

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

A settlement has taken place between the Congress and the BRS and KTR's arrest will go to 'Kanchi.' The phone tapping case, the Kaleshwaram scam, the Formula E-Car Race scam, the Dharani scam and all other scams have gone to the wind. It is shameful on the part of the Congress Government not to arrest KTR even after knowing that KTR was behind the attack on the Vikarabad Collector. The inability to arrest KTR exposes the Revanth Reddy Government's inefficiency

- Bandi Sanjay Kumar, Union Minister



'India accords priority to partnership with Nigeria'


5



KARANVIR SHARMA

TAPPING REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCE FOR EMOTIONAL CONNECTIVITY

9



'Devaki Nandana Vasudeva and Murari are poles apart,' clarifies Arjun

JANDYALA

PTI

DON'T MISS...

Health dept to fill 4,998 posts

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha has cautioned unemployed individuals not to fall a prey to fraudsters claiming to secure jobs in the Health department. He assured that the recruitment process is conducted with complete transparency and detailed that recruitment process is going on for 4,998 posts. The Minister highlighted that over 7,000 positions in the Medical and Health Services have ...

-PAGE: 3

Prof gets student's head shaved

A faculty member in charge of the Anti-Ragging Committee at Khammam Government Medical College has found himself in an embarrassing situation. He is now accused of not only ragging a first-year MBBS student but also forcing him to shave his head. He is now facing disciplinary action. The first-year student, hailing from Mulugu district reported that he had been mocked by his seniors over his hairstyle, which they claimed ...

-PAGE: 4

Shah reviews security situation in Manipur

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday reviewed the security situation in Manipur and directed top officials to take all possible steps to ensure peace in the Northeastern state, sources said. Shah held the meeting soon after he returned from Maharashtra after cancelling his election rallies there. The home minister reviewed the situation in Manipur with top security officials and directed them to take all possible steps to ensure peace, the sources said. Shah is expected to hold another detailed meeting ...

-PAGE: 5

India's free trade pacts not paused

Negotiations for all the proposed free trade agreements, including those with the UK and European Union (EU), are progressing as per the schedule and the country's FTAs are not paused, a top government official has said. The official said that an impression is going around that FTAs are paused, which is not correct. "All our FTAs, whether it is with the EU or UK, all are progressing as per the schedule," the official said. In the coming weeks, a bilateral meeting is scheduled between the ...

-PAGE: 8

Follow rules to get MSP

Minister Tummala asks farmers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao asked farmers to follow rules concerning the drying and cleaning of paddy to get the Minimum Support Price for their paddy. Tummala visited the



IKP Centre in Tekumatla village on NH-65 in Suryapet district on Sunday and examined the paddy procurement process. He explained to farmers the steps to be taken by them while selling their paddy. The farmers responded to Tummala's question about how many bags of paddy they produce per acre by saying that they produce 40 to 60 bags of paddy depending on the land, seed and weather conditions. The Minister said this year the paddy harvest is good due to the grace of God and that the government is taking all steps to provide minimum support price to their produce. He asked farmers not to set fire to paddy fields after harvest as the land will lose its fertility. It is better to plough with a cultivator immediately after harvesting, he said.

Kishan is now an enemy of TG, says CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that Telangana BJP chief G. Kishan Reddy who hailed the Sabarmati Riverfront Project of Gujarat for which 50,000 people were shifted, has been opposing the Musi Project of

Telangana. He said that Kishan has become a slave of his Gujarat masters and an enemy of Telangana like Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar who had become enemies of Maharashtra. The CM said that the cleaning of the Ganga and Sabarmati rivers

was a great achievement for Kishan and declared that whatever the BJP leaders do the TG Government will clean the Musi River. The CM said the Gujarat model will fail if the country comes to know about the Congress model.

Rs.3 lakh loan waiver if Cong wins Maha elections: Revanth

Terms Eknath Shinde, Ajith Pawar, Ashok Chawan as betrayers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the Congress will waive farm loans up to Rs 3 lakh taken by farmers if it wins in Maharashtra.

Addressing the media at Solapur on Sunday, Revanth said that the Telangana Government waived loans taken by farmers amounting to Rs 18,000 crore in just 50 days.

He said the Congress government in Telangana is also implementing the free travel facility in TGSRTC buses for women along with the waiving of farm loans.

The TG government is also giving LPG cylinders for Rs 500 and



Telangana CM A Revanth Reddy addressing the media at Solapur on Sunday

free power supply up to 200 units, he said.

Revanth said that Maharashtra is the land of warriors like Chatrapathi Shivaji, Jyothiba Phule, BR Ambedkar, Bala Saheb Thackeray, Sharad Pawar and many others but now the leaders like

Eknath Shinde, Ajith Pawar and Ashok Chawan have turned 'betrayers.' They have become 'slaves of Gujarat,' he added.

Revanth took part in the Congress campaign in Nayagaon, Bhoker and Nanded on Sunday.

He said that Prime Minister Modi

will 'stand first' in the nation if a competition is held in speaking lies. He said that the family of Bala Saheb Thackeray made Eknath Shinde, who was an auto-rick driver a Minister. Sharad Pawar made Ajith Pawar

Continued on Page 2

'BRS lies about Kaleshwaram exposed'

CM Revanth says TG sets record paddy harvest without the project

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS's lie that the Kaleshwaram Project has increased paddy cultivation area in Telangana has been debunked with the paddy yield increasing without the Kaleshwaram Project, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said in a post on X on Sunday.

"The BRS's false propaganda that the Kaleshwaram Project has increased the area under paddy cultivation in Telangana has been debunked. The Medigadda Barrage which is a part of the Kaleshwaram Project sagged. As per the instructions of NDSA, water was not stored in the Annaram and Sundilla

Barrages either. But for the first time after the formation of Telangana, without the Kaleshwaram Project,

the paddy harvest touched record levels. This is the glory of Telangana farmers, the result of their hard

A milestone in paddy production

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana has achieved a rare national milestone in paddy production during the Kharif season, by producing 153 lakh tonnes of paddy from 66.77 lakh acres. This level of production is unparalleled, both in the history of United Andhra Pradesh and in the post-

formation years of Telangana. Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy commended the achievement, calling it a rare and extraordinary feat in India's agricultural history. He emphasised that this success stands out as a national record in paddy cultivation. Continued on Page 2

work, sweat and toil. Telangana farmers are the pride of our country. My heartfelt congratulations to all our farmers for achieving this feat," the CM said in his post on X. It may be recalled that the BRS Government claimed that Telangana had become the country's rice bowl after the construction of the Kaleshwaram Project. The BRS has been claiming that Telangana is producing record quantities of paddy due to the Kaleshwaram Project. However, this year, the Congress Government did not store water in the Medigadda Barrage or the Annaram and Sundilla Barrages due to the sagging of the Medigadda Barrage.

Rahul's fight against Adani & Ambani is fake: KTR

Alleges BJP leaders shielding Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's fight against Adanis and Ambanis is fake, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said. He criticised Rahul Gandhi's stand against land acquisition in a post on X on Sunday.

"Rahul, what is the use if you raise your voice against land acquisition? What is the use of attacking Adani and Ambani? You oppose land acquisition across the country. Why can't you stop the land acquisition in Telangana? Why is Kodangal the cause of farmers' tears? You say you are fighting Adani and Ambanis. Why did your government allow the Adani factory at Ramannapet in Telangana? Telangana is a Congress-ruled state. Why didn't you object? I'll act as I hit you and you act like crying. Is this your secret in conspiracy politics? Or is it a business tie-up between Revanth and Adani? Your fight against Adani and Ambanis is fake," KTR said in his post.

In another tweet, KTR said that BJP leaders are functioning as a protective shield for Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

"BJP leaders are providing a protective shield for Revanth Reddy. This dark politics is intended to save friends. Wow, the play of thieves together! Dear Kishan Reddy, have you heard the cries of Musi victims? Is it not an act of diversion intended to deflect attention from the Lagacharla incident? If you were the first to welcome HYDRAA, we said that we would stop the bulldozers! You were the first to congratulate Revanth. We reassured the victims of Musi. What is the reason behind suddenly remembering Musi victims? Whom to save? Whom to drown? Is it to deceive anyone else? These diversionary dramas are intended to save Revanth. The Telangana people are observing the BJP's pol'itricks' and they will teach you a lesson at an appropriate time," KTR posted.



Rahul, what is the use if you raise your voice against land acquisition? What is the use of attacking Adani and Ambani? You oppose land acquisition across the country



Secretariat's Bahubali gate removed

3

'Musi Nidra aimed at protecting KTR'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP conducted its 'Musi Nidra' programme on Saturday night only to protect BRS Working President KT Rama Rao, TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said.

He said that the BJP and the BRS were enacting dramas regarding the Musi Project to protect KTR and that the opposition of some people to the Musi Project is a creation of the BRS.

"Why should the opposition come against the Congress

Government as it is ruling well," he said and added that KTR was exposed in the Lagacharla incident.

Speaking to the media at the Gandhi Bhavan here on Sunday, Mahesh said that the BJP and the BRS are helping each other. The BJP enacted the Musi Nidra drama only to divert attention from the allegations against KTR, he said.

Mahesh asked the opposition to support the decision of the Chief Minister regarding the Musi Project. He said that the TG government is not a bulldozer government like the one in Uttar Pradesh. He said that UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath follows the directions of Prime Minister Modi and that the TG government will accept suggestions regarding the Musi Project. The CM, Revanth Reddy, is trying to keep Hyderabad in the list of the world's top cities, he said.

He demanded that BJP leaders should reveal what they saw by spending a night Continued on Page 2

Business bond between KCR & Revanth's family: Bandi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"There are business ties between former KCR and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's family and I will prove that. Is the KCR family ready to leave politics? If it is proved that I and Revanth Reddy have business ties I will quit politics," Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said.

He said that KCR and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy have business ties and that is why KCR's family members are not arrested although Congress leaders have levelled several allegations against KCR and his family before the Assembly elections.

"A settlement has taken place between the Congress and the BRS and KTR's arrest will go to 'Kanchi.' The phone tapping case, the Kaleshwaram scam, the Formula E-Car Race scam, the Dharani scam and all other scams have gone to the

Says govt must ban BRS as it is destructive



Union Minister Bandi Sanjay speaking ... e media at Sangareddy on Sunday

wind. It is shameful on the part of the Congress Government not to arrest KTR even after knowing that KTR was behind the attack on the

Vikarabad Collector. The inability to arrest KTR exposes the Revanth Reddy Government's inefficiency," Sanjay said.

Addressing the media at Sangareddy on Sunday, Sanjay said that the RK (Revanth Reddy & KTR) combination is running the state and that the attacks are just a ploy to divert attention from the problems of farmers.

"The BRS is a subversive party. The BRS is playing with the lives by carrying out attacks. The BRS tried to create destruction through the protests organised by the BJP regarding the recruitment of constables and Group-I services. The government should ban the BRS. People should think about facts," Sanjay said.

Responding to a question, Sanjay said that there is no possibility of Kishan Reddy handing over the responsibilities of the Telangana BJP President.

PM Modi receives Nigeria's second-highest national award



PNS ■ ABUJA

Nigeria on Sunday conferred its national award - the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger - on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his statesmanship and stellar con-

tribution to fostering bilateral ties, making him the second foreign dignitary to receive the distinction.

In a ceremony at the State House, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu conferred the national award on Prime Minister Modi. 2

KTR for Delhi today to complain about Lagacharla incident

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao is going to New Delhi once again. It is learnt that KTR is going to New Delhi on Monday and will file a complaint with the National SC, ST Commission on the Lagacharla issue along with the farmers who became victims in the recent Lagacharla incident.

The farmers and other pharma company victims went to New Delhi on Sunday. KTR will go to New Delhi on Monday and file a complaint with the SC, ST Commission along with the farmers alleging that the police arrested many farmers of Lagacharla village. It may be recalled that the farmers of the Lagacharla village had allegedly

Continued on Page 2

Adversity or positivity, political moves matter

The mindset of politicians is beyond anybody's comprehension. Even the best of minds cannot come near their typical mindset as it wanders in the wilderness of opportunities. They catch hold of what may benefit them and avoid anything that can be detrimental to them. The 'Be a Roman in Rome' syndrome prevails in Indian politics. Politicians are very assimilative and adaptable to any adversity or positivity irrespective of their earlier stance or anything.

South India is the cradle bearer of regional parties nationwide with Tamil Nadu standing in the forefront. Later, United Andhra Pradesh came second with movie legend NT Rama Rao coming to power just nine months after launching his Telugu Desam Party. The long neglect of regional interests helped the proliferation of regional parties. Some parties led by regionally unyielding

leaders like KCR achieved separate states using popular sentiment. The popular sentiment, regional aspirations, and above all political realities worked well then and the respective leaders came to power and ruled states.

As is said there is a saturation point for any kind of sentiment and the same may not work well on all occasions and treading the same may not work well for the same leaders. Taking a cue of the emerging political realities, K. Chandrasekhar Rao abruptly changed the name of TRS to Bharat Rashtra Samathi (BRS) to reach out to other states. He even campaigned in other states during the last elections. But things did not go well for him despite discarding the regional sentiment. He lost the last Assembly elections in Telangana. Revanth Reddy, who was reared in the Telugu Desam Party, later joined the BRS, left it to join the Congress, and led

As is said there is a saturation point for any kind of sentiment and the same may not work well on all occasions and treading the same may not work well for the same leaders. Taking a cue of the emerging political realities, K. Chandrasekhar Rao abruptly changed the name of TRS to Bharat Rashtra Samathi (BRS) to reach out to other states

it to power in Telangana by defeating the BRS. In a political maneuver that speaks a lot about leaders changing their stands as political realities demand, the Telangana Chief Minister asked Muslims not to vote for regional parties. This makes sense in changing circumstances and shows the pragmatism of politicians.

Here, particularly in the Indian political context and from the perspective of politicians the adage 'Nothing is permanent except change' works well as far as realising intended

goals are concerned. There have been only a few regional parties and regionally strong leaders who stuck to their ideological mindset despite the prospect of losing power to national parties. And the remaining regional parties tend to change their outlook to gain political mileage and ensure their survival in their respective states.

Although the BRS changed its name to ensure a national perspective it did not gain in the TG Assembly elections and is now virtually facing a situation that no regionally strong party



BUDDHAVARAPU RAJESWARA PRASAD
brajeswararasad1@gmail.com

have faced so far. There is no chance for it to join the BJP or the Congress in the situation that exists in Telangana. Its regional rise was due to its opposition to other parties although it helped in the formation of a separate Telangana state. The Congress, then in power proposed it and the

then-opposition BJP did not oppose it. Ironically both the parties did not have any political advantage in the elections held after the formation of a separate Telangana state. The TRS led by K. Chandrasekhar Rao reaped the political dividends and ruled the state for a decade and lost power due to many reasons, including the changed mindset of the people. The Congress is in power now and the BJP is gradually gaining political ground. The unexpected change in the political situation in Telangana has thrown the BRS into a dilemma, and it is unable to sustain itself due to many challenges which include corruption allegations and the Revanth admin ordering a probe into many of them.

Facing changing realities, the BRS supreme is said to have considered changing his party's name to TRS again as the BRS did not hold any sentimental value for the Telangana people.

Now that thinking also, it seems, has taken a back seat as there has been no inkling of it.

The Telugu Desam Party led by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, realised this fact, aligned with the BJP and joined the NDA. That helped it to defeat the Jagan Mohan Reddy-led YSRCP and gain power in the state.

In this kind of unforeseen situation, what would be the political path of both the defeated parties is generating a lot of interest in the Telugu states. Both the BRS and the YSRCP were very confident that they would come to power in the recent Assembly elections. The defeat of the parties in the elections was a great shock for both KCR and Jagan and both are facing corruption allegations and probes from the respective governments.

The Telangana Chief Minister's statement against regional parties has found

acceptance among the people. There is a possibility that Jagan Mohan Reddy may knock on the doors of the Congress. However, the case of the BRS in Telangana is creating interest as it does not have a chance of joining or allying with the NDA or INDIA as of now.

As said there are no permanent friends or foes in politics and anything could happen as elections are nowhere near and enough time is available for leaders to chart out their course. In the given political scenario, regional parties are gradually losing their strongly held sentimental grounds and are paving the way for the entrenchment of national parties or alliances led by them. What is in store for KCR and Jagan only time can tell as they are still uncertain of their future course.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

Monday Mirchi

PRATIK JAIN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The attack on Lagacharla has catapulted Vikarabad Collector Pratik Jain into the lime-light, but it seems like the saga is throwing shade in more directions than one. A senior bureaucrat said that Back in the day, a seasoned institution like the Chief Secretary would have swooped in to offer moral support to young officers in distress. But now? Bureaucrats are gossiping behind closed doors, grumbling, what is happening? Pratik hasn't been a saint in this drama either. His remarks about not labeling the incident an "attack" and his decision to personally receive CM's brother Tirupati Reddy have raised a few eyebrows. While the opposition is seizing the opportunity to criticize him, whispers among the bureaucrats suggest that such brazen incidents of attacks are unheard of in the history of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

IAS ASSOCIATION'S 'THREE-LINER' ACT: WILL THEY HIBERNATE AGAIN?

The IAS Association Telangana finally woke up from its deep slumber and managed to churn out a three-line statement on the Lagacharla incident condemning attack on collector. With Association chief Shashank Goyal in Delhi, General Secretary Jayesh Ranjan passed the resolution. Initially, it was just two lines, but as the day dragged on, someone seemed to have remembered the third line. Whatever the case, the association at least broke its silence, albeit briefly. However, the opposition didn't let the moment pass quietly. They were quick to question the association's earlier inaction, especially when bureaucrats were targeted with foul language by politicians. The timing of the statement has only fueled whispers within the corridors of power, with many speculating that the association will soon slip back into its usual hibernation mode. For now, it's a rare appearance from the association, but one can't help but wonder—when will they actually stand up for their own with consistency?

BUREAUCRACY'S SILENCE CONTINUES DESPITE REGIME CHANGE

While the government is celebrating Praja Palana Vijayotsavalu, the winds of change in Telangana's political landscape haven't stirred the bureaucrats much, with most continuing to shy away from interviews, much like the KCR era. Even the generally approachable IPS officers seem unusually wary, offering little more than a curt "situation is not good" when approached for even routine interactions. Traditionally known for being more flexible with media engagements, the IPS community's newfound reticence has raised eyebrows. Bureaucratic circles appear frozen in cautious silence, unwilling to embrace the openness expected under the banner of 'Praja Palana.' It seems that while political leadership may have shifted, the culture of restraint and apprehension within the administration remains deeply entrenched. The restoration of true people's governance will require more than just a change at the top—it demands courage and transparency from those tasked with running the show behind the scenes.

HYDERABAD CP 'ANAND' WITH GARIKAPATI NARASIMHA RAO'S PRAISE

In a heartfelt gesture, Hyderabad City Police Commissioner CV Anand shared a video featuring renowned spiritual leader Garikapati Narasimha Rao commending the police force during the Karthika Masam Deepotsavam celebrations. Addressing the gathering, Garikapati lauded the police for their unwavering dedication, emphasizing that they manage large crowds as part of their duty with-

out expecting additional rewards. He urged devotees to express their gratitude by performing a 'namaskaram' to the officers present. Moved by these words, Commissioner Anand took to social media, stating, "Just listen to this - am happy at least someone recognized publicly the hard work which police does in India to keep the country running. Thanks a lot, Garikapati Narasimha Rao garu." This public acknowledgment highlights the often-overlooked efforts of law enforcement personnel in maintaining order during significant events, reinforcing the importance of community appreciation for their service.

JAGAN MOHAN REDDY SLAMS GOVERNMENT OVER SOCIAL MEDIA CRACKDOWN

YSRCP leader Jagan Mohan Reddy has launched a scathing attack on the state government for its aggressive action against social media activists, accusing it of stifling free expression and suppressing dissent. Highlighting the alarming rise in law and order issues in Andhra Pradesh, Jagan pointed fingers at DGP Tirumala Rao, citing the state's failure to address crimes, including 177 murders, 500 attempted murders, and 110 atrocities against women and minors. Jagan revealed startling figures, stating that 680 social media activists have been served notices, 147 cases filed, and 49 individuals arrested for allegedly posting content critical of the government. "Social media should be a platform for open expression, but this government is using brute force to silence voices that criticize its failures," Jagan remarked, accusing authorities of targeting those who question the administration.

Insiders suggest that the government has pressured the police force to take an uncompromising stand against dissent on social media, leaving activists with little room to voice their opinions. Reports indicate strict instructions have been issued to penalize anyone who posts content perceived as derogatory towards the ruling establishment.

Jagan, known for his active use of social media to spotlight government shortcomings, vowed to continue his fight against what he termed a "culture of fear" aimed at silencing opposition. "Despite the crackdown, I will lead the charge in using social media to expose corruption and misgovernance," he declared, urging activists not to bow down to intimidation.

SINGARENI CMD N. BALARAM'S DEPUTATION EXTENSION AWAITS PM'S APPROVAL

N. Balaram, serving as the Chairman and Managing Director (CMD) of Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL), is approaching the conclusion of his sixth year on deputation in his home state. Typically, such deputations are capped at five years; however, an extension was previously granted, allowing him to serve an additional year.

With this extended tenure nearing its end, the Telangana state government has formally requested the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) for a further extension of Balaram's deputation. This request is currently under consideration. Notably, any extension beyond the standard tenure requires approval from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The situation has garnered significant attention, as observers are keen to see how the state government navigates this process with the central authorities. The outcome will not only impact SCCL's leadership continuity but also reflect the dynamics between the state and central administrations concerning high-level bureaucratic appointments.

--Yours truly

'I will quit politics if govt proves BJP is enacting dramas regarding Musi Project'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Lashing out at Transport Minister Ponnambhakhar's statement that the BJP is enacting dramas in the name of the Musi Project, the BJP's Malkajgiri MP, Eatala Rajender, said that he will quit politics if the BJP is found to be enacting dramas regarding the Musi Project.

Eatala asked Ponnambhakhar to visit the Musi catchment area and if people say that the BJP is enacting dramas regarding the Musi Project then he is ready to quit politics. He asked Ponnambhakhar whether Congress leaders would quit politics if people say that the Congress government is enacting dramas in the name of the Musi Project.

Speaking to the media after completing the Musi Nidra programme on Sunday morning in the LB Nagar area, Eatala said that the attitude of the Congress and the BRS is the same.

He warned that the BJP will not remain silent if the government demolishes the houses of



Malkajgiri MP Eatala Rajender visiting the Musi catchment area after his Musi Nidra programme on Sunday

Congress & BRS share same DNA, says Kishan

Declaring that the DNA of the Congress and the BRS are one, Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy demanded that the Congress Government execute the Musi Project without demolishing the houses of the poor. Speaking to the media after his 'Musi Nidra' programme on Sunday, Kishan asked the state government how it is possible to take up the Musi Project without having a DPR.

"Will the government drive bulldozers over the poor? Will



Minister G Kishan Reddy is speaking to the people after his Musi Nidra on Sunday morning at Tulsi Nagar in Golnaka area

the government demolish the thousands of houses, temples

and prayer halls," he said. Kishan said the government should give water to the people of Nalgonda immediately and not after 10 years and that it is possible only by constructing retaining walls.

Responding to the Congress allegation that the BJP and the BRS are trying to block the Musi clean-up, Kishan said the BJP has not yet entered into an alliance with the BRS in politics and that it is not possible even in the future.

Cong blasts Kishan for sleeping with socks on in Musi area

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress's Bhongir MP, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, ridiculed Telangana BJP President G. Kishan Reddy for sleeping wearing socks in the house of Musi victims on Saturday night. He said that there is nothing wrong if Kishan had met people living in the Musi area and inquired how many are living in the FTL and buffer zone areas of the Musi River's catchment area and informed the state government as the government is going to clean up the Musi.

However, on Sunday, Kishan, who said that he will stay for three months in the Musi catchment area, slept wearing socks on his legs. Kishan had also placed a camera to take pictures and release videos to the media, Kiran said.

He said that when the Chief Minister is planning to clean the Musi, Kishan is asking why there is no DPR. Kiran said that one should estimate how much water the river would have during floods.

ESIC to conduct free health check-up for insured persons

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The ESIC Medical College Hospital in Sanath Nagar announced to conduct a free Annual Preventive Health Check-Up Program for ESIC Insured Persons (IPs) and Insured Women (IW) aged 40 years and above, as part of a nationwide initiative.

The registration begins from November 18 and free tests include

complete blood picture (CBP), X-Ray, ECG, PSA (prostate-specific antigen), random blood sugar (RBS), fasting blood sugar (FBS), renal function test (RFT), liver function test (LFT) and complete urine examination (CUE).

This initiative, launched by the Minister of Labour and Employment/Chairman, ESIC, is part of the government's effort to monitor and improve the health of insured persons

across India. Initially started as a pilot in select ESIC hospitals, the programme has now expanded to all ESIC hospitals and medical colleges, with regular monitoring and reporting to ensure its success.

Participants' health records will be stored in both physical and electronic formats, enabling the analysis of data for early detection of occupational diseases, which will help implement preventive measures in specific areas.

PM Modi receives ...

Continued from page 1

"Honoured to be conferred with the 'Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger' Award by Nigeria. I accept it with great humility and dedicate it to the 140 crore people of India and the friendship of India and Nigeria," Modi said after receiving the award.

The prime minister thanked the government and the people of Nigeria for the honour.

The award citation notes that under the Prime Minister's visionary leadership, India has been positioned as a global powerhouse, and his transformative governance has fostered unity, peace and shared prosperity

for all. This was the 17th such international award conferred on Modi by a country.

Queen Elizabeth II is the only foreign dignitary who was awarded GCOM in 1969.

In his remarks, Modi said the relations between India and Nigeria are based on mutual cooperation, goodwill and respect.

"As two vibrant democracies with dynamic economies, we have been working together for the well-being of the people of both countries," he said.

Modi said that in his meetings with the Nigerian leadership, he discussed on making mutual cooperation strong and broad.

Mulugu leads, GHMC trails in SEEEPC survey

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Social Economic Education Employment Political and Caste (SEEEPC) survey, launched on November 6, 2024, has crossed the halfway mark, with 58.3% of households surveyed as of November 17. While Mulugu district has emerged as a front-runner with 87.1% completion, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) area is lagging with a modest 38.3% progress, highlighting the challenges of covering urban regions.

During the preliminary house-listing phase, conducted from November 6th to 8th, a total of 1,16,14,349 households were listed across rural and urban Telangana. The detailed enumeration phase, which began on November 9, has since covered 67.72 lakh households.

Rural areas have shown robust progress, with Nalgonda (81.4%), Jangaon (77.6%), Mancherial (74.8%), and Peddapalli (74.3%) making commendable strides. Urban areas, however, are slower due to the complexities of densely populated zones.

Key statistics of the survey reveal meticulous planning and deployment. A total of 87,807 enumerators and 8,788 supervisors have been mobilised to cover 92,901 enumeration blocks, with rural areas contributing significantly to the progress.

Rs.3 lakh loan ...

Continued from page 1

the Deputy Chief Minister ignoring his own daughter. The Congress and the Nehru family made Ashok Chawan and his father Shankarrao Chawan Chief Ministers, he said.

However, Eknath Shinde, Ajith Pawar and Ashok Chawan 'insulted' the land which pro-

duced great warriors, Revanth said.

He appealed to the people to ensure the victory of Dr Meenal Patil Khathgaokar (Nayagaon Congress candidate), Tirupati Kadam Kondekar (Bhokher Congress candidate), Chethan Narote (South Solapur Congress candidate) and Ravindra Chouhan (Nanded Lok Sabha by-poll Congress candidate) with huge majorities.

'Musi Nidra aimed ...

Continued from page 1

in the Musi catchment area and that the Musi Project will not be scrapped no matter who opposes it. He said the government will give houses to those who lose their houses due to the Musi Project.

He asked why there is objection only against the Musi Project while there was no objection to the Sabarmati clean-up. The Congress government is going to show the change in the Musi River. The government will help people who lose their houses when the Musi Project is executed, Mahesh said.

KTR for Delhi today ...

Continued from page 1

attacked the Collector and other officials. The TG government took the incident seriously, filed several cases against the farmers and sent them to jail.

However, the farmers have now gone to New Delhi with the help of BRS leaders to file a complaint with the SC, ST Commission alleging that the police filed false cases against them. They have also decided to file a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission.

Anandam

Yoga camp on the occasion of National Naturopathy Day

Venue

Jayalakshmi Gardens, RTC Colony, Tirumalghery, Secunderabad- 15 November 18, 4 pm to 6 pm.

Telugu standup comedy

This standup comedy open mic is organised by Silly South Comedy, India's first telugu standup comedy collective.

Venue

The Hashtag Café, KPBH, Secunderabad

Entrepreneurs Meetup

By We Founders Collab, Hyderabad

Venue

The Headquarters, Space Orbit, Hyderabad November 23

Dimsum & Bao

Exiting selection of steamed buns

Venue

Sheraton Hyderabad Hotel, Till November 24th. 3pm to 6.30 pm.

Standup Comedy

Vivek Muralidharan brings in his signature show "Death by Laughter", where he brings his newest material to stage.

Venue

Multiple venues, till November 24

City Pioneer



HYDERABAD | MONDAY | NOVEMBER 18, 2024

03



Indira Mahila Shakti Bhavans approved for 22 districts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana government approves construction of Indira Mahila Shakti Bhavans in 22 districts at an estimated cost of Rs 110 crore. This initiative is part of the government's commitment to empowering women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) through various livelihood and economic development activities.

The names of the districts include Medchal- Malkajgiri, Mancherial, Rajanna Sircilla, Hanumakonda, Kamareddy, Nizamabad, Mulugu, Narayanpet, Jagtial, Jayshankar Bhopalpalay, Wanaparthy, Medak, Suryapet, Yadadri Bhuvangiri, Nagarkurnool, Nirmal, Bhadari Kothagudem and Mahabubabad.

According to the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development department, these bhavans will serve as district-level hubs for activities such as training, marketing of SHG products, exhibitions and economic empowerment programmes. The decision aims to enhance the capacities of SHGs, which comprise over 63 lakh members across rural and urban Telangana, leveraging their existing financial inclusion networks to boost economic and livelihood opportunities.

The Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), which spearheaded the proposal, highlighted that only 10 districts currently have such facilities. The construction of bhavans in the remaining 22 districts will address this gap and further strengthen the SHG ecosystem.

The approved project includes the creation of office-cum-training buildings at district headquarters.

The Commissioner of Rural Development and CEO of SERP have been directed to take necessary steps for the implementation of this project.

HM: Health dept recruitment underway for 4,998 posts

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha has cautioned unemployed individuals not to fall a prey to fraudsters claiming to secure jobs in the Health department. He assured that the recruitment process is conducted with complete transparency and detailed that recruitment process is going on for 4,998 posts.

The Minister highlighted that over 7,000 positions in the Medical and Health Services have been filled within the past 11 months. Additionally, the recruitment process for the following positions is underway: 2,322 nursing officer posts, 732 pharmacist (Grade 2) posts,



1,284 lab technician posts, 435 civil assistant surgeon posts, 156 AYUSH medical officer posts, 45 assistant professor (MNJ) posts and 24 food inspector posts.

He further assured that notifications for more positions would be released in the future, and all appointments would adhere strictly to eligibility criteria, written examinations and other government norms.

"There will be no compromise in the recruitment process," the Minister emphasised. He urged job seekers to report any suspicious individuals to the police. He also encouraged victims of such scams to file verified complaints.

The Minister directed the Health department officials and the Medical Recruitment Board to gather information on such fraudulent activities and assured stringent action against those exploiting job seekers.

"Beware of those claiming to secure jobs. We are committed to fair and transparent recruitment for all eligible candidates," the Minister reiterated.

HM orders probe into ragging incident in Khammam Medical College

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha has expressed strong displeasure over incidents of ragging in medical colleges, particularly the recent case reported from the Khammam Government Medical College. During a teleconference with senior officials on Sunday, the Minister expressed anger over the incident where a first-year student was reportedly forced to shave their head as part of ragging. He directed authorities

to conduct an immediate inquiry and take strict action against those responsible. "Such incidents must not recur," the Minister stressed, adding that preventive measures should be implemented across all colleges. He asked for creating awareness programmes to educate students about the adverse effects of ragging, suggesting collaboration with the police department to strengthen these efforts. The Minister advised senior students to maintain a friendly relationship with juniors and

avoid any actions that could intimidate or harm them. "Ragging not only ruins the victims' peace of mind but also jeopardises the future of those involved. Students should focus on building a supportive environment rather than engaging in such harmful activities," he stated. The Health department, in coordination with college administrations, has been instructed to ensure that strict anti-ragging measures are in place and enforced effectively.

MID MANAIR RESERVOIR PROJECT

TG govt sanctions 4,696 houses for displaced families

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant decision to support the Project Displaced Families (PDFs) of the Mid Manair Reservoir Project, the Telangana government has approved the construction of 4,696 houses under the Indiramma Indlu scheme.

Each house will be funded at Rs 5 lakh under the State Reserve Quota (SRQ), with the government relaxing eligibility criteria to address the specific needs of the displaced families.

According to the Telangana Housing Corporation Limited, the Collector and District Magistrate of Rajanna Sircilla district had informed that out of the 10,683 displaced families 5,987 beneficiaries have already constructed houses across 12 villages, including hamlets, under the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package. The remaining 4,696 families, who currently do not own houses, sought assistance to construct their homes.

Following a proposal from the Managing Director of Telangana Housing Corporation Limited, the government examined the matter and sanctioned the houses as a special case to ensure all displaced families have proper housing.

The Managing Director of Telangana Housing Corporation Limited and the Collector and District Magistrate of Rajanna Sircilla district have been directed to take necessary steps to implement the project.

Task Force teams detain 8 involved in adulteration

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force Team of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety inspected Raja Rajeshwari Nagar, Old Bowenpally, Secunderabad, and found adulterated and unhygienic ginger paste. Eight accused individuals were involved in the adulteration. Acting on credible information, the North Zone Team, Hyderabad City, conducted the raid.

The Task Force seized materials included 1,500 kg of garlic paste, 55 kg of citric acid, a mixture machine, grinder machine, weighing machine, 12 bags (40 kg each) of damaged raw garlic, two date stamps, and two ink bottles, all valued at Rs 4,50,000.

100% tax and registration fee exempted for EVs in State

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major push towards promoting sustainable transportation, the Telangana government has announced a 100 per cent exemption on road tax and registration fees for electric vehicles (EVs) purchased and registered in the State. This policy will be effective for two years, until December 31, 2026.

The initiative is part of the Telangana Electric Vehicle and Energy Storage Policy 2020-2030, which aims to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles and reduce carbon emissions. The exemption applies to a wide range of EV categories, including: electric two-wheelers and electric four-wheelers, including commercial passenger vehicles like taxis and



tourist cabs, as well as private cars.

Electric three-seater auto-rickshaws (both GHMC and non-GHMC areas), electric light goods carriers, including three-wheeled goods vehicles such as electric tractors, electric buses operated by the Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC), with lifetime exemption for road tax and registration fees.

Additionally, buses owned

by private industries for employee transportation, provided they are not used for commercial purposes, are also eligible for the exemption.

The Transport Commissioner of Telangana recommended this measure to accelerate EV adoption in the State. The government has ensured that the exemption is available to all eligible EVs, regardless of the number of vehicles registered during the exemption period.

IT Minister promises solution for distressed IT staff of Brane Enterprises

SAMUEL JOSHUA samueljoshuamjmc@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Assuring a balanced view of the problem and discussions with Brane Enterprises, along with a solution for the distressed employees who are highly skilled graduates from IITs and IIMs and have been terminated without months of payment, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu participated in the All India Professionals' Congress (AIPC) public hearing at the Nampally Exhibition Grounds on Sunday evening.

Over 100 former employees, representing 3,000 workers from Brane Enterprises, gathered at the public hearing to raise their grievances about unfair treatment.

Addressing the employees after hearing their grievances, Sridhar Babu emphasised that finding a solution from this meeting was the main goal of the programme. He noted that the All India Professionals' Congress (AIPC) looks into all kinds of problems faced by IT professionals and cited the incident of Kerala's IT employ-



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu speaking at the AIPC public hearing at the Nampally Exhibition Grounds on Sunday evening

ee Anna Sebastian's suicide due to work pressure. The Minister shared how IT has evolved since 1992 to make a global impact and emphasised the need to continue that legacy. Highlighting the Congress party's role in developing the IT sector, he added that it is their responsibility to help it flourish.

He said many employees possess great talent and assured that, within his capacity and

despite certain limitations, they would summon the management of Brane Enterprises, hold discussions, and help mediate a fair and just settlement for the employees. The Minister also pointed out that it is unique for a mainstream political party to address such issues faced by working-class professionals, especially in sectors like IT, where employees often feel they lack a platform to voice their concerns.

Meanwhile, AIPC Chairman Praveen Chakravarty shared his 20 years of private sector experience, including as a CEO, noting that they understand the business need for downsizing. However, the Brane Enterprises case is not due to unforeseen circumstances but involves manipulation and unfair practices, resulting in thousands of employees being treated illegally.

DCA conducts raid on medical stores

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Drug Control Administration (DCA) raided Gayatri Medical and General Stores in Secunderabad's Seethaphalmandi area on Sunday. Acting on credible information, DCA officials discovered several violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

These violations included

stocking expired drugs alongside saleable ones, selling habit-forming drugs without proper bills and unauthorised sale of abortion kits without a qualified doctor's prescription.

During the raid, the DCA officials seized drugs worth Rs 1.25 lakh. The raid was conducted by D Saritha, Assistant Director and Drugs Inspectors B Govind Singh, M Surendranath and P Renuka.

The officials stated that further investigation is underway and offenders will face legal action.

In a separate incident, DCA officials also seized 'Chloramphenicol P.D. Col Eye Ointment I.P. 1% w/w' in Ramanthapur, Uppal mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri district. The product falsely claimed to prevent and treat eye infections, violating the Drugs and Magic

Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954. The product, manufactured by Packsules, Indore, was seized and further action will be taken.

This raid was led by G Indira Priyadarshini, Drugs Inspector, Habsiguda.

DCA advised that misleading drug advertisements can result in up to six months imprisonment, fines or both.

Secretariat's Bahubali gate removed



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The State government is making changes in the Secretariat's main gates and roads. As part of it, the government demolished the east-side Bahubali gate of the Secretariat on Sunday. The government is constructing another gate at the north-east

side and grills removed for the same. The government has been taking up changes with Rs 3 crore expenditure.

The Secretariat has main gates on all four sides. Former chief minister K Chandrasekhar Rao used to enter the Secretariat from the Bahubali main gate located opposite to Lumbini Park.

However, the present government closed the gate. The government is setting up the Telangana Talli statue and developing the lawn and foundations in the path that leads to the inside main gate. The government is also constructing a road linking the south-east and north-east gates.

NATIONAL EPILEPSY DAY

Dedicated centre for epilepsy patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AIG Hospitals launched dedicated Centre for Epilepsy on National Epilepsy Day with an advice that 70 percent of epilepsy patients in India do not receive adequate treatment due to stigma, lack of awareness.

The launch was accompanied by a special Continuing Medical Education (CME) programme that brought together the nation's leading epilepsy specialists, including Dr Malla Bhaskara Rao from NIMHANS, Bengaluru, chief guest for the launch Syed Ali Murtaza Rizvi, Principal Secretary to Govt. of Telangana (Revenue Department) in the presence of PVS Raju, Vice-Chairman, AIG Hospitals.

The centre is a multidisci-



Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals, and others at the launch of dedicated Centre for Epilepsy in Hyderabad on Sunday

plinary facility that brings together neurologists, neurosurgeons, radiologists, nuclear medicine experts, psychologists and rehabilitation specialists to provide holistic care for epilepsy patients. The centre is equipped with advanced diagnostic technologies, including 3T MRI, Functional MRI, Video EEG facility and PET.

Dr D Nageshwar Reddy, Chairman, AIG Hospitals, said, "Our vision for the Centre for Epilepsy is to make world-class epilepsy treatment accessible and affordable for all. Epilepsy is not just a medical condition-it is a social challenge. Through this dedicated centre, we aim to bridge the treatment gap, reduce stigma and offer solutions that enable patients to live seizure-free lives."

WARANGAL MAKING SMART STRIDES

Cong govt releases Rs 205 cr for development of Mamnoon airport

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Significant progress has been made in the construction of Mamnoon Airport in Warangal district with the government allocating Rs 205 crore to acquire 253 acres of land required for the airport's expansion. A Government Order (GO) has been issued in this regard.

The Roads and Buildings Department has requested the Airport Authority to prepare a Detailed Project Report (DPR), including design plans for the airport's development.

In a positive turn, the GMR company, which had previously been a hurdle due to a 150-kilometer agreement, has now withdrawn its opposition to developing the Warangal airport.

Currently, the airport has 696 acres of land under its jurisdiction, and the additional 253 acres will be used for expanding the runway, constructing a new terminal building, setting up an Air



Traffic Control (ATC) tower, and installing navigational equipment.

Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, who has been actively advocating for new airports in the State, has played a crucial role in the progress of the Mamnoon Airport project.

The Congress government has

decided to develop Warangal as the State's second capital. With the population of Hyderabad, the capital of Telangana, having already crossed one crore and the city rapidly expanding, the proposal to establish a second capital for the state has been under discussion. Whenever the issue of a second capital comes up,

Warangal City is brought into focus. Currently, Warangal is the largest city in Telangana after Hyderabad. In this context, steps are being taken swiftly to establish Warangal as the second capital of the state.

For the past five years, the Vision-2041 Master Plan for Warangal has been under consideration, and it has finally received approval under the leadership of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's government. According to government sources, Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy will make an official announcement about the master plan on November 19. Until now, Warangal did not have a master plan.

Authorities have faced difficulties in granting approvals for large-scale projects in Warangal. In this context, the Congress government has now set the stage for the approval of the new master plan. The 2041 Warangal Master Plan will cover not just the city of Warangal but also the surround-

ing areas, including the towns of Kazipet, Hanamakonda, and Warangal, as well as 19 mandals and 181 villages. The total area covered by the master plan will be expanded to 1,805 square kilometers. Some mandals from the Jangaon district will also be included in the Warangal Master Plan.

In the past, the Kakatiya rulers made Orugallu (present-day Warangal) their capital. During the Kakatiya period, Warangal achieved comprehensive development in various sectors. Later, during the Nizam era, the city progressed in sectors like air transport, education, healthcare, employment, water supply, roads, and temples. As a result, when Telangana was formed, Warangal was considered the second capital of the state. However, the (Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) did not take steps to develop the city as a second capital. Now, the Congress government is making all efforts to develop Warangal.



Professor humiliates student, forces him to shave head

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A faculty member in charge of the Anti-Ragging Committee at Khammam Government Medical College has found himself in an embarrassing situation. He is now accused of not only ragging a first-year MBBS student but also forcing him to shave his head. He is now facing disciplinary action.

The first-year student, hailing from Mulugu district reported that he had been mocked by his seniors over his hairstyle, which they claimed resembled a 'Chinese-style haircut.' Unable to tolerate the bullying, the student eventually changed his hairstyle to a simpler look. The incident was brought to the attention of the college's Anti-Ragging Committee, led by Assistant Professor Dr. Rahman. However, Dr Rahman himself is

now under scrutiny for allegedly being involved in the ragging.

On November 12, instead of taking action against the senior students who had allegedly ragged him, Dr Rahman reportedly took the student to a hair salon and had his head shaved. Unable to tolerate the humiliation, the student filed a complaint with the college principal on November 13, accusing the faculty member.

In response, Principal Dr S Rajeswarara Rao took the incident seriously and reported the matter to the Director of Medical Education. A committee was also formed to investigate the incident. As a result, Dr. Rahman was removed from the anti-ragging committee, and further disciplinary action will be considered after the investigation report is submitted, according to sources.

Young woman proves poverty is no barrier to success

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a heartwarming tale of perseverance and grit, Dakuri Chandrakala, a young woman from Shadnagar in Rangareddy district, has become a beacon of hope for her family, demonstrating that poverty is no barrier to education and success.

Born into a humble family that survives by collecting and selling old papers, Chandrakala's life story is one of resilience. Despite the challenging circumstances of her upbringing, where her family struggled to make ends meet, she pursued her education with determination. Completing her early education from 1st to 4th standard at Amarchinta Government School, Narayanapet, she moved on to Narayanapet Social Welfare Hostel for her 5th to 10th standard education. She then continued her intermediate studies in the BiPc group at Shadnagar Government Junior College.

Chandrakala's dedication to her studies led her to pursue a degree at LB Nagar Social Welfare Hostel in Hyderabad. During this period, she faced financial hardships, yet her friends supported her educational expenses, and she also worked at



Chandrakala

Amazon to fund her further studies. Undeterred by her circumstances, she completed her postgraduate degree, MA in Telugu, from AV College in Hyderabad.

Her ambition did not stop there. Chandrakala has attempted the constable job examination three times, missing the mark by just three points each time. Despite these setbacks, her resolve has only grown stronger. She is currently preparing for the Group-11 examination, hoping to secure a government job and lift her family out of poverty.

Chandrakala's journey is a

shining example of perseverance, as she continues to strive for a better future despite her humble beginnings. Her story has garnered admiration from many, and she hopes for support from the government and kind-hearted individuals to assist in her educational endeavors.

Chandrakala's dream is to achieve a stable government position, providing her family with financial security and serving as an inspiration for others facing similar hardships. Her determination and spirit make her a true symbol of hope and resilience in her community.



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi inspecting an examination centre in Nalgonda on Sunday

Group-3 exam held peacefully in district

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Group-3 examinations were conducted in Nalgonda district on the first day on Sunday, according to District Collector, Ila Tripathi.

Immediately after the commencement of the Group-3 examinations, the Collector inspected several examination centres set up in the Nalgonda district headquarters. First, she visited the examination centre at Saint Alphonsus School where she inquired about the details of candidates who attended and those who were absent. The Chief Superintendent of the centre, D Rambabu, informed her that out of the 528 candidates assigned to this centre, more than half failed to turn up.

Following this, the District Collector visited another examination centre at Don Bosco High School. At this cen-

tre, 348 candidates were assigned, out of which 155 appeared for the examination.

Next, the District Collector also inspected the examination centre established at NG College. Chief Superintendent Anil Kumar informed the Collector that out of 480 candidates assigned to this centre, 410 appeared for the examination, while 70 were absent. During her visit, the District Collector also inspected the strong room where Group-3 examination materials were stored.

In Miryalaguda town, a total of 7,798 candidates were assigned to 28 examination centers. In the morning session, 2,934 attended, while 4,864 were absent. In the afternoon session, 2,930 attended out of 7,798, and 4,868 were absent, as informed by the Collector.

Officials told to provide quality edn in govt schools



Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy inspecting ongoing road construction work at Chanduru in Nalgonda district on Sunday

PNS ■ MUNUGODE/NALGONDA

Munugode MLA Komatireddy Rajgopal Reddy on Sunday conducted a comprehensive review of both road construction and on education scenario in the Munugode constituency.

During his inspection of road construction works in the limits of Chanduru Municipality, Rajgopal Reddy reviewed the ongoing construction of a 1.9-kilometer double-line cement concrete road. He emphasised the importance of proper drainage systems to ensure smooth water flow during rains. He advised the officials to increase the size of drainage pipes in critical areas and that additional underground cross-drainage systems be added to prevent water stagnation.

The MLA also stressed the need for expanding the road width to 84 feet, allowing space for future utilities such as cables and pipelines. He instructed officials to adhere to high-quality standards in road construction and to develop a master plan for future infrastructure to meet the growing needs of the municipality.

At the same time, the MLA focused on strengthening the education system in the constituency. He held a review meeting with education department

officials, including the District Education Officer, Mandal Education Officers, and other staff, to discuss the current status of schools, student enrollment, infrastructure, and teaching standards. He noted that the students' strength in government schools has been declining largely due to poor infrastructure and lack of quality education. He suggested that improving both the quality of education and the facilities would help increase enrollment. To address this, he proposed the development of government schools with better infrastructure, ensuring that students from 1st to 10th grades can study in same school.

The MLA also expressed concern that many poor families were sending their children to private schools, spending up to 80 per cent of their earnings on education. He called for a focus on providing free, quality education in government schools.

The review meetings were attended by various local leaders, including Kumbham Srinivas Reddy, Chairman of the Unified Nalgonda District SSC Board, as well as DEO Bikshapathi, MEOs from Chanduru, Munugode, Nampally, Marriguda, and Gattupalli mandals.



Dedicated BC Commission Chairman B Venkateswara Rao holding a public hearing in Khammam on Sunday

Dedicated Backward Commission holds public hearing in Khammam

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Backward Classes Dedicated Commission Chairman B Venkateswara Rao has said that the proposals received from various caste-based associations would be codified and a report would be submitted to the government to provide reservations.

He, along with Commission Secretary B Saidulu and Khammam Additional Collector P Srinivasa Reddy, held a public inquiry at the Collectorate here on Sunday.

The Chairman inspected the registration centre on the premises of the Collectorate. Later, he received representations from various caste groups and individuals.

Representatives of Vaddera community, nomadic tribes, Viswa Brahmana, Viswa Karma communities, Muslims, minorities, fishermen's association, All-India OBC castes association, Pusala community, washermen's community, Dudekulu, Yadava, Gollakuruma community, potters' association and various groups submitted their memoranda to the chairman indicating the quota for their respective community in proportion to their population.

The Chairman has indicated that the government constituted the dedicated BC commission to finalise the quota for various caste groups in local body elections.

Motorcycle-borne snatchers strike at Patancheru

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

In an incident that caused a stir in Patancheru town early on Sunday morning, two miscreants snatched a gold chain from an elderly woman.

According to Crime Circle Inspector Raju, the incident took place at 5:30 am when 75-year-old Sripada Somalakshmi from Srinagar Colony was returning home after

offering prayers at the Tulasi Kota in front of her house. As she was walking towards her house, two motorcycle-borne men approached the old woman and snatched the gold chain. One of the bikers, wearing a helmet, stayed at a distance while the other, wearing a mask, came closer, snatched the four tola gold chain from her, and fled with it on the bike.

Upon receiving information, the police rushed to the scene and initiated an investigation. A case was registered based on a complaint filed by Somalakshmi's son, Sripada Sridhar Chari. The police have launched a search operation based on the visuals from the CCTV footage, and special police teams have been formed to track down the culprits.

Ministers inspect venue for CM's meeting in Warangal

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has set an ambitious goal to make one crore women crorepatris in next five years, according to Ministers Konda Surekha and Sitakka.

They visited the Arts College grounds here, venue of the public meeting - victory meeting - to be addressed by Revanth Reddy here on Monday in connection with the Congress government completing one year in office.

Addressing the media here on Sunday, they said that the venue of the meeting was

named as Indira Mahila Sakti Pranganam.

The Chief Minister went on record stating that the government is keen to develop Warangal on a large scale after the capital city of Hyderabad in Telangana, they said. The government has been paying special attention on development of airport. The caste-based census is being conducted after a very long time, they said calling it as something extraordinary.

The Congress government is not going back on the farmers' issue, they said.

Mystery shrouds death of 26 people at village in Mulugu district

PNS ■ MULUGU

In an unsettling and mysterious development, at least 26 people in Jangalapalle village in Mulugu district have died under unexplained circumstances in the past month. The deceased, mostly aged between 30 and 50 years, were all struck by similar symptoms before passing away within 48 to 72 hours of showing signs of illness. The sudden and unexplained deaths have left the community in a state of fear

and confusion.

The villagers are now living in a climate of dread, with many afraid to leave their homes after dark. Residents have begun taking precautions, such as shutting off lights and securing their doors. The atmosphere in the village is one of uncertainty.

According to locals, the series of deaths has been ongoing for about a month, with the majority of victims being relatively young adults. Strangely, most of the individuals passed

away after being admitted to hospitals for treatment, with their bodies later returned to the village, fueling the sense of helplessness among residents.

In the absence of any clear medical explanation, villagers have turned to various theories to explain the deaths. Some elders believe it may be due to ill-luck or bad omens, while others suspect black magic or the influence of negative energy. Despite regularly worshipping the village goddess, some have suggested that perform-

ing additional rituals or pujas might help lift the perceived curse.

Meanwhile, a video about the situation in Jangalapalle has gone viral on social media, prompting the youth of the village to call for urgent action from authorities. The young people are asking for the establishment of a medical camp to investigate the cause of the deaths and provide necessary healthcare, while also helping to dispel any superstitions and fears among the villagers.

ACROSS THE STATES



J&K minister meets fencer Chhavi, assures govt support

Jammu and Kashmir Minister for Youth Services and Sports Satish Sharma on Sunday met young female sabre fencer Chhavi Sharma at her residence here and assured full government support in her endeavours. Chhavi has brought laurels to the country by winning a bronze medal in sabre girls team event in Cadet and Junior Commonwealth Fencing Championship held at Christchurch, New Zealand in July. She has also participated in Asian Cadet and Junior Fencing Championship held at Manama Bahrain, World Cadet and Junior Fencing Championship Riyadh Saudi Arabia and has won many medals in national level fencing championships. The minister applauded her excellent performances in national and international events and assured all possible support from the department, an official spokesman said. He also appreciated the efforts of the Youth Services and Sports department, her parents and coach on her outstanding performances.

'India accords priority to partnership with Nigeria'



PNS ■ ABUJA

India accords high priority to its strategic partnership with Nigeria and it will work towards boosting ties in a range of areas, including defence, energy and trade, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said during his talks with Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Sunday. In his televised opening remarks at the meeting, Modi identified terrorism, separatism, piracy and drug trafficking as

major challenges and said the two countries will continue to work together to deal with them. Modi arrived in Abuja early Sunday on the first trip to the country by an Indian prime minister after a gap of 17 years. "We give high priority to our strategic partnership with Nigeria...I am confident that a new chapter in our ties will begin following our talks," the prime minister said. Modi also described the around 60,000-strong Indian expatriate community as a key

pillar of India-Nigeria relations and thanked Tinubu for ensuring their welfare. The prime minister also announced that India is sending 20 tonnes of relief supplies for Nigerian people hit by last month's floods. He also referred to the African Union becoming a permanent member of the G20 at the India-hosted summit of the grouping last year and described it as a significant outcome. Before the delegation-level talks, Modi and Tinubu held one-on-one meeting at the Presidential Villa.

The prime minister was also accorded a ceremonial welcome. Both sides are likely to ink a number of agreements following the delegation-level talks. Modi is in Nigeria as part of a three-nation tour. From Abuja, he will travel to Brazil to attend the G20 summit. His last destination will be Guyana. The India-Nigeria ties were elevated to the status of a 'strategic partnership' during then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to the African nation in October 2007.



No progress at COP29 in matters critical to developing countries: India

PNS ■ BAKU (AZERBAIJAN)

At COP29 in Baku, India expressed frustration with developed countries for not seriously discussing how to support climate action in developing nations, saying it is impossible to tackle climate change without financial and technological help.

Delivering a statement in the closing plenary of the subsidiary bodies' meeting on the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) on Saturday, India said developed countries, which have historically contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions and have more resources and the ability to act on climate change,

India said developed countries with the highest capacity to take climate action had "continuously shifted goals, delayed climate action, and consumed a highly disproportionate share of the global carbon budget"

have repeatedly delayed climate action and continuously shifted goalposts. "We have seen no progress in matters critical for developing countries (during the last week). Our part of the world is facing some of the worst impacts of climate change with far lower capacity to recover from those impacts or

to adapt to the changes to the climatic system for which we are not responsible," said India's deputy lead negotiator Neelesh Sah.

He said the MWP is meant to help, not punish, and must respect each country's right to set its own climate goals based on its unique needs and circumstances.



Justice Gavai stresses importance of Article 39A

Supreme Court Judge and National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) Executive Chairman Justice B R Gavai on Sunday elaborated on the critical role of legal services in empowering marginalized communities and ensuring social justice. He said that Article 39A of the Constitution is of immense significance as it guarantees the right to free legal aid for the voiceless, marginalized and vulnerable sections of the society, ensuring access to justice for those who might otherwise be deprived of it. Justice Gavai shared these views during the regional conference of the State Legal Services Authorities themed 'Empowering the Marginalized and a Step Towards Social Justice' organised at the Chandigarh Judicial Academy here, according to an official release. Justice Surya Kant, Judge, Supreme Court; Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan, Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Himachal Pradesh; and Justice Tashi Rabstan, Chief Justice, High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh also graced the occasion, the release said.

Mahayuti playing politics over caste and religion: Mayawati

PNS ■ PUNE

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Sunday accused the BJP-led Mahayuti coalition in Maharashtra of playing politics over caste and religion.

The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister was in Pune to campaign for BSP candidates ahead of the November 20 Maharashtra assembly elections.

Addressing a rally, she urged people to reject the BJP and Congress and asserted that her party would give justice to every community if voted to power.

"Caste should not be a factor while giving tickets to candidates in elections," she said,



accusing the ruling dispensation of exploiting caste and religion for political gains. She also claimed that Mahayuti would also play the reservation card for its benefits.

"The ruling party will use 'saam' (persuasion), 'daam' (reward) and 'dand' (punishment) to win the elections in the state. Multiple members from some political parties are deliberately asked to contest the polls to split votes and help the ruling party," she claimed.

Amit Shah reviews security situation in Manipur

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday reviewed the security situation in Manipur and directed top officials to take all possible steps to ensure peace in the Northeastern state, sources said.

Shah held the meeting soon after he returned from Maharashtra after cancelling his election rallies there.

The home minister reviewed the situation in Manipur with top security officials and directed them to take all possible steps to ensure peace, the sources said. Shah is expected to hold another detailed meeting with top officers on Monday and take further steps, they said.

The move came as the situation in Manipur, which has been reeling from ethnic strife since May last year, continued to



be volatile following protests and violence after the recovery of bodies of women and children.

Irate mobs set ablaze the residences of three more BJP legislators, one of whom is a senior minister, and a Congress MLA in various districts of Imphal Valley even as security forces foiled an attempt to storm the ancestral residence of Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh, officials said.

NPP withdraws support to BJP-led govt

PNS ■ SHILLONG/IMPHAL

The National People's Party (NPP) on Sunday withdrew support to the BJP-led government in violence-hit Manipur, claiming that the N Biren Singh dispensation has "completely failed to resolve

the crisis and restore normalcy" in the northeastern state.

The NPP has 7 MLAs in the 60-member Manipur assembly. In the last few days, the situation in Manipur further deteriorated and many more innocent lives have been lost and people in the state are

"going through immense suffering", the NPP claimed in a letter to BJP chief J P Nadda. "We strongly feel that the Manipur state government under the leadership of Shri Biren Singh has completely failed to resolve the crisis and restore normalcy."

'Maha deprived of jobs as key projects shifted to Gujarat'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday criticised the ruling BJP for its policies, claiming Maharashtra was deprived of jobs due to the shifting of some big projects to Gujarat.

Speaking at a rally in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district while campaigning for the November 20 Maharashtra assembly polls, she claimed the ruling alliance leaders were trying to divert the attention from real issues and making attempts to polarise the society.

Targeting the Mahayuti government over its flagship Ladki Bahin scheme, Vadra said women should vote for a better life and not because they are getting Rs 1,500 a month. The



Congress leader also said if the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) comes to power, it will give Rs 7,000 per quintal MSP to farmers for soybean crop.

Vadra claimed there were more than 2.5 lakh vacant posts in Maharashtra. The state has

been deprived of jobs due to the shifting of Foxconn, Airbus projects to Gujarat, she added.

"People are making efforts, learning new skills, but they still can't find jobs. This should have been the government's primary focus, but it has failed to fill these posts," she said. She also sought to link suicides by youth in Maharashtra to lack of job opportunities. "Maximum number of youth suicides in the country are happening in Maharashtra. This is the result of the BJP's failure to address unemployment," the Congress leader claimed. On the slogan "ek hain to safe hain" (if we are united, we are safe) raised by BJP leaders during the poll campaign, Vadra said the word 'safe' has two meanings - security and coffer. "But in this country, the only one who is truly safe is Adani. The entire country knows that Adani is the only one who has access to the government coffers, while ordinary citizens struggle," she alleged.

Govt schools to be revamped in Haryana

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Haryana government will completely revamp state-run schools in the next five years, School Education Minister Mahipal Dhandra said on Sunday while stressing that improving education facilities in rural areas and transforming the sector is a key priority.

Visiting villages in his Panipat Rural Assembly constituency, Dhandra appealed to the people of the area to educate their children and equip them with the

skills to contribute nation building. "My entire life is dedicated to the service of the rural people and I am walking this path to serve them. It may take some time to fix the system, but in the end, the results will be very positive," he was quoted as saying in an official statement.

"Improving education facilities in rural areas and transforming the sector is a key priority. The government will completely revamp the state-run schools in the next five years," Dhandra said.

JMM led govt standing like a mountain: Soren

PNS ■ JAMTARA (JHARKHAND)

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Sunday claimed that his alliance government was standing like a mountain in the state and the BJP was unable to shake it despite its nefarious design to topple it. He claimed that they put him behind bars to topple his government but could not shake it.

"The unity of coalition partners is essential to protect the Constitution of the country



and keep agenda-less BJP out of power," Soren said at a public meeting at Jamtara in support of INDI block candidates

in the ensuing assembly poll. Attacking the saffron party, Soren questioned what BJP did for adivasis, farmers, and poor people of the state. They did "nothing".

"We have delivered for the betterment of people, who are availing benefits of the government's welfare schemes like 'Aapki Sarkar, Aapke Dwar' (your government at your doorstep) where government officials visit the doorstep of people to solve their problems," Soren said.

Delhi second-most polluted city in India; air quality 'severe'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi's air quality worsened further on Sunday, with an AQI of 441, making it the second-most polluted city in the country.

The city's 24-hour Air Quality Index (AQI), recorded at 4 pm daily, stood at 441, in the 'severe' category. On Saturday, the AQI was 417.

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), a 'severe' AQI poses risks to healthy individuals and severely impacts those with pre-existing health conditions. Four cities in the country recorded the AQI in the 'severe' category. Bahadurgarh



in Haryana topped the list with an AQI of 445, followed by Delhi (441), Bhiwani in Haryana (415) and Bikaner in Rajasthan (404), according to the CPCB's data. Of the 40 monitoring stations

"satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300 "poor", 301 and 400 "very poor", 401 and 450 "severe" and above 450 "severe plus".

With the third stage of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) restrictions coming into force in Delhi-NCR from Friday, a stringent ban has been imposed on construction and demolition activities, mining-related operations have been suspended, shifting to online classes for students up to Class 5 is being considered and daily water sprinkling on major roads has been mandated.

The GRAP for Delhi-NCR is divided into four stages of air

quality -- Stage 1 for "poor" air quality (AQI ranging from 201 to 300), Stage 2 for "very poor" air quality (AQI from 301 to 400), Stage 3 for "severe" air quality (AQI from 401 to 450) and Stage 4 for "severe plus" air quality (AQI above 450).

According to the Centre's Decision Support System for Air Quality Management, vehicular emissions contributed approximately 15.8 per cent to Delhi's pollution on Sunday.

The system also reported that stubble burning was the main contributor to the capital's air pollution on Saturday, accounting for 25 per cent of the total pollution.

Major initiatives in offing to strength party at grassroots level in J&K: Cong

PNS ■ JAMMU

Some major initiatives are in offing to revamp and strengthen the Congress at the grassroots level in Jammu and Kashmir, the party's fact finding team said on Sunday.

The fact-finding team headed by Jammu and Kashmir Congress vice-president Ravinder Sharma dropped the hint about major initiatives during their visit to Rajouri where they held a day-long meeting with party leaders and workers, a party spokesperson said.



Last month, Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president Tariq Hameed Karra set up the fact-finding team after the party's dismal performance in the recently held assembly elections by winning only six seats

— five in Kashmir and one in Jammu region.

The team was constituted to ascertain the reasons behind the Congress' defeat in the polls, especially in Jammu region, and to suggest measures for strengthening the party.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Left turn ho!

Anura Kumara Dissanayake's election triumph could prove to be a turning point for Sri Lanka's politics and South Asia

Sri Lanka has done it again. After electing Anura Kumara Dissanayake as President his left-leaning party has secured a majority in the parliament, which gives Anura a complete control over Sri Lanka. What is more startling is that his party has decimated the Tamil parties in the northern Sri Lanka, which was the stronghold of Tamil parties. This is indeed a stunning political shift. Anura Kumara Dissanayake, leader of Sri Lanka's National People's Power (NPP), has achieved a resounding victory in the country's parliamentary elections, winning 123 out of 225 seats in Sri Lanka's Parliament. This outcome, which comes barely two months after Dissanayake's election as President on September 21, marks a pivotal moment in the nation's political landscape and could have significant ramifications not only for Sri Lanka but also for the wider South Asian region. Dissanayake's rise to prominence is both unexpected and historic. His party, despite winning only 42 per cent of the presidential vote, has managed to galvanise a broad cross-section of Sri Lankan society, particularly in regions where other political forces have traditionally held sway. His victory represents a rejection of the traditional political elites that have long governed the island since its independence in 1948, and it signifies the growing appeal of his platform advocating for economic revival and social justice. Notably, the NPP's win in the Jaffna district—a historically Tamil-majority area in the northern part of Sri Lanka—has surprised political pundits. For decades, Tamil ethnic parties have dominated this region, a legacy of the civil war (1983-2009) that left a deep divide between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese-majority government.



This victory in Jaffna is symbolic of a new approach to ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, the Tamil population has been wary of Sinhalese-majority leaders, given the traumatic history of the civil conflict, where over 100,000 lives were lost according to conservative UN estimates. Dissanayake's success in these areas suggests that many Tamils are willing to embrace a new kind of leadership, one that offers economic promise and a path forward, beyond ethnic divisions. Dissanayake's victory carries significant implications for the future of Sri Lanka. First and foremost, his strong mandate gives him the political capital needed to implement his economic revival agenda, which is urgently needed as Sri Lanka grapples with economic instability and growing debt. Dissanayake has long advocated for Marxist economic policies, including land reforms, wealth redistribution and greater state control over key industries. If successful, his administration could lead to a reshaping of Sri Lanka's economy, potentially benefiting marginalised communities, including Tamils and other ethnic minorities. Dissanayake's popularity, especially among younger voters and ethnic minorities, suggests a growing demand for alternative political solutions. But can he live up to people's expectations, bring about radical changes and maintain ethnic harmony? That is the big question only time can tell!

This victory in Jaffna is symbolic of a new approach to ethnic relations in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, the Tamil population has been wary of Sinhalese-majority leaders, given the traumatic history of the civil conflict, where over 100,000 lives were lost according to conservative UN estimates. Dissanayake's success in these areas suggests that many Tamils are willing to embrace a new kind of leadership, one that offers economic promise and a path forward, beyond ethnic divisions. Dissanayake's victory carries significant implications for the future of Sri Lanka. First and foremost, his strong mandate gives him the political capital needed to implement his economic revival agenda, which is urgently needed as Sri Lanka grapples with economic instability and growing debt. Dissanayake has long advocated for Marxist economic policies, including land reforms, wealth redistribution and greater state control over key industries. If successful, his administration could lead to a reshaping of Sri Lanka's economy, potentially benefiting marginalised communities, including Tamils and other ethnic minorities. Dissanayake's popularity, especially among younger voters and ethnic minorities, suggests a growing demand for alternative political solutions. But can he live up to people's expectations, bring about radical changes and maintain ethnic harmony? That is the big question only time can tell!

PICTALK



Labourers thresh paddy at a field on the outskirts of Amritsar

The smog capital of India

As Delhi battles a toxic mix of seasonal stubble burning and local pollution sources, its residents are exposed to severe and potentially life-threatening health risks



RAJDEEP PATHAK

The National Capital Territory of Delhi, which is home to nearly 30 million people, has been grappling with dangerously high pollution levels for over two weeks. On Wednesday, November 13, 2024, the air quality index (AQI) across Delhi remained in the 'very poor' category, marking the 15th consecutive day when residents faced increased health risks from the polluted air. According to official data (the Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi, managed by the Central Government), this situation will likely persist for at least six days. In parallel, the city is also experiencing an unusually warm spell that defies typical seasonal trends, adding complexity to an already challenging situation for residents. This grim forecast highlights the role of unfavourable meteorological conditions that limit the dispersal of pollutants, essentially trapping them close to the ground. The AQI measures levels of harmful pollutants in the air, with a higher value indicating a greater concentration of pollutants. While an AQI between 300 and 400 is considered "very poor," levels above 400 are classified as "severe," meaning the pollution is severe enough to affect even healthy individuals. The IMD has reported that the typical winter season may not arrive in Delhi as quickly as expected, thereby disrupting long-established weather patterns that typically bring cooler, less polluted air to the region.



There are many contributors to this game, the primary being: vehicle emissions, industrial activities, construction dust, and the neighbouring states of Punjab and Haryana which engage in the seasonal burning of crop residue.

The primary pollutant in Delhi's air, according to IQAir—a global air quality monitoring agency based in Switzerland—is PM2.5, a fine particulate matter that can penetrate deeply into the lungs. Earlier this month, parts of Delhi recorded Air Quality Index (AQI) levels as high as 1,133, placing them in the "hazardous" category. Prolonged exposure to such elevated PM2.5 levels poses serious health risks, including respiratory infections, asthma attacks and even heightened mortality rates among vulnerable populations. Warmer-than-normal temperatures hinder the ability of pollutants to disperse, as colder temperatures usually facilitate the movement of these particles away from the urban air layer.

The combination of stagnant weather conditions, pollution, and warm temperatures has created a perfect whirlpool of the smog's persistence over Delhi, making it more difficult for the city to "breathe" as it would in cooler conditions. Health experts believe that exposure to high levels of pollution can lead to short-term effects like coughing, throat irritation and chest tightness. In the long term, the risks increase substantially, with studies linking air pollution exposure to chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart disease, and even impacts on cognitive functions. Air pollution is a severe health crisis in India, causing between 1.2 million and 1.8 million premature deaths each year. The 7 million annual deaths from air pollution worldwide exceed those from COVID-19, as well as combined fatalities from war, homicide, car and plane accidents. Clean air is essential for human health, yet scientific studies continue to reveal new health risks linked to air pollution, including respiratory diseases, heart issues, stroke, and lung cancer, as well as emerging links to premature births, diabetes, and brain damage. Poor air quality can also worsen outcomes for COVID-19 by increasing vulnerability to respiratory illnesses. Dr David R Boyd, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, CA, Associate Professor in law, policy and Sustainability in his paper "The Human Rights to Breathe Clean Air" published in The National Library of Medicine (2019) necessitates the urgency for treating air pollution as a human rights issue and that "Air pollution on today's scale, clearly violates the rights to life and health, the rights of the child and the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment" and that there is an urgent need to voice that the legal support of a human rights issue, since Dr David says that "The human rights perspective changes everything—because governments have clear, legally enforceable obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. As Delhi battles yet another season of toxic air, the health and wellbeing of millions are at stake. The situation demands urgent and coordinated action from the government, industry, and residents (read citizens). Sustainable improvement requires systemic changes to reduce pollution at its source. While the road to a cleaner, healthier Delhi may be long, there is hope in ongoing technological and policy developments aimed at reducing pollution. As more people become aware of the critical importance of air quality, public support for environmental initiatives will continue to grow, fostering a collective movement toward cleaner air and a better quality of life for all Delhiites and others who visit to see the grandeur of the Capital City. When... It's in our hands!"



THE DENSE FOG MIXED WITH THICK SMOG HAS CREATED A NEAR-TOTAL OBSCURITY, AS CITIZENS FOUND THEMSELVES ENVELOPED IN A HAZARDOUS BLEND OF POLLUTANTS AND MOISTURE RESULTING IN KEEPING DAYTIME TEMPERATURES LOWER THAN EXPECTED

Health experts believe that exposure to high levels of pollution can lead to short-term effects like coughing, throat irritation and chest tightness. In the long term, the risks increase substantially, with studies linking air pollution exposure to chronic respiratory diseases, lung cancer, heart disease, and even impacts on cognitive functions. Air pollution is a severe health crisis in India, causing between 1.2 million and 1.8 million premature deaths each year. The 7 million annual deaths from air pollution worldwide exceed those from COVID-19, as well as combined fatalities from war, homicide, car and plane accidents. Clean air is essential for human health, yet scientific studies continue to reveal new health risks linked to air pollution, including respiratory diseases, heart issues, stroke, and lung cancer, as well as emerging links to premature births, diabetes, and brain damage. Poor air quality can also worsen outcomes for COVID-19 by increasing vulnerability to respiratory illnesses. Dr David R Boyd, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability, University of British Columbia, CA, Associate Professor in law, policy and Sustainability in his paper "The Human Rights to Breathe Clean Air" published in The National Library of Medicine (2019) necessitates the urgency for treating air pollution as a human rights issue and that "Air pollution on today's scale, clearly violates the rights to life and health, the rights of the child and the right to live in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment" and that there is an urgent need to voice that the legal support of a human rights issue, since Dr David says that "The human rights perspective changes everything—because governments have clear, legally enforceable obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. As Delhi battles yet another season of toxic air, the health and wellbeing of millions are at stake. The situation demands urgent and coordinated action from the government, industry, and residents (read citizens). Sustainable improvement requires systemic changes to reduce pollution at its source. While the road to a cleaner, healthier Delhi may be long, there is hope in ongoing technological and policy developments aimed at reducing pollution. As more people become aware of the critical importance of air quality, public support for environmental initiatives will continue to grow, fostering a collective movement toward cleaner air and a better quality of life for all Delhiites and others who visit to see the grandeur of the Capital City. When... It's in our hands!"

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti; Darshan Smriti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INFANT LIVES LOST

Madam — The shocking fire accident in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of Maharani Laxmibai Medical College in Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, in which at least 10 newborn babies died due to burns and suffocation and some still struggling for their lives, is really heart-wrenching. Just a few months back, a devastating fire in a newborn care unit of a children's hospital in Delhi had claimed the precious lives of infants. Lack of preparedness, readiness to tackle fire accidents, be it due to short circuit or any other sort and lack of awareness on what to do in case of such incidents make us victims to infernos. The death of these little innocent infants poses a big question: when are we really going to learn our lessons? Be it hospitals or hotels, movie halls or malls, people may not have the slightest bit of idea about the escape routes, layouts and other possible ways of escape in case of an inferno. Staff of the concerned establishments should be prepared to rescue or at least guide the guests to safety. Intensive care units and baby care units should definitely have safety arrangements so that such fire accidents can be prevented. Buildings should have a common way to exit that anyone, irrespective of age and gender, should be able to identify and escape immediately. Buildings should have proper fire and electricity safety devices and these must be checked occasionally. Staff, especially in sensitive places like hospitals, schools, and hotels, should take part in mock drills and be ever ready in case of emergency. Schools and colleges should include fire disaster management lessons in their physical education curriculum so that we can groom citizens who can face such emergencies boldly, wisely, and bravely and even help the weak and those who are very young.

M Pradyu | Kannur

BULLDOZER RULE ENDS

Madam — The spirit of the verdict should sensitise all the concerned. Bulldozing the structures of those who are branded as

Secure online transactions



The rapid growth of digital payments, from banking to shopping, has made everything done online nowadays; it has opened doors for scammers as they continue to evolve their methods to con people in newer ways. Cybercriminals are

employing new tricks to defraud individuals, like fake UPI transaction images, net banking fraud through emails, etc. And from common citizens to government officials, no one is untouched by these scammers.

There are various things that we must do if we fall prey to such scammers, like contacting authorised customer care centers, reporting incidents immediately to the National Cyber Crime Helpline, documenting everything, keeping strong passwords, and staying informed through social media, etc. A strong and rigorous awareness campaign has to be started by the government of India so that these scammers do not have a free run & individuals are safe.

Bal Govind | Noida

criminals and those of communally ostracised is an act that proclaims the rule of a dictator and the death of democracy. The rule of law is thrown in bins and the individual's whims and fancies of the persons at the helm of power prevail only in a totalitarian state.

The salient feature of the verdict is the part that recommends payment of compensation to the victims. The bureaucratic section should stick to the statutory provisions and should not dance to the tunes of those in power, as persons in power may come and go but laws prevail forever. Also, those who permit illegal constructions in the water areas should be penalised by making them compensate the victims when such structures are razed. But the crux of the issue is the corruption and avaricious attitude of the political bigwigs to enjoy a monopoly in enjoying asset accumulation by demolishing dissents and oppositions. The real solution to such issues could emerge only from a people's movement against corruption.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

DELHI POLLUTION CRISIS

Madam — The Delhi Chief Minister Atishi has directed all educational institutions, particularly the primary schools, to shift to online classes while going by the very high risk of AQI in the state. The Delhi civic authorities started implementing methods like sprinkling water with dust suppressants on roads, as well as mechanised sweeping that would help settle dust, which also came into effect. There is a ban on non-essential constructions in the world's most polluted capital. The air quality has worsened to the level that the image of the Taj Mahal appears to be a kind of ghost at the moment. The manmade calamity by worsening air conditions and the cleaning up of the image by the Delhi government's AAP has become like a war for them, which is symbolic of the party's election symbol, the 'Broom', to rebuild their unclean image nearing the elections along with other major issues.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Let us be comfortable with silence to discover inner self



ASHA IYER KUMAR

Silence is empowering, it not only gives peace but also strength and clarity. It invites us to reconnect with our inner calm, a solitude we often shun

I am writing this column from the quiet environs of an Alpine valley in Germany. The winter has set in, turning the skies grey and the air bleary. This small town in Bavaria withdraws into its living rooms as early as 4.30 pm when darkness falls and then there is only silence all around, made palpable by the dwindling traffic and people on the streets. For someone who is used to the non-stop noise of metropolitan Dubai, this silence is new and comforting. The downtime it offers is not everyone's cup of tea though, for silence can be disconcerting to many. Its virtues are disregarded and it is taken as a sign of lethargy and dispiritedness, an absence of inspiration and the ultimate sign of an introverted personality. In a world teeming with sounds, silence has become something of an endangered species. It is the quietude that we collectively fear as if the absence of words leaves us exposed, untethered, and somehow incomplete. When conversations taper off,



there's often an instinctual drive to fill the void, a compulsion to keep the hum of interaction alive lest silence brings its "awkwardness" into the room. But I often wonder, is silence something to be avoided? Or is it, in fact, a sanctuary we have lost touch with, one that could lead us back to ourselves? I think of the times I have seen people—close friends, even strangers—grapple with the discomfort of a pause, reaching for words as if they were life preservers in a sea of quiet. We are, it seems, constantly seeking refuge in noise, hoping it will drown out whatever solitude and reflection might stir in us if given the chance. Silence is perceived as

emptiness, a fearful space, rather than a fertile ground for connection and self-discovery. We are conditioned to believe that engagement is strength and that silence, somehow, signals inadequacy. To be quiet in conversation is almost seen as a failing; we are regarded as "shy" or "distant." Yet, silence has its richness, a subtle power that invites us into the fullness of presence, something words cannot always offer. In silence, we are called to listen, not only to others but also to our inner voice and perhaps that's where the unease begins. The quiet holds a mirror up to us, revealing what lies within when the outside world fades to a hush. Silence invites us to reconnect with an inner calm, a solitude we often shun. Instead of fearing what might emerge in the absence of chatter, we might learn to find comfort in simply being—without the compulsion to fill every moment with talk. In this way, silence is not a void; it is an invitation to pause, to settle our racing minds and to let the

dust of daily life drift gently to the ground. Consider, too, the depth that silence brings to relationships. When we share a moment of quiet with someone, we are not erasing the connection; we are deepening it. It is in these pauses that we see each other most clearly, unfiltered by words, and held by the simple act of shared presence. Yet, our tendency to fear silence as awkward makes us miss the power of these moments—times when we could breathe alongside one another, unburdened by the need to perform or impress. It is time we learn to embrace silence not as an absence but as a presence—a steady, gentle force that grounds us when words have exhausted their role. For in those quiet spaces, we can find not just peace, but a reservoir of strength and clarity, one that restores rather than depletes, and brings solace to our weary souls. (The author is a columnist and children's writing coach based in Dubai; views are personal)





FIRST COLUMN

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership redefines leadership, emphasising the leader's role as a servant to their team



SAKSHI SETHI

In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, the traditional top-down leadership model is often insufficient for addressing the challenges organisations and communities face. The concept of servant leadership approach which, prioritises service to others over self-interest, has emerged as a vital alternative for fostering trust, collaboration and sustainable success.

Servant leadership is grounded in a set of key principles such as empathy, awareness, commitment to growth, stewardship that distinguish it from traditional, top-down leadership models. Trust in leadership across industries is at an all-time low, exacerbated by scandals, corporate greed and exploitative practices. By putting people first, servant leaders create a foundation of reliability and authenticity that restores faith in leadership.

Nowadays modern employees seek more than just a paycheck. They want meaningful work, supportive environments and leaders who genuinely care about their growth and wellbeing. Servant leadership aligns with these expectations by fostering empowerment, empathy and commitment to growth. This approach helps organisations attract and retain top talent in competitive job markets. Servant Leadership has proven effective in various contexts, from corporate settings to community organisations. Companies like Southwest Airlines and Starbucks have integrated servant leadership into their management philosophies, resulting in loyal employees and strong customer relationships. In education, servant leadership fosters supportive environments where teachers and students thrive. Similarly, nonprofit organisations benefit from servant leaders who prioritise the needs of the communities they serve.



It is often believed that, in times of crisis, such as economic downturns or global pandemics, organisations with servant leaders are more likely to thrive as these leaders provide stability and reassurance to their teams; prioritise people over profits during tough times and even empower employees to adapt and innovate. In an era where businesses are held accountable for their societal and environmental impact, servant leadership helps organisations fulfill their social responsibilities. By focusing on stewardship and community building, servant leaders ensure that their organisations contribute positively to society.

While servant leadership offers numerous benefits, it is not without its challenges. Its emphasis on service, empathy and community-building can sometimes create complexities, especially in environments that demand rapid decision-making or highly competitive strategies. Undeniably, this approach is a compassionate and effective approach in many scenarios but is not a one-size-fits-all solution. To succeed, it must be carefully balanced with the demands of the organisation and tailored to the specific context in which it is applied. By placing the wellbeing and development of others at the forefront, servant leaders foster trust, collaboration and sustainable success. In an era where ethical leadership is more important than ever, adopting the principles of servant leadership can lead to profound, lasting impact not just within organisations, but in society as a whole. By serving first, leaders ultimately inspire and empower others to achieve their fullest potential.

In essence, servant leadership is about flipping the traditional power dynamic. Instead of a command-and-control approach, servant leaders focus on collaboration, ethical behaviour and the empowerment of others to create more effective and meaningful outcomes. In a world that increasingly demands empathy, collaboration and accountability, servant leadership is more than a philosophy it is a necessity.

(The writer is an educator; views expressed are personal)

Supreme Court strikes down 'bulldozer injustice'



K S TOMAR

By reinforcing legal safeguards, the Apex Court seeks to restore public trust in the justice system and ensure that no citizen is denied their constitutional rights

A historic Supreme Court verdict against "bulldozer justice" promises broad legal, social, and administrative impacts, addressing concerns around the unchecked, high-handed demolition of properties linked to criminal accusations. Such actions have often violated the fundamental tenets of the Indian Constitution. This ruling holds direct implications for BJP-ruled states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Assam and the Delhi Municipal Corporation, which have been accused of misusing administrative powers to punish marginalised sections of society without due legal process.

The concept of "bulldozer justice" was notably invented by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath, earning him the nickname "Bulldozer Baba" among supporters. The Court's verdict marks a setback to the UP government, though CM may not express regret for actions nullified by the ruling, which had previously jeopardised the constitutional guarantees afforded to all Indian citizens.

Social Implications Protection of Marginalised Communities: The ruling acknowledges that bulldozer justice has disproportionately impacted marginalised groups. By mandating due process, the Court aims to prevent biased or retaliatory actions against vulnerable communities, promoting equal treatment under the law. **Public Trust in the Rule of Law:** By condemning bulldozer justice, the Supreme Court seeks to rebuild public confidence in lawful governance, fostering trust that the state will not bypass legal safeguards to punish alleged offenders.

Awareness and Advocacy: This judgment may empower civil rights groups to challenge arbitrary demolitions, advocating for the rights of those affected by unilateral property destruction. Administrative and Policy Impact.

Reduced Arbitrary Actions: Administrative bodies may now face restrictions against immediate demolition practices that bypass judicial processes, holding them accountable to legal frameworks designed to protect against arbitrary punishment. This could encourage a fairer and more equitable application of laws.

Policy Revisions at the State Level: States that have regularly employed demolitions as a form of "bulldozer justice" may need to revisit their policies, ensuring alignment with constitutional rights to property and due process. This could result in tighter guidelines and even statutory changes. **Limit on Executive Power:** The Court's disapproval of unilateral demolition reinforces the separation of powers, signaling that executive decisions must strictly adhere to legal boundaries.

Legal and Judicial Consequences Strengthened Due Process: The ruling reaffirms that demolitions must respect due process, requiring legal scrutiny rather than administrative discretion. This will likely lead to the implementation of judicial approval for demolition orders, protecting citizens' rights against arbitrary state actions.

Increased Judicial Oversight: The ruling could result in heightened court involvement in cases where demolitions serve as punitive responses to alleged crimes, particularly in cases involving minority or marginalised groups.

Pressure for National Guidelines: The Supreme Court suggested nationwide stan-



ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES MAY NOW FACE RESTRICTIONS AGAINST IMMEDIATE DEMOLITION PRACTICES THAT BYPASS JUDICIAL PROCESSES, HOLDING THEM ACCOUNTABLE TO LEGAL FRAMEWORKS DESIGNED TO PROTECT AGAINST ARBITRARY PUNISHMENT

dards for property demolitions related to criminal cases, which could formalise rules for state authorities to follow, reducing current ambiguities.

Supreme Court Justices BR Gavai and KV Viswanathan made impactful assertions, noting that demolitions based solely on accusations violate fundamental rights. The Court emphasised the presumption of innocence and mandated a 15-day notice period, allowing tenants or owners time to challenge demolition orders or make necessary arrangements. This highlights the right to shelter under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

The Court warned that contempt proceedings could follow violations of these guidelines and responsible officials may face compensation liabilities for restitution. This ruling stemmed from controversial demolitions in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, alongside a Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind petition challenging demolitions in Delhi's Jahangirpuri in 2022. Data show that state laws on demolitions were often violated in Uttar Pradesh, a state pioneering "bulldozer justice."

The Uttar Pradesh Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973, requires a minimum 15-day notice before unauthorised structures can be removed, with a right to appeal. However, the 2022 demolitions, where structures were razed without due process, led to the Jamiat-Ulama-i-Hind's petition to the Supreme Court.

In another significant instance, former Chief Justice Chandrachud, before his retirement on November 9, and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra directed the Uttar Pradesh government

to pay Rs 25 lakh as compensation to a man whose home was demolished in 2019 for a road-widening project.

The Court expressed concern over state actions that could potentially use demolitions as selective reprisals, noting that citizens' voices must not be stifled by the threat of losing their homes. In Rajasthan, demolition laws under Section 245 of the Rajasthan Municipalities Act, 2009, require prior written notice detailing the grounds for eviction.

Following communal tensions in Udaipur, authorities issued a quick notice before demolishing a house on alleged forest land encroachment, contravening local law requirements for a reasonable response period. Section 91 of the Rajasthan Forest Act, 1953, restricts eviction orders to be issued only by a Tehsildar.

The Madhya Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1961, stipulates that any unauthorised building alteration or construction may be removed, but only after notice. However, this was ignored when a labourer's home was demolished immediately after his son's arrest, raising rights violation concerns.

Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957, the commissioner can remove illegal structures but must give reasonable opportunity for owners to dispute the action. The Jahangirpuri incident in 2022 highlighted the need for due process, intensifying scrutiny on such practices. In Haryana, demolitions are governed by Section 261 of the Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, which mandates a notice period with an opportunity to contest. However, after communal violence in Nuh

in 2023, authorities demolished over 440 structures, mostly affecting Muslim households. Although similar to Delhi's DMC Act, Haryana's compliance period is notably shorter—only three days, leaving owners little time for appeals.

Strengthening Accountability: The Supreme Court's new guidelines aim to check arbitrary demolitions and uphold legal protections, particularly for vulnerable tenants. These regulations emphasise that adequate notice, transparency, and due process must be integral to any demolition order. While state laws vary, adherence to these guidelines will be essential in ensuring that demolitions respect both legal and constitutional rights, strengthening administrative accountability.

A Fundamental Shift in the Justice System: The Supreme Court of India's recent ruling against "bulldozer justice" was a response to cases where properties of individuals accused of crimes, especially those involving communal violence, were demolished without legal due process. The Court underscored that demolitions must be legally justified and cannot bypass established procedures. It criticised this practice for disproportionately impacting marginalised communities, violating human rights, and eroding public trust. In essence, this ruling reaffirms the constitutional right to due process, expected to curb the trend of using demolitions as extrajudicial punitive measures. The ruling marks a shift toward a justice system grounded in fairness, procedure, and accountability.

(The author is a political analyst and strategic affairs columnist; views are personal)

Tackling the epidemic of diabetes and hypertension: Urgent action needed

Lack of awareness and limited early screening make these two lifestyle diseases rampant

Diabetes and hypertension are two interconnected yet distinct chronic diseases that collectively strain public health. Both conditions share underlying risk factors, such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and high stress levels. They also frequently co-occur, accelerating the onset of severe complications and amplifying each other's impact.



PANKAJ BHARDWAJ

Diabetes and hypertension significantly increase the risk for cardiovascular diseases, chronic kidney disease, stroke, and eye disorders, forming a "double-edged sword" for health. In particular, hypertension, when combined with diabetes, can increase the likelihood of heart disease and stroke. Management of these conditions in India is challeng-

ing due to lack of awareness, inadequate early screening and inaction, particularly in rural and resource-poor areas. More than half a billion people are living with diabetes globally. This is only expected to more than double in the next 30 years, in almost every country, according to a Lancet study. When it comes to hypertension, over a billion people—

1 in every 4 men and 1 in 5 women—are living with this condition, which ranks as one of the leading causes of premature death worldwide. In addition to this, WHO states that more than 50 per cent of people with diabetes and about 46 per cent of adults living with hypertension don't even know about their condition. It is safe to argue that lack of awareness is the biggest problem here. Both conditions have become the largest, silent, dual epidemics currently challenging India. The Cost of Inaction: Tertiary treatment for complications from advanced diabetes and hypertension—such as heart disease, kidney failure, or stroke—is exponentially more costly than primary health interventions. In 2024, reports from different

Insurance companies showed that the cost of a kidney transplant in public sector hospitals in India generally goes up to 6 lakhs.

This estimate is significantly lower than in private hospitals, which can go up to INR 15 lakhs or more, due to higher administrative and facility fees. Similarly, cardiac surgery can range anywhere between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 15 lakhs. In contrast, medication for diabetes and hypertension cost potentially up to only Rs 10,000 yearly, which is otherwise completely free of cost if obtained from a Government hospital.

Thus, investing in primary care interventions is far more cost-effective and sustainable than managing advanced complications. Reducing the



Burden: Encouraging people to take ownership of their health and get regular check-ups could prevent costly treatments.

One person's decision to monitor their blood pressure or blood sugar levels could save thousands in healthcare costs—covering medication, hospital beds and medical staff—funds that could otherwise be allocated to proactive community health services.

This alone could lead to a decrease in the incidence of severe complications, ultimately saving lives and reducing the overall societal cost.

A Path Forward: Our country needs to work on three fronts parallelly: first, increasing awareness campaigns, second, enhancing access to screenings and third, ensuring widespread support for affordable primary care.

Educating communities, especially in rural areas, about the importance of early detection can create a more health-conscious society that seeks intervention before these conditions spiral.

At the same time, the government's initiatives, such as the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes,

Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS), need robust on-the-ground implementation to reach every corner of the country. The National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS) was launched in 2010 by the Government of India, as a game changer.

It aims to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) through early diagnosis, management, and health promotion. The programme focuses on four major NCDs—cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and stroke—due to their high prevalence and impact on public health. It equips our communities to battle hypertension and dia-

betes through accessible screenings and preventive care. By catching issues early and promoting lifestyle change, we're not just treating diseases—we're transforming health outcomes and reclaiming years of productive life across India.

Conclusion: Addressing diabetes and hypertension isn't just a medical issue; it's a societal one. India's battle against these diseases demands the willingness of individuals to seek preventive care, awareness of the risks, and action by both govt and citizens to implement and utilise early detection programs. Only then can we mitigate these silent but pervasive epidemics and prevent a looming healthcare crisis.

(The author is a public health expert; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

India's free trade pacts not paused: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Says all talks progressing as per schedule

Negotiations for all the proposed free trade agreements, including those with the UK and European Union (EU), are progressing as per the schedule and the country's FTAs are not paused, a top government official has said.

The official said that an impression is going around that FTAs are paused, which is not correct.

"All our FTAs, whether it is with the EU or UK, all are progressing as per the schedule," the official said.

In the coming weeks, a bilateral meeting is scheduled between the commerce secretary and the Director-General of the European Union to take stock of the negotiations for the proposed trade agreement with the European Union.

They will also meet as part of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC).

Besides the EU and the UK, India is negotiating these agreements with Australia, Peru, Sri Lanka, and Oman.



In such pacts, two trading partners either significantly cut customs duties or remove the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease norms to promote trade in services and attract investments.

India has so far implemented FTAs with a number of nations including Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the UAE.

According to the commerce ministry, the next round of negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement between India and South American nation Peru will be held after finalisation of the FTA strategy.

The standard operating procedure (SOP) or strategy document for negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) is expected to be ready by the end of this

year. It is an internal document aiming to standardise the processes of negotiations of these pacts.

The ministry has also informed that the negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) with Oman were completed in March this year, but further discussions are ongoing.

Food inflation to moderate in next 2 quarters: Marico

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

FMCG major Marico is looking for double-digit growth in the second half of FY25 and expects the prevailing high food inflation to moderate in the next two quarters, which will help revive urban consumption, its MD & CEO Saugata Gupta said.

The company, which has already gone for a price hike for its Saffola range, expects a similar action from other FMCG players as prices of raw materials such as coffee, cocoa, and palm oil have gone up.

"In the sector, there will be some price increases. If you look at some other input costs for other players, there has been a globally significant increase in the prices of coffee, and cocoa, and so there is a little bit of inflation situation and now you are seeing a significant increase in palm oil prices."

"So across the sector, there will be some price increase," Gupta told PTI.

However, he also pointed out that most of the big-scale FMCG manufacturers would try to absorb a portion of the increase in the commodity prices through various cost management initiatives and extend a small part of the burden, as volume growth also matters.

"I think it will be smart to absorb some of these costs and (pass on) only a part to the consumer, given the demand situation, because at the end of the day, volume, growth and market share are far more important in the short and medium and long term," he said, adding, "margins always come back for scale players."

Besides, the other driver of the input costs is crude oil and Gupta does not expect any major volatility in the near-term there.

Over Marico -- the maker of Saffola and Parachute -- Gupta said he is pretty hopeful of trying to improve that sequential volume growth a bit in the second half of the ongoing fiscal year.



"In the sector, there will be some price increases. If you look at some other input costs for other players, there has been a globally significant increase in the prices of coffee, and cocoa, So there is a little bit of inflation situation and now you are seeing a significant increase in palm oil prices."

However, he added, "There are challenges in terms of input cost, which could ensure a margin will lag a little bit of revenue growth."

The biggest concern right now is food inflation.

"We expect that to hopefully to moderate over the next two quarters and then the urban growth is expected to recover because that has been impacted a little bit by the high food inflation that is prevailing," he said.

Marico, which had reported a 7.6 per cent increase in consolidated revenue to Rs 2,664 crore for the September quarter along with a 20.2 per cent rise in PAT, is witnessing a sequential volume improvement.

"Our revenue growth is also in high single-digits and we are fairly confident about revenue moving into double digits in the second half of the year," he said.



'Sagarmanthan' to begin from today

Sagarmanthan, South Asia's largest maritime thought leadership forum, will begin on Monday, according to an official statement. Organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) in association with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), the maiden edition of 'Sagarmanthan - The Great Oceans Dialogue' aims to foster knowledge on maritime sector and provide a premier global platform for global leaders, policy makers, business moguls, thought leaders and visionaries to share, learn and shape actionable insights towards effective decisions for a future ready, sustainable and efficient marine sector, the statement said. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said, "Sagarmanthan is an attempt at celebrating the best available knowledge in maritime sector from global experts with deep understanding, wisdom and insights on upcoming trends." Sonowal further said as India's role as an important and key maritime player has increased manifold, this platform offers a premier platform for everyone to seek knowledge, share wisdom, chalk out pathways and set the course for maritime sector's collective journey onwards.



FM answers to X user seeking tax relief

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday responded to an X user seeking tax relief for the middle class, saying the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government attends to people's concerns. "PM @narendramodi's government is a responsive government. Listens and attends to people's voices. Thanks once again for your understanding. Your input is valuable," Sitharaman replied to the user on X. The user had posted: "I humbly request you to consider providing some relief for the middle class. I understand the immense challenges involved, but it's just a heartfelt request." Sitharaman also said, "I recognise and appreciate your concern."



Prestige Estates to launch Rs 52 K cr housing projects

Realty firm Prestige Estates Projects Ltd plans to launch housing projects worth Rs 52,000 crore by March next year to encash surge in demand for residential properties. In its latest investors presentation, Prestige Estates has mentioned that the company plans to launch multiple projects in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Goa, and Delhi-NCR comprising more than 53 million sq ft area with a total sales bookings value of Rs 52,114 crore. According to a transcript of conference call with analysts, Prestige Estates CMD Irfan Razack expressed confidence that the company will be able to meet its sales bookings guidance for this fiscal year at Rs 24,000 crore. During the 2023-24 fiscal year, Prestige Estates clocked record sales booking of Rs 21,040 crore. Prestige Estates recorded sales of Rs 4,022.6 crore in the September quarter as against Rs 7,092.6 crore in the year-ago period. During the April-September period, the company's sales bookings fell to Rs 7,052.2 crore as against Rs 11,007.3 crore in the corresponding period last year. Nevertheless, Razack is confident of not only meeting the target but exceeding it considering the strong pipeline of new launches.

Anil's Group sets up centre to helm 2030 growth strategy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Anil Ambani's Reliance Group has launched the Reliance Group Corporate Centre (RGCC) as part of its 2030 growth strategy.

"The RGCC will serve as a strategic hub, providing guidance to the Group's companies as they pursue new opportunities and technological advancements," the firm said in a statement.

The core team of RGCC will include experienced leaders of the Group -- Sateesh Seth, Punit Garg, and K Raja Gopal.

Garg currently leads as CEO of Reliance Infrastructure, while K Raja Gopal has been

at the helm of Reliance Power for six years.

He has over 27 years experience in the power sector. Other leaders from the Group companies will also be invited to the RGCC.

"The establishment of RGCC aims to harness the in-house expertise of these seasoned leaders to support the Group's forward-looking growth initiatives and cultivate a new generation of leadership for future project," the statement said.

The RGCC will play a pivotal role in mentoring and developing emerging leaders, blending experience with fresh talent to propel the Group towards sustained growth.



ACME Sun Power secures Rs 3,753-cr term loan from REC



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ACME Sun Power, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACME Solar Holdings, has secured a Rs 3,753-crore term loan from state-owned REC Ltd.

The loan has been secured for the development and construction of a 320-MW firm and dispatchable renewable energy (FDRE) project in collaboration with SJVN.

Wholly-owned subsidiary ACME Sun Power Secures Rs 3,753 crore loan from REC for FDRE projects in Rajasthan and Gujarat, ACME Solar Holdings said in a statement on Sunday.

An FDRE plant ensures round-the-clock power supply, assisting power distribution companies (discoms) in fulfilling their renewable purchase obligations and energy storage obligations.

The project would be located at high resource potential areas at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan for solar capacity and Bhuj and Jam Khambhaliya, Gujarat for wind sites, the company said.

A power purchase agreement has been signed with SJVN and the grid connectivity has also been secured. The land acquisition process is in advanced stages, the company said.

Manoj Kumar Upadhyay, Chairman and Founder of ACME Solar Holdings, said, "We are delighted to receive this financial assistance, which reinforces the trust and confidence of our lenders. This funding is a significant step in strengthening our commitment to building world-class FDRE renewable energy projects and contributing to India's green energy transition."

Davos meet to focus on 'collaboration for intelligent age'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

'Collaboration for the intelligent age' would be at the core of discussions when over 100 business and government leaders from India join their global counterparts at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in January 2025.

Expected to be attended by nearly 50 heads of states and governments from across the world, the annual meeting from January 20-24, 2025 would take place in the backdrop of a change of regime in the US and various geopolitical and macroeconomic issues including the Ukraine war and the continuing West Asia crisis.

Besides Union ministers and civil society leaders, the Indian presence would be comprised of top executives of business conglomerates like

Reliance, Tata, Adani, Birla, Bharti, Mahindra, Godrej, Jindal, Bajaj and Vedanta groups.

Besides Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani, the next-generation leaders from their groups are also expected to be present, while technology leaders including Salil Parekh of Infosys, Rishad Premji of Wipro, as also Sumanth Sinha of ReNew, Vijay Shekhar Sharma of Paytm and Adar Poonawalla of Serum Institute are expected in the Swiss Alpine resort town.

Geneva-based WEF, which describes itself as an international organisation for public-private cooperation, will convene leaders from government, business and civil society as well as scientific and cultural thinkers for its 55th annual meeting under the theme of 'Collaboration for the Intelligent Age'.

FII trading, global trends to dictate trends: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Trading activity of foreign investors and global trends will be the major driving factors for the equity markets in a holiday-shortened week ahead, according to analysts.

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE have declared a trading holiday on November 20 for assembly elections in Maharashtra.

Elections to the 288-member state legislative assembly will be held on November 20, and votes will be counted on November 23.

"The Indian stock market will remain shut on Wednesday, November 20, in observance of Maharashtra assembly elections. The election results, along with key global economic indicators,



including US bond yields, dollar index performance, US unemployment claims, flash manufacturing and services PMI data, and Japan's inflation data, will be pivotal in shaping market direction.

"High US bond yields and a strengthening dollar post-election have impacted emerging markets like India, and FII

(Foreign Institutional Investors) activity remains a key factor, influencing Indian equities in the near term," Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investment Ltd, said.

The movement of global oil benchmark Brent crude and rupee-dollar trend would also influence trading in the market, experts said.

"This week is also shortened due to a holiday, and with the earnings season largely concluded, attention will shift back to FII flows. Foreign institutional investors have been on a consistent selling spree for the past month and a half. Additionally, traders will keep a close watch on global market trends," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark gauge Sensex fell 1,906.01 points or 2.39 per cent.

Equity markets were closed on Friday for Guru Nanak Jayanti.

The BSE benchmark fell a massive 8,397.94 points or 9.76 per cent from its all-time high, and the Nifty has also lost 2,744.65 points or 10.44 per cent from the record peak.

When DLF's K P Singh fulfilled Rajiv's wish of bringing GE to India!

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

When Rajiv Gandhi was the prime minister, he was determined to bring General Electric into India and his wish was fulfilled by DLF's K P Singh, who helped catalyse the American giant's presence in this country, says a new book.

Singh talks about his journey through India's transforming landscapes and his indelible contributions to the industry in "Why the Heck Not?", published by Penguin Random House India.

Co-authored with Aparna Jain, Singh also writes about the bold risks and visionary decisions that shaped his career, as well as the challenges he overcame.

Delving into the GE story, the book says in the mid to late '80s, Gandhi revered GE chairman and CEO Jack Welch as a business icon.



Determined to bring him to India, he dispatched the Indian envoy in Washington, Ambassador P K Kaul, to extend a formal invitation, it says.

"At the time, India was not globally known for business prospects and was not a priority on the lists of investors and entrepreneurs. Jack refused Kaul, bluntly stating that he would not waste his time visit-

ing India," it says.

Singh then recalls an evening in 1988 when Gandhi's secretary, Sarla Grewal, met at a formal dinner and urged him to fulfil the prime minister's wish, regardless of obstacles.

Singh knew it was a difficult task but still said he would "meet Welch, gauge his pulse and see if I can convince him for an India visit".

Welch had then just married and Singh proposed that the couple should come and see the "romantic Taj Mahal".

Soon, Jack was scheduled for a four-day visit. "I don't want to meet any fuddy-duddies. The youth are the ones with promise. I want to meet young leaders and businesspeople," he told Singh.

Retail tomato prices drop 22.4 pc on improved supplies: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail tomato prices declined 22.4 per cent month-on-month on improved supplies across the country, the Consumer Affairs Ministry said on Sunday.



The all-India average retail price of tomatoes stood at Rs 52.35 per kg on November 14, down from Rs 67.50 per kg on October 14, according to an official statement.

During the same period,

corrections were reported from key markets like Pimpalgaon (Maharashtra), Madanapalle (Andhra Pradesh), and Kolar (Karnataka), the ministry said.

"Though arrivals have subsided at major tomato centres in Madanapalle and Kolar, prices have eased due to seasonal supplies from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat filling supply gaps nationwide," it added.

Favourable weather conditions have supported both crop

growth and smooth supply chain movement from fields to consumers, the statement noted.

The country's tomato production is projected to increase 4 per cent to 213.20 lakh tonne in 2023-24. While tomatoes are grown year-round, production varies seasonally across regions. The ministry said adverse weather and logistics disruptions significantly impact prices due to the crop's high susceptibility and perishable nature.

THE SABARMATI REPORT

Fearless attempt marred by flawed misstep

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

The *Sabarmati Report* is influenced by a tragic event in history, in which a coach of the Sabarmati Express was set ablaze close to the town of Godhra in Gujarat. The train journeyed from Ayodhya to Ahmedabad, leading to the deaths of several individuals, primarily Hindu pilgrims coming back from a religious event in Ayodhya. The blaze was allegedly initiated by a mob and victims were unable to escape, when the carriage was consumed by fire. The event triggered extensive violence throughout Gujarat, resulting in communal clashes that persisted for many weeks. The incident, which is one of the darkest pages in history, continues to haunt millions of Indians.

PLOT

The movie centers around Samar Kumar (played by Vikrant Massey), a Hindi journalist entangled in the office politics of the newsroom. The story develops as Samar, with the assistance of a youthful journalist called Amrita Gill (played by Raashii Khanna), works to reveal the reality of Godhra to the public. The film's plot revolves around the search for truth and a major media outlet's attempt to conceal it.

HIGHLIGHTS

The highlights of *The Sabarmati*

Report include the chilling recreation of the Godhra Train Burning sequence, a pivotal moment in the film. The intense courtroom confrontation between Samar and the politician is another standout scene. The film effectively uncovers the conspiracy behind the riots, exposing shocking truths. Thought-provoking themes of justice, accountability and communal tensions are woven throughout. The film's technical aspects, including haunting cinematography, a haunting background score and skillful editing, add depth. Impactful moments including the climax, where a powerful verdict is delivered, Amrita Gill's emotional testimony and hard-hitting dialogue will make you hooked.

DRAWBACKS

However, *The Sabarmati Report* does have its own drawbacks. The film's graphic violence and disturbing imagery may be triggering for some viewers, while its emotional intensity could overwhelm certain audiences due to the sensitive subject matter. Pacing issues arise, with some scenes feeling rushed or dragging and the emphasis on melodrama slightly detracts from the fact-based narrative. The film's messaging sometimes feels heavy-handed, with themes feeling forced or didactic and the portrayal of complex political and social issues lacks nuance. Additionally, some historical inaccuracies or creative liberties are taken and the tone unevenly balances drama, thriller and social commentary elements.



DIRECTED BY: Dheeraj Sarna
PRODUCED BY: Balaji Motion Pictures and Vikir Films Production
CAST: Vikrant Massey, Raashii Khanna, Ridhi Dogra, Barkha Singh, Nazneen Patni, Hella Stichmair, Aryan Ardent, Sundip Ved, Prince Kashyap, Sandeep Kumar, Rohit Ameriya, Al Arjun, Anjali Nadig and Tushar Phulke
WRITTEN BY: Arjun Bhandegaonkar, Avinash Singh Tomar and Vipin Agnihotri
MUSIC BY: Kartik Kush, Akhil Sachdeva, Anu Malik and Arko
RATING: 3/5

PERFORMANCES

Vikrant Massey can effortlessly embody any character. True that! Just like always, Massey being a skilled actor, effortlessly adapts to

any role he is assigned, whether it be a black or white character. Describing his excellent performance as a Hindi journalist would be an understatement. This exper-

rienced actor really stands out as Samar. Even though his dialogues make a strong impression, as usual, it is his eyes that do the speaking. With flawless

execution, Ridhi Dogra portrays Manika as a strong and no-nonsense individual, unwavering in her convictions. Dogra masterfully blends strength, passion and unwavering self-assurance, making Manika an unforgettable figure. Her character is marked by unapologetic assertiveness, sharp intellect and empathetic yet unflinching commitment to truth and justice. Meanwhile, Raashii Khanna shines in her role as Amrita. She brings a strong sense of depth and sincerity to her character, fully honouring the script.

Her character embodies vulnerability, courage and determination, conveying emotional depth through poignant portrayals of pain, loss and struggle for justice. Amrita's narrative arc showcases inner strength, navigating complex emotions from grief to anger and ultimately, hope. Her story evokes empathy, making her relatable and endearing to audiences.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Cinematography by Amalendu Chaudhary captures the stark real-

ities of riot-torn Gujarat, employing muted colors and stark lighting to convey the somber mood. The cinematography's blend of close-ups, wide shots, and aerial views creates a visceral experience. The editing by Manan Sagar is crisp, seamlessly interweaving multiple narrative threads. The background score by the team is haunting and evocative, amplifying tension and emotional depth. The sound design effectively recreates the chaos and intensity of the riots. Production design meticulously recreates the early 2000s setting, adding authenticity. The film's visual effects are subtle yet effective, enhancing key sequences.

Despite these, *The Sabarmati Report* has some technical drawbacks. The pacing occasionally falters, with uneven editing transitions disrupting the narrative flow in a few scenes. Certain visual effects appear inconsistent and lacking in polish.

VERDICT

The Sabarmati Report offers an intriguing perspective on a pivotal event in Indian history, despite some narrative detours. While its intentions occasionally waver, the film regains focus for an impactful climax. Decent performances from the cast elevate the viewing experience. It's a worth watching for those interested in fact-based dramas and social commentaries, but with tempered expectations.

Karanvir Sharma tapping real-life experience for emotional connectivity

AARTI SREENATH
aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

Karanvir Sharma, known for his gripping portrayals of Shaurya Sabarwal in *Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani* and the intense Haider Akhtar in *Rab Se Dua*, has made a mark in the world of Indian television. His performances, marked by their emotional depth and raw intensity, have earned him recognition and a dedicated fan base. But as the actor reflects on his career, it's clear that his aspirations go far beyond just the small screen.

Starting from his early days in television, he speaks humbly about his journey from his initial projects like *Zid* to his most latest popular roles.

As *The Pioneer* connects exclusively with the talented actor, we were struck not just by his humility, but also by his palpable sense of anticipation. "The most defining moment of my career is yet to come," he says with a confident hint of mystery in his voice. "The milestone I'm waiting for will happen next year. That's what keeps me motivated. It reminds me that there is always room for growth."

It's not often that you meet an actor who speaks with such conviction about their future and yet, Karan's words resonate with an unmistakable energy. Despite having achieved significant milestones in his career including his memorable turn in *Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani*, a role that won him acclaim for its depth he believes the best is yet to come.

What sets him apart from many of his peers is his unwavering commitment to his craft. He doesn't let the fame or success of a role dictate his next step. *The Zid* fame explains, "I've always been someone who chooses roles based on the strength of the character, not the recognition it brings. Whether it's a hit show or a movie, what matters to me is the story and the character I'm portraying. That's where my focus lies."

He stresses that a show's success is not just the responsibility of the actors, but a collective achievement. When comparing his approach to film roles and television roles, the *Rab Se Hai Dua* actor explains that in television, linear storytelling allows for a more continuous flow, while in films and web series, the narrative structure can be non-linear, requiring a different kind of preparation. He points out that both mediums have their unique challenges and demands but emphasises that, regardless of the format, his passion to understand the craft remains consistent.

As he reflects on his transformative performances, his complex portrayal of Shaurya, a man torn between his beliefs and his love for *Anokhi*, or *Haider Akhtar*, the conflicted man at the heart of *Rab Se Dua*, he reveals the depth of his preparation. "For me, it's all about drawing from real-life experiences," he says, leaning in thoughtfully. "I observe people around me, I read, I watch films and sometimes, it's just a fleeting moment that sticks with me. I recall a time when I saw a girl sitting silently in a hospital, her face a canvas of emotions. I didn't know her, but when I approached her, she broke down and shared everything with me. That moment became a source of inspiration for my role as Haider."

He delves into the emotional depth of his performances, particularly in roles like Shaurya Sabarwal in *Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani* and Haider Akhtar in *Rab Se Dua*. He shares a

deeply personal story about a moment in a hospital where he encountered a girl in a state of emotional distress, which later influenced his portrayal of Haider. This story highlights his approach to acting, using life experiences and the emotions of those around him as a foundation for his performances. He reflects that this empathy and deep connection with his characters are what make his portrayals resonate with audiences.

This ability to tap into real emotions is what makes his performances so believable.

Moving on to his role in *Safal Hogi Teri Aaradhna*, Sharma speaks about how the success of the show has affected his approach to acting. He remains grounded and focused on the character rather than external metrics like TRPs or fame. For him, the essence of a successful show lies in the collaborative effort—quality writing, skilled direction and the right team coming together to create something meaningful. He speaks about how the technical aspects of the show, such as high-quality cinematography and the involvement of experienced professionals, elevate the final product.

Despite his growing fame and popularity, he remains grounded, a quality that seems to define him both as an actor and a person. "What excites me most right now is not the success, but the journey ahead," he says, his eyes gleaming with optimism. "As much as I enjoy my work, I'm always looking ahead. I know that the kind of work I'm meant to do will come. Until then, I will continue to learn, grow and evolve."

As for connecting with his audience, as he reflects on his presence on social media, noting that he doesn't actively follow trends or algorithms. Instead, he focuses on authenticity. He believes that his work speaks for itself, rather than using social media to build influence. This honest approach to his career resonates with his philosophy of being an entertainer, not an influencer.

To unwind from the intensity of his professional life, he has now turned to spirituality and meditation, seeing it as a tool for staying grounded and maintaining a sense of peace amid the pressures of fame and a demanding career.

With such a mindset, it's clear that he is not just carving a path in Indian television; he's paving the way for a career that promises to transcend the medium. And while he waits for that defining moment to arrive, there's little doubt that when it does, he will be ready to take on whatever challenges lie ahead.

In a world full of fleeting trends and short-lived fame, his dedication to his craft and his belief in the power of storytelling sets him apart as one to watch in the years to come. His reflections offer valuable insights for aspiring actors and a broader audience looking to understand the complexities behind a successful career in entertainment.

Karanvir Sharma, the talented actor behind *Shaurya Aur Anokhi Ki Kahani* and *Rab Se Dua*, sits down with *The Pioneer* for an exclusive conversation, as he reflects on his journey, he reveals a sense of anticipation and conviction about his future, hinting that the best is yet to come



BORN HEALTHY, BORN STRONG:

Maternal health for premature birth prevention

Premature birth, defined as delivery before 37 weeks of pregnancy, is a significant global health challenge, often leading to long-term complications for the baby and emotional and financial stress for families. According to WHO's last data about 287,000 women died during and following pregnancy and childbirth in 2020. However, optimising maternal health and ensuring responsible fertility treatment can significantly reduce the risk of premature birth. Raising awareness about these factors is crucial for improving outcomes for both mother and child.

Maternal health: The foundation for full-term pregnancy

The journey toward a healthy pregnancy begins with the mother's overall health. Conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, obesity and infections can significantly increase the risk of preterm labour. Regular preconception health checks help identify and manage these risk factors early. Moreover, adopting a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active and avoiding harmful substances like tobacco and alcohol create an optimal environment for a full-term pregnancy.

During pregnancy, prenatal care is essential. Frequent check-ups allow healthcare providers to monitor fetal growth, manage any emerging complications and provide timely interventions. Expectant mothers are encouraged to take prescribed prenatal vitamins, especially folic acid and practice stress management, as stress hormones are linked to preterm labour.

Responsible fertility treatment: A critical role

Fertility treatments, such as in-vitro fertilization (IVF), have been a boon for couples struggling with infertility. However, they come with their own set of risks, including multiple pregnancies—a leading cause of prematurity. Responsible practices, like transferring a single blastocyst embryo during IVF and opting for advanced techniques like PGT-A and

transferring single Euploid embryo and other advances like CAPA IVM (In Vitro Maturation), can minimise these risks. CAPA IVM requires minimal hormonal stimulation, reducing the chance of ovarian hyperstimulation and lowering the likelihood of multiple pregnancies, thereby promoting safer outcomes for both mother and baby.

Global progress and the need for awareness

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the maternal mortality ratio worldwide has improved significantly, declining from 441 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1985 to 223 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2020. However, at the halfway mark to 2030, the goal of reaching a global maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 70 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births remains elusive. This progress reflects advancements in maternal health care, yet challenges like premature birth persist.

Empowering women through awareness

Awareness and education are key to preventing prematurity. Couples planning a family should consult healthcare providers early to understand their health status and the safest fertility options. Additionally, healthcare professionals must emphasise the importance of maternal health and responsible fertility practices during consultations.

Preventing premature births requires a collaborative effort between individuals, families and healthcare systems. By prioritising maternal health and advocating for safer fertility treatments, we can help more babies enjoy the benefits of a healthy, full-term start in life. Awareness is the first step toward ensuring that every child has the best possible chance to thrive.

(The author, Dr. Sai Manasa Darla, is the clinical head and fertility specialist at Oasis Fertility.)

what's brewing?



Actress Simran Choudhary, along with the founder and chairman Selvakumar and director of Somnifera, Dr. Karthik, inaugurated its state-of-the-art health and wellness centre in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad.

Shivaranjani

Simran Choudhary



Jahanvi

Pavani

Chathna

Anupama

PARTY



Tollywood Actor Nikhil Siddhartha along with *Bigg Boss 8* fame Sonia Akula inaugurated the Adayaaye Luxury Fashion Label at Banjara Hills Road No : 10. The event also marked the presence of Miss Teen India Bipasha.



Jabardasth Varsha, along with Kalyani Motors CEO - A.Venkateshwara Rao unveiled the all-new Dzire at Maruti Suzuki Arena at Kalyani motors in LB nagar, Hyderabad.

Photos by- SV Chary



Ortus International School officially opened its doors to usher in a new era of innovative, tech-enabled and holistic learning, offered through its first campus in Kokapet, Hyderabad. The launch was attended by esteemed dignitaries and education leaders from all over the country.

Yasaswini, Charita and Sneha Reddy

Sameera and Ravali



Jayesh Ranjan, special chief secretary of IT, Industries and Commerce, Government of Telangana, along with Gareth Wynn Owen, British Deputy High Commissioner, Joginder Tanikella, CEO of T-works and Ramesh Kancharla, CMD, Rainbow Children's Hospital, among the other dignitaries, marked their presence at the Premiathon-2024, The Hope Run's 3rd edition, held atHITEC City in Hyderabad.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



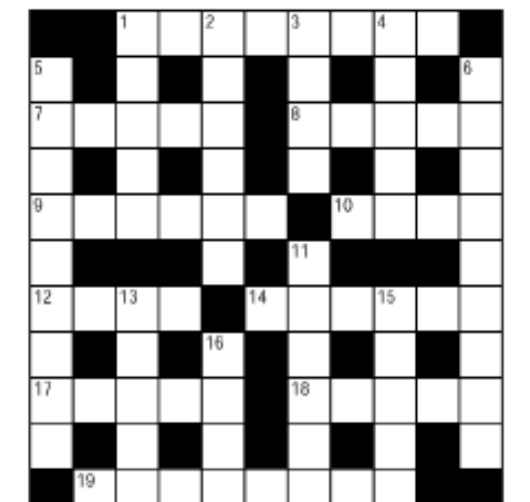
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



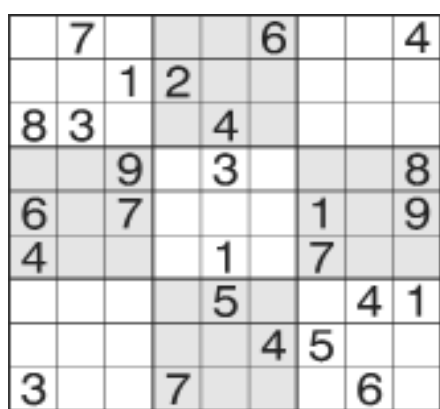
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- Large stone buildings built in ancient Egypt as tombs
- Steel pins knocked into wood
- Call in on
- Get
- A song sung by one person
- Have a lie down
- Thin cord for tying parcels
- Fabric
- Defrosts
- So smooth it is difficult to get hold of

DOWN

- Indicate direction with your finger
- Moscow is in this country
- Shift
- A type of dance club
- Wrong
- Most powerful
- A sculpted figure
- Ruin
- Rome is the capital city of this country
- Large boat



GINGER MEGGS



'Devaki Nandana Vasudeva and Murari are poles apart,' clarifies Arjun Jandyala

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Superstar Mahesh Babu's nephew Ashok Galla returns to the big screen with his second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, directed by Arjun Jandyala of *Guna 369* fame. Scheduled for release on November 22, the film has already created buzz, especially after the launch of its intriguing trailer, which hints at a mythological touch.

When asked about the apparent trend of mythological themes in Tollywood, Arjun Jandyala clarified, "It's not about following a trend. Prashanth Varma gave this story before his film *HanuMan* was released. Initially, I was supposed to work on a film for producer Balakrishna, but during that time, Prashanth Varma also narrated this story to Ashok Galla. Ashok liked it and we decided to proceed with this project first."

Jandyala further explained that Prashanth Varma was impressed by his debut film *Guna 369* and had trusted him to direct this story. "We understand each other well, and the synergy helped bring the story to life beautifully," he shared.

Regarding the film's mythology-inspired backdrop, he elaborated, "The trailer clearly indicates references to Krishna and Kamsa from ancient mythology. For instance, the villain's death being foretold to occur at the hands of his sister's third son is just one element. However, the movie has many surprises in store for the audience."

Reflecting on the four-year gap since his first film, *Guna 369* (2019), he attributed it to external factors. "The pandemic caused delays for everyone. I've been working on this project for the past year and a half, so it's not really a gap as much as a dedicated focus on making this film."

He also revealed making a few changes to the original story provided by Prashanth Varma. "I had some ideas and discussed them with Prashanth, who supported and agreed to the changes. He was pleasantly surprised when he saw the final film."

One of the movie's standout features is a special idol of Lord Krishna integral to the story. "The idol's connection to the narrative is crucial and the sequence featuring it is sure to be a highlight," said Jandyala. While visual effects play a role, he assured that they are natural and do not overpower the storytelling.

After the trailer's release, comparisons were drawn to Mahesh Babu's classic *Murari*. Jandyala addressed this, saying, "Although both films involve supernatural elements, the concepts and stories are entirely different. In *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, the protagonist faces life-threatening obstacles and how he overcomes them is the crux of the narrative. The story seamlessly blends action, emotion and commercial elements."

The film was shot in Vizianagaram near Visakhapatnam, a choice driven by the story's requirements. "There is a specific temple in Vizianagaram that provides the perfect backdrop and a fresh visual experience for the audience," he explained.

Miss India Manasa Varanasi makes her debut in this film as the female lead. Jandyala praised her performance, saying, "Her role is pivotal and she has portrayed a strong character with perfection. She was the ideal choice for the role." The filmmaker admitted that working on a story provided by a successful director like Prashanth Varma was a challenge. "It was a huge responsibility, but I took it as a challenge and worked hard to ensure the film's success," he concluded confidently.

ASHOK GALLA AND MANASA VARANASI ARE SET TO PLAY THE LEAD ROLES IN DEVAKI NANDANA VASUDEVA. AHEAD OF ITS RELEASE, DIRECTOR ARJUN JANDYALA DISCUSSES THE FILM, COMPARISONS WITH MAHESH BABU'S MURARI AND THE CHALLENGES HE FACED DURING ITS MAKING.



Maha Sandram promises intense action drama

The Telugu film industry continues to witness a wave of distinctive projects as new-generation filmmakers experiment with fresh and unique subjects. Joining this trend is *Maha Sandram*, an action drama featuring Navneet Raina in the lead role. The film is being produced by Seshu Ravella and Karthikeya V, with the story, screenplay and direction also helmed by Karthikeya V.

The project was formally launched with a puja ceremony attended by Damodara Prasad, Secretary of the Telugu Film Chamber of Commerce, along with prominent directors N. Shankar and Samudra. Speaking at the event, Karthikeya expressed his excitement for the

film, saying, "It's an action film with a lot of emotions." He also highlighted that the movie will introduce new artists and technicians, adding, "The story has some interesting twists and turns and we will start the shoot soon."

Maha Sandram is being made as a bilingual film in Telugu and Hindi, catering to a broader audience. Regarding the title, the director shared, "For this story, the title *Maha Sandram* is apt. I will reveal more details about the film in the coming days."

With production set to begin soon, *Maha Sandram* promises an engaging blend of action, emotion and surprises, making it a project to look forward to.

Hombale Films sets release date for Kantara: Chapter 1

The much-awaited *Kantara: Chapter 1* is all set to hit theatres on October 2, 2025, aligning with the festive occasion of Dussehra. As Hombale Films gears up for its next pan-India

cinematic extravaganza, expectations are soaring following the immense success of *Kantara*. Renowned for delivering grand and authentic storytelling, Hombale Films has spared no effort in

crafting this visual spectacle. The film's production has brought the historic Kadamba Empire to life in Kundapur, featuring meticulously detailed architecture and immersive settings that promise to transport audiences to a bygone era of valor, culture and mysticism.

Leading this ambitious project, actor-director Rishab Shetty has poured immense effort into his role. To bring authenticity to his character, he trained extensively in Kalaripayattu, one of the world's oldest martial arts rooted in Kerala's rich tradition. His determination to master the form ensures his portrayal embodies resilience and cultural depth.

The *Kantara* franchise initially captivated audiences by introducing the world to the vibrant folklore of the Konkan region. With its compelling narrative, stunning visuals, and heartfelt performances, the film resonated deeply with viewers across borders, becoming a global phenomenon. Its authentic depiction of local traditions and rich storytelling established a dedicated fanbase and set the stage for this highly anticipated chapter.

With the announcement of its release date, excitement for *Kantara: Chapter 1* has reached new heights.



'Teaser is just a glimpse, don't form negative assumptions'

Dharma and Aishwarya Sharma take the lead in *Drinker Sai*, a film with the tagline "Brand of Bad Boys." Produced by Basavaraju Srinivas and directed by Kiran Tirumalasetti, the story is said to be inspired by real-life events. The film is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon. In a unique promotional move, the teaser was launched by celebrities portraying everyday roles such as an auto driver, electrician, AC mechanic, motor mechanic, waiter and coolie.

Speaking about the film, director Kiran Tirumalasetti explained, "The protagonist's name is Sai and he drinks excessively, which is why we named the film *Drinker Sai*. The teaser contains a few curse words, but these are commonly used in real life. Those who might form a negative impression after watching the teaser will change their perspective once they see the full movie. I'm confident the audience will appreciate it."

Aishwarya Sharma, the female lead, expressed her gratitude to the director for entrusting her with the role. "I'm thrilled to bring this beautiful story to the Telugu audience. *Drinker Sai* will touch your hearts with its engaging love story," she said. Dharma, who plays the protagonist, credited his parents for their encouragement and support. "I've reached this stage because of the motivation provided by my parents," he shared. Addressing concerns about the teaser, he added, "The teaser is just a glimpse of the film, so don't form negative assumptions. *Drinker Sai* is a heartfelt love story with many elements that will entertain and resonate with everyone."



Dolly Dhananjaya on his intense role in Zebra



Dolly Dhananjaya, best known for his portrayal of Jali Reddy in *Pushpa*, is now set to play one of the lead characters in the upcoming film *Zebra*, alongside Satya Dev. Directed by Eswar Karthik, the film is scheduled to release on November 22 in Telugu and four other languages.

Speaking about his role, Dhananjaya said, "I played a powerful and intense gangster character." He explained that the film features two interconnected worlds: one centered around a bank and the other around gangsters. "Director Eswar crafted the story based on some true incidents. It delves into financial crimes within the banking system, something we've all heard about but rarely understand in detail. This film explores how such crimes occur," he elaborated.

Dhananjaya praised the director's storytelling approach,

saying, "Eswar narrated the story in a way that's easy for everyone to understand. When he first shared the script with me, I was immediately intrigued. It was a well-bound script."

The actor also highlighted the film's entertainment quotient. "While the story is intense, it also includes comedy and other entertaining elements. The director has skillfully blended everything into a screenplay-driven film," he shared.

On working with co-star Satya Dev, Dhananjaya said, "He's a very good friend of mine, and I had a great time working with him."

Expressing his gratitude towards the Telugu audience, Dhananjaya said, "The Telugu audience has embraced me ever since *Pushpa*. Jali Reddy remains a memorable role for me. I hope to continue receiving good opportunities in Telugu cinema in the future."

PUSHPA 2 FEVER: #WHYPATNA TAKES OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

Pushpa 2: The Rule, one of the most anticipated films of the year, has kept audiences on the edge of their seats since its announcement. With the electrifying teaser and music already setting the stage for the film's massive arrival, the excitement has only intensified with the announcement of a grand trailer launch event on November 17.

What makes this launch even more intriguing is the location, Patna. The makers have chosen the historic Gandhi Maidan as the venue for the trailer's big reveal, expecting around 10,000 fans to attend the event. This choice of Patna has left fans and netizens buzzing, prompting the trending hashtag #WhyPatna across social media as people speculate about the reason behind selecting this particular city for such a monumental event.

Ahead of the trailer release, the makers dropped a striking new poster, along with an ominous caption that reads: "HUMONGOUS DESTRUCTION LOADING." The trailer will be released today at 6:03 PM, and the event at Gandhi Maidan will begin from 5 PM onwards, with fans able to tune in via a live stream on YouTube.

Directed by Sukumar, *Pushpa 2: The Rule* stars Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna, and Fahadh Faasil, and is produced by Mythri Movie Makers. The film is set to release on December 5, 2024 and with its high-octane storyline and larger-than-life spectacle, it's poised to make a massive impact at the box office.



Chay & Sobhita's wedding card takes internet by storm

Akkineni Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala on December 4 at Annapurna Studios, Hyderabad. The couple has started sending out wedding invitations and gifts to family members and close friends and their wedding card has now gone viral on social media.

The wedding card prominently mentions both sets of Naga Chaitanya's grandparents—Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Annapurna and Daggubati Rama Naidu and Rajeshwari. It also acknowledges his parents, listing his mother Lakshmi and her hus-



band Sarath, as well as his father Nagarjuna and stepmother Amala. The auspicious time for the wedding ceremony, or Muhurat, is set for 8:13 PM, followed by dinner. Interestingly, the bride's full name is written as Lakshmi



Sobhita on the card. Naga Chaitanya was previously married to actress Samantha Ruth Prabhu in

2017, but the couple parted ways in 2021 after a few years of marriage. Following their divorce, Chaitanya began dating actress Sobhita Dhulipala and now the two are ready to tie the knot.

On the professional front, Naga Chaitanya's upcoming film *Thandel* is all set for release on February 7, 2025. Meanwhile, Sobhita is busy with multiple projects, including web series and films.

The wedding cards have become a trending topic online, with fans eagerly discussing the details of the much-awaited ceremony.

India beat Japan 3-0 to top league stage

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

Defending champions India stormed into the semifinals of the Women's Asian Champions Trophy with an unbeaten record, defeating Japan 3-0 here on Sunday. Continuing her stellar form, star striker Deepika netted a quickfire brace from penalty corners in the final quarter to seal the victory, following vice-captain Navneet Kaur's opener in the 37th minute. With this win, India topped the league stage with maximum 15 points from five matches, ahead of Olympic silver medallists China (12 points). India will take on fourth-placed Japan in the semifinal on Tuesday, while China will play third-placed Malaysia in the other last-four game. Deepika, the tournament's leading scorer, now boasts 10 goals, including four field goals, five penalty corners, and one penalty stroke, underscoring her dominance. In the day's other matches, Malaysia beat Thailand 2-0, while China defeated South Korea by an identical margin. The Indians secured their



first scoring chance in the form of back-to-back penalty corners in the eighth minute but Deepika's flick from the

second effort was brilliantly saved by Japanese goalkeeper Yu Kudo. India earned another penalty corner in

the 13th minute but yet again wasted the chance. The Indians continued to dominate and secured their

fourth penalty corner in the 25th minute but once again Kudo rose to the occasion and made three brilliant

saves to deny the hosts. A minute after the change of ends, Kudo again came to Japan's rescue to deny Deepika. India eventually broke the deadlock in the 37th minute through Navneet's brilliant reverse hit to the second post. Deepika's brilliance The Indians continued their domination and earned three back-to-back penalty corners in the 47th minute and star dragflicker Deepika finally found the back of the net with a powerful low dragflick to open her account. A minute later, the Indians secured another set piece and this time too Deepika struck again with a powerful flick into the top right corner, effectively sealing the match. Credit must also go to the Indian defence, led brilliantly by Udita and Sushila Chahu, as they didn't let the Japanese take a single shot at the Indian goal. Skipper Salima Tete, Neha and Sharmila Devi too were brilliant in the midfield, creating numerous chances for the forwardline with their runs and neat dribbling skills.



Swiatek leads Poland comeback over Czechs to set up BJK Cup semi against Paolini's Italy

AP ■ MALAGA (SPAIN)

Iga Swiatek won in singles and doubles to lead Poland's 2-1 comeback against the Czech Republic in the Billie Jean King Cup. Poland will meet Italy in the semifinals after Jasmine Paolini likewise won her singles and doubles matches to lead Italy back for a 2-1 win over Japan. Marie Bouzkova beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 4-6, 6-4 to give the Czech Republic a 1-0 lead on the indoor hard court in Malaga's Palacio del Deportes. The second-ranked Swiatek leveled the score after she held on for a 7-6 (7), 4-6, 7-5 win over Linda Noskova. The five-time Grand Slam winner then went back on the court after a short break to help Katarzyna Kawa beat Katerina Siniakova, the world's top-ranked doubles player, and Bouzkova 6-2, 6-4. "Let's enjoy this one. For sure it was an exhausting day and some really tough matches, but I am really happy we won that last one," Swiatek said. She added that she hadn't played doubles in three years and praised Kawa's well-placed passing shots in the doubles lane as key to victory. Swiatek showed no sign that she was worn down by the back-to-back matches that combined for 3 hours, 50

minutes of playing time. The Polish pair converted all four break chances and hit more winners, 29-18, than the Czechs. Poland is seeking its first title. The Czech Republic is an 11-time champion, second only to the United States' 18 titles. ITALY EYES SHOT AT CONSECUTIVE FINALS The fourth-ranked Paolini, a finalist at Wimbledon and the French Open, defeated Moyuka Uchijima 6-3, 6-4 to level the tie 1-1. She then helped Sara Errani beat Shuko Aoyama and Eri Hozumi 6-3, 6-4 to seal the quarterfinal win. Japan took the early lead when Ena Shibahara defeated Elisabetta Cocciaretto 3-6, 6-4, 6-4. Uchijima stole Paolini's first service game. But that was only a blip in an otherwise dominant showing by the Italian. Paolini broke Uchijima four times and hit 17 forehand winners to secure the straight-set victory. In doubles, the Italians broke the Japanese four times and made just 14 unforced errors to 23 by their rivals. "Japan is a tough cookie, as you say in English," Italy captain Tathiana Garbin said. "They played with a lot of courage so it was fun to watch this kind of level. My players, they played unbelievable doubles, so we made it.

West Indies chase down 219 to beat England by five wickets in 4th T20



AP ■ GROS ISLET (ST. LUCIA)

Shai Hope and Evin Lewis made half centuries in a rapid 136-run opening stand as the West Indies completed a record run chase to beat England by five wickets in the fourth Twenty20 international. Hope made 54 from 24 balls and Lewis made 68 from 31 balls, with seven sixes and four fours, in a partnership which lasted only 9.1 overs but enabled the West Indies to reach a winning target of 219 on Saturday. The West Indies' confident start was shaken when Lewis, Hope and Nicholas Pooran fell to consecutive balls in the 10th over. But captain Roston Chase put the innings back on track with 38 from 23 balls and Sherfane Rutherford competed the chase with successive sixes and an over to spare. There were 32 sixes in the match, 16 from each team. "We had to assess the

conditions. That's one thing we struggled with in the first three games in the power play," Hope said. "We've been losing some early wickets so the main thing was to try and understand what was the best remedy, to understand the conditions and come out of the power play on top." England already had won the five-match series after winning the first three matches by eight wickets, seven wickets and three wickets respectively. Every match in the series and in the previous three-match one-day series has been won by the team winning the toss. After being sent in, Phil Salt and Jacob Bethell who both have deep roots in the Caribbean made swift half centuries as England made 218-5 to equal the highest first innings total at the Darren Sammy Stadium. Bethell who was born and raised in Barbados made an unbeaten 62 from 32 balls

while Salt who was born in Wales but raised in Barbados made 55 from 35 balls at the top of the order. Will Jacks (25), Jos Buttler (38) and Sam Curran (24) also contributed to England's innings of 218-5. The West Indies made a speedy start in pursuit of that total. Hope reached his half century from 23 balls, the West Indies were 69-0 after the power play and their hundred came up in only 7.3 overs. Lewis was more watchful than Hope at first but when he began to hit out it was with enormous power. He reached his half century from 26 balls and the longest of his sixes traveled 105 meters. The century partnership between Hope and Lewis came from only 45 balls and they had looked impregnable until Lewis played an awkward shot to a ball from Rehan Ahmed which he skewed to Dan Mousley. Hope was run out next ball for the second time in consecutive matches and Pooran was bowled first ball as the West Indies slumped to 136-3. Powell restored some of the early momentum with his 38 before falling lbw to John Turner in his T20 debut. The West Indies needed 21 from the last three overs with five wickets in hand, then 15 from two. After edging towards the target in singles, Rutherford finally found the middle and blasted consecutive sixes from Mousley to clinch the win.

McGrath urges Australia to 'go hard' on emotional Kohli

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Pace legend Glenn McGrath feels Australia have the "ammunition" to target an "emotional" Virat Kohli, who will be under pressure if he gets off to a poor start at the five-match Test series for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, starting in Perth from November 22. India have won the last four Test series against Australia, including two Down Under. However, they head into the much-anticipated five-Test assignment on the back of a 0-3 series whitewash at the hands of New Zealand at home. "Without a doubt, especially after coming off a 3-0 loss



against New Zealand, you've got plenty of ammunition to back yourself up," Fox Cricket quoted McGrath as saying on 'CODE Sports'. "So put the pressure on them and see if they're up for it," he added. Kohli, who has been India's batting mainstay for over a

decade, has struggled with form in Test cricket recently. In the six matches he's played this year, he has averaged just a mere 22.72. With the injured Shubman Gill out of contention from the first Test and skipper Rohit Sharma's participation also in doubt, Kohli will feel the pressure of leading the batting line up. However, the 36-year-old has a penchant of eking out his best in Australia. Kohli has an impressive average of 54.08 in the four Australia tours he has been a part of. And McGrath warned that targeting Kohli aggressively could also hit him, especially if he manages to keep his emotions in check.

Need to be proactive against Ashwin, and not allow him to settle: Smith

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian batting talisman Steve Smith wants to adopt a proactive approach against Ravichandran Ashwin in the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy to avoid his struggles against the Indian spinner during the 2020-21 series. Ashwin had nicked off Smith thrice during that rubber, and later in 2023 the Indian off-spinner dismissed the Aussie twice as he could only make 22 runs against his old foe. "I don't like getting out to off-spin in Australia. But he's also a very good bowler and he came in with some decent plans. There were a couple of occasions where he got on top of me," Smith told the Sydney Morning Herald. "But then I got on top of him at the SCG when I was a bit more proactive (Smith made 131 and 81 at Sydney). So, that's key for me. Just be proactive against him and not let him settle and bowl the way



he wants to," he added. Ashwin's Test bowling average stands at a modest 42.15 in Australia compared to his home average of 21.57. Smith hoped to land the first blow on the 38-year-old to gain an early upper hand in the five-match series, beginning at Perth from November 22.

The Tamil Nadu man recently said that he had worked out Smith after some initial struggles against him. "I think I've kind of figured out what he does or how he bats, I've had an edge over him. I've had the wood over him," Ashwin had told Channel Seven. But Smith did not read too much into it.

"Ashwin and I have had some good battles over the years. When you have five matches, if someone gets on top of another player, they could have 10 innings against them. "So, you're facing those mental challenges each game, and if it goes one way early, they will feel under pressure against that player. There's nowhere to hide in five games like there are in a two-game series," said the New South Wales man. The 35-year-old, who is 315 shy of 10,000 Test runs, will bat at his favoured No. 4 slot against India after opening the innings for four Tests earlier this year. It was not a successful experiment and Smith hoped to hit the ground running early from a position where he made runs at an average in excess of 60. It always makes your summer better when you start well. It gives you a lot of confidence. It's about not overthinking things. It's playing each ball as it comes and keeping it simple.

US Open runner-up Fritz back in another big final and faces Sinner again for ATP Finals crown

AP ■ TURIN (ITALY)

Taylor Fritz is starting to make reaching big finals a habit. He feels like he belongs among the very best players in tennis, too. The American followed his runner-up finish at the U.S. Open by beating Alexander Zverev 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (3) on Saturday to play for the trophy at the ATP Finals. "I have believed that I belong, that I'm one of the best players," Fritz said. "It's not results-based. It's more I can feel how I'm playing. This week is huge." In Sunday's final, Fritz will face top-ranked Jannik Sinner — the player he lost to in the U.S. Open final. Sinner also beat Fritz in straight sets in the group stage this week. Sinner advanced with a rapid 6-1, 6-2 win over Casper Ruud. Fritz became the first American finalist since James Blake lost the 2006 final to Roger Federer. The last American to win the elite eight-man event was Pete Sampras, who beat Andre

Agassi in 1999. "I trust my game and I trust my level and I don't feel nearly as uncomfortable in these situations anymore because I've been playing the top guys at big events a lot lately," Fritz said. "I'm getting more comfortable in the moment. I'm really, really confident in my game." Fritz upbeat after loss to Sinner Fritz came away encouraged from his 6-4, 6-4 loss to Sinner on Tuesday. "I felt much more comfortable from the baseline. ... I had chances to break him in both sets," Fritz said. "He had an equal amount of chances, and he took his. He played the big points better than I did. It didn't feel anywhere near as one-sided as the Open." Sinner noted that Fritz "played a great match." "The difference was just a few points. Tomorrow will be very similar. ... But finals are always different than group matches." Fritz trying to match Gauff Fritz wins the trophy, it will mark an American sweep of the season-ending events

after Coco Gauff won the WTA Finals last week. Fritz's run in New York made him the first American man to reach a Grand Slam singles final in 15 years. He's playing at the ATP Finals for the second time. On debut two years ago, he beat Rafael Nadal in his opener and made it to the semifinals, losing to Novak Djokovic. "It's awesome to come back and already go a step further," Fritz said. "I'm all about always trying to do better than the year before." At the start of the week, Fritz told The Associated Press his "career has always been a very steady progression and just improving a little bit each year." Fritz has Zverev's number it was Fritz's fourth consecutive victory over Zverev, who replaced Carlos Alcaraz at No. 2 in the rankings this week. "He's an uncomfortable player for me," Zverev said. "It's no secret." Fritz also beat Zverev at Wimbledon and the U.S. Open, plus the Laver Cup. Fritz will finish year at career



high Fritz was already assured of finishing the year in the top five for the first time and he'll rise to a career-high No. 4 on Monday. Zverev has seen Fritz's improvement up close —

especially on one key stroke: "His forehand used to break down quite a lot. ... I feel like the ratio is a lot more towards winners now." It was a matchup of big servers between the 6-foot-5 (1.96-meter) Fritz and the 6-

foot-6 (1.98-meter) Zverev, and when Fritz broke Zverev for 4-2 in the first set, it marked the first time that Zverev lost a service game in four matches in Turin. Eventually, though, the match turned into a physical

duel from the baseline. Fritz rallied from 0-40 and held his serve for 3-2 in the third after a nine-minute game full of long rallies — winning one such exchange that lasted 30 strokes. Fritz was then under

pressure one service game after another but somehow managed to keep holding. Fritz got ahead early in the tiebreaker and finished Zverev off with an audacious inside-out forehand winner on his first match point. Fritz finished with 15 aces to Zverev's 10 in a match that lasted 2 hours, 20 minutes. "I felt like statistically and shot-wise, my level maybe was even higher than his until the important moments. That's where I kind of blew it," Zverev said. "This one will hurt more than the other few." Doping case hangs over Sinner Sinner is playing at home for the first time since it was announced before his U.S. Open title that he tested positive in two separate drug tests this year. A decision to clear Sinner of wrongdoing was appealed by the World Anti-Doping Agency in September and a final ruling in the case is expected next year. Last year, Sinner lost the final to Djokovic, who withdrew injured this year.