arjun's visit. Arjun went directly to Chiranjeevi's house, leaving him with no option but to welcome him since he is his nephew," revealed a source close to Chiranjeevi. Interestingly, Allu Arjun arrived at Chiranjeevi's residence with media personnel and his PR team. He even drove himself and deliberately rolled down the car window to ensure everyone could see him at Chiranjeevi's house. "This act put Chiranjeevi in an embarrassing situation," the source added.

The same scenario unfolded at Nagababu's house. "Neither of

the brothers had any clue about Aliu Arjun's visit," said the source. However, the visits were strategically planned, as Aliu Arjun aimed to convey the message that any differences between him and the Mega family has been resolved. "Chiranjeevi was genuinely shocked when Arjun showed up unannounced," the source further revealed. These developments have added to the ongoing speculations and discussions about the strained dynamics within the Mega family.

'Dream Catcher is a psychological

nother thriller is on the way to hit the screens on January 3. *Dream Catcher* is the title and it is directed and produced by Sandeep Kakula with Prashanth Krishna and Aneesha Dama as the lead pair. It is a psychological thriller and the

thriller'

director says it gives something new to the audience.

"My dream was to make a film and this *Dream Catcher* started with the idea of creating a film about dreams. Hollywood films like *Inception* were my inspiration," said the director Sandeep Kakula. He wanted to attempt something at a Hollywood level with this one and he shot this film entirely in Hyderabad. "After seeing the trailer, people are asking where the film was shot. I can confidently say that no film based on dreams has been released in Telugu until now," said the director. He added in this film he didn't put any song or action scenes, as he focused only on the story. The director feels that he never wanted to release it on OTT. "I believe if we made a good film, it would be appreciated anywhere." he said.

Lead actor Prashanth Krishna said that director Sandeep called him for an audition for this film four years back. "He made this film with passion, involving everyone in the team. This film will give you a fresh experience as a psychological thriller," said Prashanth. After the trailer, he received compliments that he resembles Adivi Sesh and Rana. "They are both incredible actors and self-made stars. I'm happy to be compared to such talented and passionate actors," said Prashanth.





Jr NTR champions road safety in Andhra Pradesh

If you've watched Jr NTR's recent films, you might have noticed a heartfelt video about road safety and accident prevention that plays before the main feature begins. This message holds deep personal significance for the actor, as he lost both his elder brother, Janaki Ram and his father, Hari Krishna, in road accidents. Jr NTR frequently emphasises road safety, often requesting his fans at public events to drive safely and return home to their families.

Now, his impactful message has transcended cinema screens and reached the streets of Andhra Pradesh. In a pioneering initiative, the Andhra Pradesh government has adopted Jr NTR's iconic road safety message, incorporating it into traffic signals across the state. This poignant message, which plays at major intersections, serves as a vital reminder:

"Drive safe and don't speed, risking your life because your family is waiting for you. There have been a couple of tragedies in my family that claimed my father's and brother's lives. Such things should not happen to anyone. Be careful." This unprecedented move highlights the government's recognition of Jr NTR's influence and their trust in his ability to inspire change. The actor's sincere words now echo at major traffic signals, underscoring his role as not just a cinematic icon but also a voice of care and responsibility.

Drinker Sai feels like watching the Mukesh ad on repeat for two hours

REVIEW

SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

he year 2024 concluded with the release of a small film titled *Drinker Sai* on December 27. This film features upcoming actor Dharma Kakani in the lead role, while Aishwarya Sharma makes her debut as the female lead. Despite being a small-budget film, the makers promoted it well. Directed by debutant Kiran Tirumalasetti, the film attempts to deliver a message but falls short in execution. Here's a breakdown of the story and

Story:

its performance.

Sai, also known as Drinker Sai (played by Dharma Kakani), is a wealthy young man who becomes alcoholic after the death of his parents. His days revolve around drinking incessantly, picking fights, and relying on his uncle (Srikanth Iyengar) to bail him out of trouble. One day, Sai is hit by the bike of a medical student, Bhagi (Aishwarya Sharma), who leaves the scene without much ado. Seeking revenge, Sai confronts her the next day, only to fall in love with her. However, Bhagi, disapproving of Sai's drinking habits, pretends to reciprocate his love. When Sai discovers that Bhagi doesn't actually love him, he is devastated. The rest of the story explores Sai's attempts to win Bhagi's love, the challenges he faces, and the lessons he learns.

ne races, an

Director Kiran Tirumalasetti presents a story that, while based on a real incident, offers nothing new or engaging. The narrative feels like an extended version of the mandatory two-minute anti-smoking and anti-alcohol message that precedes every film. Unfortunately, the same message is stretched into a two-and-a-half-hour movie, with little innovation or depth. Rather than spending resources on this film, the makers could have opted for a social awareness campaign on the ill effects of smoking and drink-

The first half of the film revolves around Sai's drinking habits and his growing infatuation with Bhagi. The plot is interspersed with songs and lackluster scenes, making it a tedious watch. The second half introduces the "Vanthena" episode, which is a spoof of Manthena Satyanarayana and his Nature Cure Hospital. These sequences are immature, uninspired and fail to generate any interest.

As anticipated, the film concludes with the predictable message: "Smoking and alcohol are injurious to health." While the intention is commendable, the execution is unimaginative, making the film an ordinary watch with a foregone conclusion.

Performances:

Dharma Kakani, in his second film, delivers a decent performance and looks handsome on screen. He exudes confidence and ease in his acting, indicating potential for a bright future. However, without a compelling story, his efforts feel underutilized. Aishwarya Sharma, as the female lead, performs well for a debutante but has significant room for improvement.

Srikanth Iyengar and Posani Krishna Murali offer notable performances, but their roles don't leave a lasting impact. Bhadram's comedy

falls flat and adds nothing to the film, while the rest of the cast, including Rithu Chowdhary, have minimal roles.

Technical Aspects:

The film's music is subpar and fails to elevate the narrative. The cinematography is average, and the dialogues are unimpressive. Despite the efforts of the cast and crew, the overall technical execution lacks finesse.

Verdict:

Drinker Sai could easily have been a two-minute short film akin to "The Mukesh Story," but instead, it drags its message into a tedious two-and-a-half-hour runtime. The second half, particularly the "Vanthena" episode, is unnecessarily prolonged and monotonous. While the film aims to deliver a social message, it does so in an uninspired and predictable manner. The year 2024 ends on a dull note with this routine and forgettable film.

Cast: Kakani Dharma, Aishwarya Sharma, Posani Krishna Murali, SS Kanchi, Srikanth Iyengar, Bhadram and others

Music director: Sri Vasanth Cinematographer: Prashanth Ankireddy

Producers: Basavaraju Srinivas, Ismail shaik and Basavaraju laharidhar

