

Bid to boost India-US ties

PRICE STABILITY
BEDROCK FOR SUSTAINED GROWTH: RBI GUV

Boyapati's influence in Ashok GALLA'S FILM

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The Lagacharla women victims are saying that the police touched them in an indecent manner. The government should tender apologies for the police attack on the farmers. We are opposing the Government's and Ministers' efforts to politicize the Lagacharla incident against reality. That doesn't mean we are supporting the BRS. BRS is a more wretched party than the Congress. The BRS party pooled thousands of acres of land in the name of pharma city.
- Thammineni Veerabhadram, CPM State Secretary

DON'T MISS...

106 stalls at Indira Mahila Shakti Bazaar

As part of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's plan to empower women financially as crorepati, Chief Secretary to the government, A Shanti Kumari has directed officials to speed up initiatives under the Indira Mahila Shakti Programme. This programme includes purchasing buses for women's self-help groups, setting up solar plants, and establishing the Indira Mahila Shakti Bazaar at Shilparamam. During a high-level meeting at ...

-PAGE: 3

Loan sharks on prowl

Clinging like a leech, a gang of usurious moneylenders are fleeing not only the poor but also the business people in the district. They are allegedly extorting excess interest rates and engaging in rampant exploitation. People, including the poor and common workers, are getting caught in the jaws of loan sharks. The victims are struggling to pay back the loans. Unable to repay the excessive interest, they are facing severe hardships...

-PAGE: 4

Mamata to initiate 'total reshuffle' in CID

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced the initiation of a "total reshuffle" in the state CID, accusing a section of police personnel in the lower ranks of indulging in corrupt practices. She also directed DGP Rajeev Kumar to look into "complaints" received against some CID officers and take action in case those were found to be genuine. "I will initiate a total reshuffle in the CID. I am giving you (Kumar) the responsibility..."

-PAGE: 5

Sebi abolishes 10% Security deposit

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday abolished the requirement of a mandatory security deposit with the exchanges before a public issue in a bid to facilitate ease of doing business for issuer companies. The move will be applicable with immediate effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular. Before this, any company that is looking to launch a public issue of equity shares has to deposit with the stock exchanges an amount equal to 1 per cent of the issue size. The deposit was ...

-PAGE: 8

Rs 1,750 cr: Adani's bribe to Jagan for solar power deal?

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

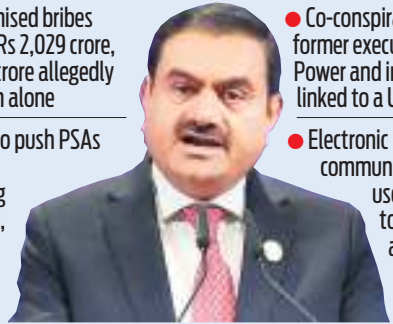
In a significant legal development, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (USSEC) has indicted billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani for allegedly paying ₹1,750 crore to former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The payment was purportedly made to influence State electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) to sign a deal to procure 7 GW of solar power from the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) under a manufacturing-linked project.

Court documents filed in New York referred to "Foreign Official #1" as a high-ranking figure from Andhra Pradesh who held office between May 2019 and June 2024. Although the filing did not explicitly name Jagan Mohan Reddy, it alleged that Gautam Adani met the official multiple times in 2021 to finalise power sale agreements (PSAs) between SECI and the State's DISCOMs.

The court papers further revealed that Gautam Adani, along with his nephew Sagar Adani, Vineet Jain, and others, had promised bribes totalling ₹2,029 crore (approximately \$265 million) to Indian officials. Of this amount, Jagan Mohan Reddy allegedly

Payment made to influence DISCOMs to sign a 7 GW agreement with SECI

- Court documents referred to Jagan as "Foreign Official #1" without explicitly naming him.
- Adani allegedly met Jagan multiple times in 2021 to finalise the power sale agreements.
- The total promised bribes amounted to Rs 2,029 crore, with Rs 1,750 crore allegedly going to Jagan alone.
- Bribes aimed to push PSAs under the Manufacturing Linked Project, benefiting Adani Green Energy.
- AP DISCOMs signed the largest solar power deal in India with SECI in December 2021.
- US prosecutors charged Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and six others for bribery and corruption.
- Co-conspirators include former executives of Azure Power and individuals linked to Jagan alone.
- Electronic communication was used extensively to facilitate the alleged bribery scheme.



received ₹1,750 crore. The bribes were reportedly intended to secure PSAs benefiting Adani Green Energy and other connected companies. The filings also identified co-con-

spirators, including a UK citizen based in Hong Kong and an Indian national, both associated with a US-based company. The documents detailed extensive

electronic communication among the accused to facilitate the alleged bribery scheme, which led to PPAs being signed between July 2021 and February 2022.

In December 2021, Andhra Pradesh's DISCOMs signed a PPA with SECI for the purchase of 7 GW of solar power—the largest such agreement by any Indian state, according to the court documents. On Wednesday, US prosecutors in New York formally charged Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and six others, including Vineet Jain, CEO of Adani Green Energy, and former Azure Power executives, for offering bribes to Indian officials to secure lucrative solar energy contracts.

Oppn assails govt, says will raise matter in Parl

2

KTR TO RAHUL

'Is Rs.100 cr gifted by Adani to Revanth not a 'bribe'?

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Bharat Rashtira Samithi (BRS) party working president KT Rama Rao has urged the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and the Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to come clean on the Congress's dealings with industrialist Gautam Adani.

KTR observed that Rahul Gandhi should tell whether the Rs.100 crore that Adani had given Revanth Reddy (towards the Skill University) was not a bribe.

KTR tweeted in this regard on Thursday: "Dear @RahulGandhi... Continued on Page 2"

'Bumper offer for BJP'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister and BRS MLA Vemula Prashanth Reddy commented that it is a 'bumper offer for Union Ministers - G Kishan Reddy and Bandi Sanjay Kumar to take action against Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy as Rahul Gandhi openly urged an inquiry on Adani affairs in Telangana. Continued on Page 2

If Adani is corrupt, why did Revanth take Rs.100 cr donation, questions BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Finding fault with Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for alleging that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was hand in glove with Gautam Adani in corruption and demanding the Prime Minister to arrest Adani following his indictment in a bribery case in the United States, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national official spokesperson Sambit Mitra sought to know from the Congress why it had taken

donation from a man they knew was corrupt. Sambit Mitra said: "On October 19, 2024, Adani Foundation donated Rs.100 crore to Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for Skill Development (University). Why did your government take donation from a corrupt man? On January 23, 2024, Revanth Reddy went to the World Economic Forum and the Congress government of Telangana signed a Rs.12,400 crore MoU with the Adani group. Continued on Page 2

RANGANAYAKA SAGAR PROJECT LAND ISSUE

Charges against me are baseless: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Commenting that it is shameful on the part of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for making false allegation that he (Harish Rao) encroached irrigation lands at Ranganayaka Sagar, former irrigation minister T Harish Rao demanded the CM to prove that his land belongs to Ranganayaka Sagar project. Harish Rao slammed CM Revanth Reddy for alleging that he has registered the 13 acres of farmers patta land in his name through Dharani Portal and has a history of encroaching lands. Harish Rao, on Thursday at



Sangareddy, threw a challenge at CM Revanth Reddy that he is ready for anything if CM Revanth Reddy proves that he took the irrigation land.

Harish Rao said, "I will stand in the land that I registered in my name purchasing from the farmers. Revanth Reddy should conduct a survey in his presence only. There is no question of fearing at Revanth Reddy's blackmail. I will continue questioning the government on behalf of the people and the BRS party".

Harish Rao alleged that CM Revanth Reddy is trying to hand over the lands for his men for the construction of companies. He alleged that Revanth Reddy is trying to file cases if questioned about the failures of the government.

MEIL exports mega pressure vessels to Mongol refinery

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Megha Engineering & Infrastructures Limited (MEIL), a global infrastructure leader, organised a flag-off ceremony for the inaugural dispatch of a pressure vessel to the Mongol Refinery in Mongolia. The event took place on Thursday at MEIL's manufacturing facility in Jeedimetla.

This dispatch marks the start of an important phase in the project and highlights the collaboration between India and Mongolia, reflecting the strength of their bilateral relations. The Government of India supports this government-to-government initiative, focusing on economic development and energy security in Mongolia.

Mongol Refinery CEO Altantsetseg expressed her appreciation, saying, "India and Mongolia are working closely to strengthen ties. MEIL's work on this project is impressive, and I am honoured to be part of this milestone." She also noted that this is Mongolia's first oil refinery, and MEIL is handling three of the four project packages.

Meanwhile, MEIL Director P Doraiah highlighted the company's skilled workforce, which has overcome challenges to make the refinery project a success.

TPCC begins spadework for polls to local bodies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee has begun the spadework for the upcoming elections to local bodies by seeking to build on the momentum generated by the official Praja Palana Vijayotsavulu as well as two public meetings in Warangal and Vemulawada.

As part of these efforts, TPCC president B Mahesh Kumar Goud conducted extensive meetings with party leaders at the Gandhi Bhavan on Thursday.

Addressing the meeting, Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the party was yet to fill a few more nominated posts. The party was trying to give nominated posts to leaders striving for the party. He asked party leaders to work hard for the upcoming elections to local bodies. "Everyone should work hard to get good results. The party leaders and

cadre have to take the government's developmental and welfare programmes to the people. Praja Palana Vijayotsavulu were part of the exercise of taking government programmes to the people. Party activists must take the government's programmes to "every household", he said.

Pointing to the campaigns of the Bharat Rashtira Samithi and the Bharatiya Janata Party against the government, he said there was dire need to counter those narratives. He asked the leaders to design the party campaign in an appropriate manner.

Ministers Seethakka, Tummala Nageshwara Rao, Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, MPs Mallu Ravi, Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, MLAs, MLCs, government advisors, senior leaders and executive committee members participated in the program.



'Even Ajmal Kasab was given a fair trial'

PAGE: 5

International Criminal Court issues arrest warrants for Netanyahu, Hamas officials

PNS ■ THE HAGUE

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants on Thursday for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former defence minister and Hamas officials, accusing them of war crimes and crimes against humanity over the war in Gaza and the October 2023 attacks that triggered Israel's offensive in the Palestinian territory.

The decision turns Netanyahu and the others into internationally wanted suspects and is likely to further isolate them and complicate efforts to negotiate a cease-fire to end the 13-month conflict. Continued on Page 2



Netanyahu rejects arrest warrant

PNS ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has condemned the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant against him, saying Israel "rejects with disgust the absurd and false actions". In a statement released by his office, he said: Continued on Page 2

Who will be next Maharashtra CM?

Mahayuti and MVA constituents bat for different names

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Even before the first votes are counted in Maharashtra, fissures have emerged within the ruling Mahayuti and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on who will head the next government with constituents in both camps laying claim over the chief minister's post.

After polling for the 288-member assembly ended on Wednesday evening, the ruling as well as opposition fronts started claiming that mandate will be in their favour when votes are counted on November 23.

Soon after polling, state Congress chief Nana Patole asserted a MVA government will be formed in Maharashtra under the leadership of his party.



Voting trends suggest the Congress will get the maximum number of seats in the new assembly, he said. His remarks did not go down well with ally Shiv Sena (UBT), whose

leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday insisted the chief ministerial face will be decided by all alliance partners jointly once the MVA secures majority. Continued on Page 2



TG Assembly session in Dec

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The state government has decided to conduct the winter session of the Assembly in the second week of December. The Congress government is planning to get several important bills passed by the Assembly.

The government, which introduced the draft of The Telangana Record of Rights Bill, 2024 bill aimed

at simplifying land record processes in the state, has been stating that it will seek passage of the ROR Act-2024. The government would also discuss the caste census and issues concerning farmers. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who had previously mentioned that the Cabinet expansion would take place after Maharashtra and Jharkhand elections, is presently concentrating on cabinet expansion.

NOMINATED POSITIONS

Party will give priority to women leaders: TPCC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president B Mahesh Kumar Goud has assured that the party will give priority to women leaders when it comes to filling nominated positions.

committee meeting held on Thursday at Gandhi Bhavan under the leadership of Mahila Congress president Sunitha Rao. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that the Congress would give party positions and government positions to women leaders. The party would recognize every woman leader

who had been working hard for the sake of the party. The party gave opportunity to Sunitha Rao to contest the Assembly elections and gave corporate positions to several women leaders. The party would give positions in market committees to women as well as tickets in elections to local bodies.

MP Mallu Ravi urged women leaders to take to people the government's women-oriented programmes. He wanted them to popularize the Congress government's schemes like free bus travel for women, 200 units free power, gas cylinder at Rs.500, and many more.

ATTACK ON COLLECTOR IS WRONG

Police attack on Lagacharla villagers is despicable: CPM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana CPM State secretary Thammineni Veerabhadram said that 'attack on the Collector by the villagers is wrong but the attack by the police on Lagacharla villagers is despicable. Veerabhadram said that the Left parties are condemning the police atrocities in Lagacharla severely.

The leaders of Left parties visited Lagacharla village on Thursday. Later speaking to the media, Veerabhadram said, "The Lagacharla victims are saying that the police touched women in an indecent manner. The government should tender apologies for the attack on the farmers of Lagacharla village and do justice to them. No question of taking a single inch of land in Lagacharla village by the government. The Communist parties would stand by the Lagacharla victims till the end."

Veerabhadram said that the Collector has been stating that not to say that as an attack. However, government authorities and Ministers are describing the incident as an attack. "We are opposing the government and Ministers' efforts to politicise the Lagacharla incident against reality. That doesn't mean here we are not supporting the BRS. BRS is a more wretched party than the Congress. The BRS party forcibly acquired thousands of acres of land in the name of Pharma City."

447 CASES REPORTED, CONFIRMS STATE

US flags surge in TG travellers with Chikungunya

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Director of Public Health and Family Welfare Department has addressed concerns over a reported surge in Chikungunya cases as US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has issued travel advisory that there is more number of Chikungunya cases from the travellers returning from Telangana. Officials from Public Health have clarified that the situation is under control, with no deaths reported this year.

13,320 samples tested so far in 2024.

The peak months were August (134 cases) and September (183 cases). Other months: Fewer cases, ranging from 1 to 20 per month.

August saw an increase of 575% compared to July (134 cases in August vs 20 cases in July). September cases rose 36.57% compared to August (183 vs. 134).

Director of Public Health and Family Welfare, Dr B Ravinder Nayak, assured the public that there is no need for panic as no deaths have been reported due to Chikungunya. Most cases occurred during the monsoon season.

Proactive measures were implemented ahead of the monsoon, including intensified vector control activities, regular fogging and spraying, and door-to-door fever surveys in high-risk areas. Adequate testing kits and essential medicines have been made available across all healthcare facilities in the State, said the release.

The department also maintains close surveillance, shares weekly and monthly reports with central agencies, and ensures swift response mechanisms are in place. Citizens are advised to follow health advisories and take precautions to prevent mosquito breeding, added the statement.

We are on verge of world war, Buddha is only way out: Gadkari

PNS ■ BODH GAYA (BIHAR)

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday emphasised the need to embrace the philosophy of Buddha to promote peace and observed that the global situation seemed "on the verge of a world war".

Speaking at a function organised by the trust managing the UNESCO World Heritage Site at the Maha Bodhi Temple in Bihar's Bodh Gaya, Gadkari said, "Today the world is facing a big problem. It seems to be on the verge of a world war... This is the time when we should aspire for world peace (Vishva Shanti). Lord Gautam Buddha can inspire us."

Gadkari also shared his personal connection to the Buddha, highlighting Nagpur, his hometown and constituency, as the place where Baba Saheb Ambedkar had embraced Buddhism.



"I had the privilege of providing the finishing touch to the Nagpur Deekshabhoomi, where work had stalled for some time, as a minister in the then government of Maharashtra," he said.

The ex-BJP chief also referred to former Maharashtra minister Sulekha Kumbhare,

an Ambedkarite Buddhist, as "my sister", who had played a key role in the construction of "Dragon Palace" temple at Nagpur, "built with generous help from devotees in Japan". "Recently, I had the good luck of visiting the temple with my wife and spend some time in meditation", said

Gadkari, who felt "all that I have achieved in my life is a blessing of Lord Buddha who keeps inspiring me to work for the poor".

The Minister for Road Transport and Highways also announced that the government is constructing about 1,600 km of road as part of the Buddha Circuit, at an estimated cost of Rs 22,000 crore.

"Work is complete for 1,100 km and will be over by early next year for another 370 km. The tender process is underway for the remaining 130 km," he said.

Gadkari explained that the aim was to connect key historical sites in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh with high-quality, multiple-lane roads, with Bodh Gaya being one of the prominent locations in the Buddha Circuit. "Needless to say, this place (Bodh Gaya) where the Buddha got Enlightenment, is one such spot", said Gadkari.

Space and sea should be subjects of 'universal cooperation'

PM Modi in Guyana

PNS ■ GEORGETOWN

Offering the mantra of 'Democracy First, Humanity First' for global good, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that space and sea should be subjects of "universal cooperation", not universal conflict.

In his address at a Special Session of Parliament of Guyana here, Modi also said India has "never moved forward with selfishness, expansionist attitude", and it has always been away from harbouring any feeling of seizing resources. The prime minister, who arrived in Guyana on the final leg of his three-nation visit, is the first Indian head of the state to visit the country in more than 50 years.

"For the world to move forward, the biggest mantra is 'Democracy First, Humanity First'. The spirit of democracy

first teaches us to take everyone along and participate in everyone's development. Humanity First guides our decision-making. When we make Humanity First the basis of our decision-making, the results are also ones which benefit humanity," he said.

In his address, Modi also asserted that it is "time for awakening of the Global South", and for its members to come together to create a new global order. "For the world, this is not a time for conflict. It is a time to identify and eliminate the conditions that lead to conflict," he said. "I believe that space and sea should be subjects of universal cooperation, not universal conflict," Modi said.

In his remarks, Modi termed the India-Guyana ties of 'mitti' (soil) as full of cordiality, referring to their cultural ties of over a century and a half.

BRS ON ADANI ISSUE

'Rahul is a pathological liar'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Bharat Rashtia Samithi (BRS) party has once again targeted the Congress party in the context of indictment of industrialist Gautam Adani and others in a 265 million dollar bribery case by the US authorities.

On its handle on 'X' (formerly Twitter), the party slammed the Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, characterizing him as a pathological liar. It said: "A pathological liar is who @RahulGandhi is. Under that garb of fighting Adani and monopolistic business, he has not spoken one word when Revanth is busy signing deals with Adani and taking Rs 100 crores as an alleged bribe. Today he says whoever has made deals with Adani should be arrested. Walk the talk Rahul. Get Revanth arrested if you really believe in what you speak".

International Criminal Court ...

Continued from Page 1

But its practical implications could be limited since Israel and its major ally, the United States, are not members of the court and several of the Hamas officials have been subsequently killed in the conflict.

Netanyahu and other Israeli

leaders have condemned ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan's request for warrants as disgraceful and antisemitic. US President Joe Biden also blasted the prosecutor and expressed support for Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas. Hamas also slammed the request.

Manipur people deserve better than a 'part-time Guv': Cong

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In the wake of fresh violence in strife-torn Manipur, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday said the people of the state deserve better than "a part-time governor, a failed chief minister and a super-failed Union home minister".

The Congress general secretary in-charge of communications said the tenure of former Governor Anusuiya Uikey was curtailed to less than 18 months, and even she was puzzled as to why the prime minister did not visit Manipur despite several requests sent to him.



"Since July 31, 2024, Manipur does not have a full-time Governor. The present incumbent spends most of his time in Assam. "The tenure of the earlier

incumbent Anusuiya Uikey ji, a distinguished tribal political leader, was curtailed to less than 18 months. Even she is puzzled why the PM has not visited the state in spite of repeated requests," Ramesh said in a post on X.

"A part-time Governor, a failed CM, and a super-failed Union Home Minister. Surely the people of Manipur deserve better," the Congress leader said.

The Congress has been repeatedly questioning Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not visiting Manipur despite ethnic violence rocking the state for several months now.

Netanyahu rejects ...

Continued from Page 1

"There is nothing more just than the war that Israel has been waging in Gaza."

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants on Thursday for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his former defence minister and Hamas officials, accusing them of war crimes and crimes against humanity over their 13-month war in Gaza and the October 2023 attack on Israel respectively.

Netanyahu condemned the arrest warrant against him, saying Israel "rejects with disgust the absurd and false actions".

In a statement released by his office, he said: "There is nothing more just than the war that Israel has been waging in Gaza."

The decision turns Netanyahu and the others into internationally wanted suspects and is likely to further isolate them and complicate efforts to negotiate a cease-fire to end the fighting. But its practical implications could be limited since Israel and its major ally, the United States, are not members of the court and two of the Hamas officials were killed in the conflict.

Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders have condemned ICC Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan's request for warrants as disgraceful and antisemitic. US President Joe Biden blasted the prosecutor and expressed support for Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas. Hamas also slammed the request.

If Adani is corrupt, why did...

Continued from Page 1

Is Rahul different from his chief ministers? He will have to reply to this."

Sambit Patra said: "The matter relates to the agreement for sale and purchase of electricity, and the agreement with state distribution companies. Which are the four states mentioned in the US court? The matter pertains to the time between July 2021 and February 2022. Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Odisha all had non-NDA governments at that

time. They had neither our CMs nor ruling parties supported by us. But they had governments of the Congress or their allies."

He added, "Rahul Gandhi has said he has no objection to any of his ex-CMs or leaders being interrogated. All right ... Let there be interrogation of Bhupesh Baghel. We have no problem. You file a case."

The electricity bills of these states were not being generated by the Modi government but by the respective state governments, Patra underlined.

'Bumper offer for ...

Continued from Page 1

Prashanth Reddy tweeted in this regard saying, "Kind Attention to @kishanreddybjp @bandisanjay_bjp.. it is

'Is Rs. 100 cr...

Continued from Page 1

High time you and your Congress CM in Telangana come clean. You can hold a million press conferences and say what-

bumper offer to you to take action on telangana chief minister @revanth_anumala as @RahulGandhi has openly urged an enquiry on Adani affairs in telangana".

ever you may please. But can you tell me that the Rs 100 crore 'gifted' by Adani to Revanth Reddy is not a bribe? Can you openly tell what all was promised to Adani by your Telangana Govt?"

Who will be next...

Continued from Page 1

While a majority of exit polls have predicted that Mahayuti will retain power, a few have favoured the MVA.

On the Mahayuti side, Shiv Sena MLA and party spokesperson Sanjay Shirsat said the assembly elections were contested with Chief Minister Eknath Shinde as the face.

"Voters have shown their preference for Shinde through voting. I think it is Shinde's right (to be the next CM) and we are confident that he will be the next CM," Shirsat said.

BJP leader Pravin Darekar batted for Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis for the top post.

Table with 2 columns: Time/Event and Details. Includes sections for TODAY, ALMANAC, and HYDERABAD WEATHER.

Nagarjuna seeks ...

Continued from Page 1

Ashok Reddy read out in the Court Konda Surekha's post tendering apologies to Nagarjuna's family.

It may be recalled that Konda Surekha made inappropriate comments against the family of Nagarjuna at Gandhi Bhavan on October 2nd, as part of her criticism against BRS working president KT Rama Rao. Reacting to her comments, Nagarjuna approached the Nampally Court and filed a criminal case for defamation, appealing the Court to initiate action.

Oppn assails govt, says will raise matter in Parl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Adani group's indictment in the US over alleged bribery and fraud gave fresh ammunition to opposition parties to demand a joint parliamentary committee probe into the business group's dealings, even as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi sought Gautam Adani's immediate arrest.

Addressing a press conference here, Gandhi claimed that it is now pretty clear and established in the US that the businessman has broken Indian as well as American laws.

Adani should be arrested immediately and interrogated while his "protector" and SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch should be removed from her post and a probe initiated, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha said.

Taking a jibe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ek hain to safe hain' slogan, Gandhi said as long as the prime minister and Adani are together, "they are safe" in India.

"Modi ji will never arrest Adani because in the end he will be the one to get caught. Therefore - if we are one, we are

safe," he said in a post on X. The Adani group denied the charges, saying the allegations by US prosecutors are baseless and that the conglomerate is compliant with all laws. It also said it will pursue all possible legal recourse.

The issue has given fresh impetus to the opposition camp's attacks on the government since ahead of the winter session of Parliament starting November 25, and is likely to dominate the proceedings of both houses.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said a com-

prehensive JPC probe into all aspects of the Adani group's functioning, including its investments in foreign countries, and institutional erosion in India is the need of the hour.

"This entire vicious nexus, involving cronies, compromised bureaucrats and certain politicians, created by PM Modi and Adani has to be investigated and dismantled," he said in a post on X. Several opposition parties including the TMC, CPI-M, CPI, AAP and NC stepped up the attack on the business conglomerate, calling for a JPC probe.

Advertisement for Chhattisgarh Raja Sahakari Bank Mydt. (APEX BANK) regarding RFP for procurement of cloud-based services.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

City Pioneer

Two missing students traced near Suryalanka Beach

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two Class 8 students who went missing after attending school in Kukatpally were found near Suryalanka Beach in Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh. The Kukatpally Police, with the help of local authorities and a clues team, tracked down the missing girls following a detailed investigation. Ramakrishna, Sub-Inspector of Kukatpally, speaking to The Pioneer, confirmed that a case was registered on Wednesday night after the two students were reported missing. Initial inquiries with their schoolmates revealed that the girls had often expressed interest in visiting Suryalanka Beach.



CITY EVENTS

Traditional Arts Festival

Kinnera Arts Theatre presents traditional arts festival under the aegis of the Department of Language and Culture, Telangana government, as part of its 47th anniversary.

Annamayya, Harikatha by Srirama Bhattar Bhagavatar. November 22. 5.30 pm to 7 pm.
Parvathi Kalyanam, Harikatha by Padmalaya Acharya Bhagavatharini. 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm.

Venue

Ravindra Bharati Auditorium, Hyderabad

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

Zakir Khan live

Stand up comedy show

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika November 27

Sweccha- Nela Nela Naatakam

Exhibition-cum-sale

Venue

Ravindra bharathi November 27

NYU CARNIVAL

With singer KARTHIK

Venue

Boulder Hills, Hyderabad December 31

Group-II hall tickets from Dec 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Public Service Commission (TSPSC) has announced the dates for the Group-II hall tickets to be available from December 9. The exam will take place over two days, with Paper-1 and Paper-2 scheduled for December 15, 2024, and Paper-3 and Paper-4 on December 16, 2024.

The exam will be held in two sessions each day: Paper-1 from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and Paper-2 from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm. Paper-3 from 10:00 am to 12:30 pm and Paper-4 from 3:00 pm to 05:30 pm.

Candidates can download their hall tickets from December 9, 2024, through the TSPSC official website and they should carry the downloaded hall ticket for all sessions. The last date to download the hall tickets will be December 15, 2024, the first day of the exam. Candidates will be allowed entry from 8:30am for the morning session and from 1:30pm for the afternoon session. The gates will close at 9:30am and 2:30pm respectively. No candidate will be allowed after the gates are closed.



HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 22, 2024

03

TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN THE STATE

Indira Mahila Shakti Bazaar at Shilparamam to have 106 stalls



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As part of Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's plan to empower women financially as crorepatris, Chief Secretary to the government, A Shanti Kumari has directed officials to speed up initiatives under the Indira Mahila Shakti Programme. This programme includes purchasing buses for women's self-help groups, setting up solar plants, and establishing the Indira Mahila Shakti Bazaar at Shilparamam. During a high-level meeting at the Secretariat on Thursday, Shanti Kumari emphasised completing 22 Indira Mahila Shakti Bhavans within eight months. She noted that the bazaar, which will feature 106 shops show-

casing products from women's self-help groups, should be ready for inauguration by the first week of December.

She urged IT companies and other businesses will provide financial support for cultural and social events at the bazaar.

The Chief Secretary announced the plan of acquiring 600 buses for women's groups, with 150 buses to be purchased in the first phase. These will be operated through TSRTC, which will handle maintenance.

Additionally, Shanti Kumari also mentioned that the programme targets the installation of 4,000 MW of solar power plants, with 1,000 MW in the first phase. These will utilise unused government

lands on a lease basis, with zero-interest loans provided for funding.

She noted that maintenance will be managed by Telangana Redco and Vidyut Discoms. These initiatives aim to generate significant income for women's groups.

Principal Secretary, Revenue, Navin Mittal; Principal Secretary, Endowments, Shaileja Ramaiyer; Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ahmed Nadeem; Secretary, Irrigation, Rahul Bojja; Secretary, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, DS Lokesh Kumar; Secretary, Tribal Welfare, Sharath; and CEO, Serp, Divya participated in the meeting.

HMDA begins robust monitoring of applications

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

HMDA has started a robust monitoring mechanism for review of disposal of building permissions and layout applications in order to improve service delivery standards significantly.

As part of this, weekly review of applications being processed in the HMDA is conducted by Metropolitan Commissioner every Wednesday. Applications are being monitored daily in the logins of every officer to ensure that no file takes more than 10 days for examination and processing. A campaign to bring down pending applications within HMDA beyond 30 days to zero is being undertaken from the last week of October.

The results of these efforts have been extremely encouraging. New Applications filing increased by 39% in June to October period in 2024 vs. 2023. Applications disposal increased by 14.4% in the same period.

HMDA is committed to speedy disposal of development permission applications while ensuring transparency, efficiency and accountability in the processes.

30th INDIAN PLUMBING CONFERENCE

Hyd is one of the few water positive cities in India



Harkara Venugopal Rao, Telangana government Advisor, along with Kannik-Marquardsen, Denmark's Commercial Counsellor, lighting the lamp at Hitec on Thursday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad is one of the few water positive cities in India, declared the speakers at a three-day 30th Indian Plumbing Conference, organised by the Indian Plumbing Association (IPA), with the theme "Water, the New Currency," on Thursday.

In a video address, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu emphasised the critical need to protect water, a vital but limited resource. He appreciated the plumbing industry's role in

conserving water and promoting public health and sustainability, urging further efforts in water conservation and education.

Meanwhile, Harkara Venugopal Rao, Telangana government Advisor, inaugurated the event alongside keynote speaker Soren Norrelund

Kannik-Marquardsen, Denmark's Commercial Counsellor. Rao highlighted Telangana's initiatives, including preserving water bodies, pre-treating wastewater and promoting EV

policies. He noted plans like the Musi Riverfront Project to enhance Hyderabad's urban water management and heritage.

Kannik-Marquardsen shared Denmark's water conservation achievements, including reducing daily water use and innovating in wastewater energy production.

He highlighted Denmark's collaboration with India to develop sustainable water solutions and their shared vision of impactful change for the future



1,211 women constables graduate from TGPA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's Director General of Police Dr Jitender said, "It is proud moment as 1,211 women are passing out at the Raja Bahadur Venkatarama Reddy Telangana Police Academy on November 21." The constables, who completed a 9-month rigorous training, were administered the oath by Abhilasha Bisht, DGP, Telangana Police Academy.

This batch consists of highly qualified trainees, with 194 post-graduates and 56% aged between 21-25 years. The trainees come from various districts across Telangana, with the highest number from Warangal (166), followed by Ramagundam (120) and Karimnagar (104). The academy provided specialised training in modern law enforcement techniques, focusing on cybercrime, narcotics and newly enacted criminal laws, said DGP Dr Jitender.

The training programme also emphasised stress management, self-defence and community relations. Trainees gained hands-on experience

during major events like the Parliament Elections and Ganesh Nimajjanam bandobust.

The graduation ceremony saw several top performers recognized: Kandula Mamatha was the overall topper with 1146.40 marks. U Sowmya won Best All-Round Performance in the AR batch. Soniya topped in outdoor subjects and Peddolla Prakruthi excelled in firing.

For the first time, the academy offered special accommodation for women trainees who are feeding mothers, allowing them to stay with their children and complete the training.

Individually, the Tri Commissionerates saw many stipendiary cadet trainee police constables passing out in Rachakonda, Hyderabad and Cyberabad.

Police Commissioner CV Anand of Hyderabad City Police, Sudheer Babu of Rachakonda Police and Avinash Mohanty of Cyberabad encouraged the cadets that discipline and professionalism are the pillars of the police force.

VISION OF INDEPENDENCE

KIMS AI smart glasses to boost daily life of visually impaired

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

A 10th-grade student, a graduate aspiring to teach and a woman preparing for competitive exams now feel independent as KIMS Foundation and Research Centre distributed 100 free AI-based smart glasses to visually impaired individuals from economically weaker sections. The foundation aims to distribute 500 glasses annually, with 400 more planned for this year.

Among the beneficiaries, 14-year-old G Parneeti expressed excitement about using the glasses for her final exams, particularly Mathematics. "Though I have a scribe, the glasses will help me feel independent and handle daily tasks without relying entirely on my parents," she shared with The Pioneer.

Similar stories emerged from Narmada, who is preparing for competitive exams and Madhav Kumar B, a graduate aspiring to become a teacher. The foundation selected recipients across Telangana through partnerships with schools for the visually impaired.

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma highlighted that India's 20 million visually impaired citi-



Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, along with former DRDO scientist Dr V Bhujuanga Rao of KIMS Foundation and Research Centre and KIMS Hospital CMD Dr Bollineni Bhaskar Rao

zens could greatly benefit from these smart glasses, which enhance daily functionality and self-confidence.

Former DRDO scientist Dr V Bhujuanga Rao of KIMS Foundation and Research Centre and KIMS Hospital CMD Dr Bollineni Bhaskar Rao, speaking with The Pioneer explained, "The first 100 free AI based smart glasses have been distributed to individuals belonging to below poverty line families. There will be a background check along with verifying the income levels and then glasses will be distributed."

"We plan to distribute nearly 500 glasses every year and this year

the remaining 400 will be given within three or four months when our collaborator Achala Health Services, a technology company, manufactures them. They might cost Rs 10,000 when distributed in the market, added the experts.

Face Recognition: Identifies individuals nearby for easier social interactions.

Object Recognition: Detects objects and obstacles, aiding safe navigation.

Text-to-Speech: Reads text aloud, improving access to printed and handwritten material.

Navigation Assistance: Offers route guidance, even from parking lots to offices or homes.

Claims on Hyd ranking last in food safety dismissed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Food Safety Commissioner RV Karnan has dismissed claims circulating on the social media that Hyderabad ranks last in food safety standards and said that food safety standards have been improving.

He also said that over the next month 60 additional training sessions will be held to create awareness among 3,000 more people.

According to the Crime in India-2022 report released by the National Crime Records Bureau in December 2023, only 246 cases related to food adulteration were registered in Hyderabad in 2022.

Karnan emphasised that old data is being misused to spread misinformation about Hyderabad's food safety standards.

Releasing a statement, Karnan said, "Considering the rise in hotels and population growth, the government is strengthening the food safety department.

Along with modernising the Nacharam Food Safety Lab, new food testing labs are being established in Warangal, Nizamabad and Mahbubnagar. Five mobile food testing labs will soon be operational, with the vehicle procurement process already underway. Labs are being developed to test at least 24,000 food samples annually.

Special cells are being set up in collectorates to handle and resolve food safety complaints."

In the past 45 days, a special drive resulted in 3,774 hotels and street food vendors being issued FSSAI licences and registrations. Training sessions conducted in districts such as Mahbubnagar, Sangareddy, Karimnagar and Nalgonda trained 1,500 hotel workers, owners and street food vendors.

Participants in these sessions are being provided free hygiene kits, aprons, head caps and gloves.

Raghu Vamsi Aerospace to create 1,800 jobs upon expansion: Minister

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Creating 1,800 jobs, Raghu Vamsi Aerospace, which manufactures critical aircraft engine components and defence products, announced a major expansion in the city. IT Minister D Sridhar Babu laid the foundation stone for the company's new manufacturing facility at Shamshabad Aerospace Park on Thursday.

The upcoming facility, with an investment of Rs 300 crore, will cover 200,000 square feet and is expected to create 1,200 direct jobs over the next three years.



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu at the foundation stone laying ceremony for the company's new manufacturing facility at Shamshabad Aerospace Park on Thursday

He noted that Raghu Vamsi Aerospace has become a key supplier of critical components for engines powering

aircraft like the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 MAX. The company works with global aerospace giants such as GE

Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, Pratt & Whitney, Safran and Honeywell, providing precision-engineered components for aviation innovation.

Sridhar Babu also appreciated the company's growth, from its start as an MSME in 2002 to a global manufacturer of vital aviation parts, including fuel pumps and landing gear systems.

He acknowledged its role in strengthening Telangana's aerospace industry, a vital part of India's defence manufacturing ecosystem.

The Minister highlighted the thriving Hyderabad Aerospace SEZ, home to companies like Tata and Bharat Forge, which support over 1,500 MSMEs. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to industrial growth, including incentives for industries in Tier-2 and Tier-3 towns.

FIRST TIME IN SOUTH INDIA

Loka Manthan held in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting that for the first time in South India, Loka Manthan 2024 was held in Hyderabad at Shilparamam, with the Telangana Culture Department as a partner, Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao welcomed artists from various professions and fields, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, to showcase cultural unity. He also invited guests to experience Telangana's cuisine, traditions and tourist attractions.

The Minister emphasised that 'Lok' means people and society, highlighting the importance of unity in diversity. He appreciated Lok Manthan for creating discussions on culture, traditions, policies and the Indian



way of life. He also lauded the event's efforts to honour cultural icons, promote Indian classical arts and pass them on to future generations. Jupally also noted

Telangana's rich history and its role as a cultural treasure house blending northern and southern traditions. The State's peaceful coexistence of various religions and communities reflects its Ganga-Jamuna tehzeeb.

Telangana respects unity in diversity, celebrating its own festivals like Bathukamma and Bonalu while honouring those of other states, such as Onam, Gudi Padwa and Pongal.

The Minister also mentioned that the State actively promotes Indian art forms, including Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi, and Yakshagana, alongside folk and tribal traditions, showcasing the uniqueness of Indian culture. He noted that culture is the essence of our way of life.



DEO accused of having extra-marital relations

PNS ■ NALGONDA

The District Education Officer (DEO) of Nalgonda, Bikshapati is now at the center of serious allegations. Bikshapati is accused of having an extramarital affair. It came to light when his wife lodged a complaint with the police.

Reports suggest that Bikshapati has been leading a double life for years, maintaining multiple extramarital relationships. She further accused him of having an affair with another woman and even keeping her in their home. According to the wife, Bikshapati fathered three children with this mistress without her knowledge.

The wife has filed a complaint at the Nalgonda Two Town Police Station, seeking justice and calling for immediate action against his misconduct. In her complaint, she also alleges that Bikshapati had sexually harassed female teachers, using his position to intimidate and suspend them when they rejected his advances.

The allegations sparked outrage, particularly among women's organisations, which are now demanding immediate action against Bikshapati.

These groups raised concerns about his political influence and involvement in various unethical activities. Authorities launched an investigation into the matter, and public pressure is mounting for action against him.

UNDIVIDED ADILABAD DISTRICT

Loan sharks on prowl

PNS ■ ADILABAD

Clinging like a leech, a gang of usurious moneylenders are fleeing not only the poor but also the business people in the district. They are allegedly extorting excess interest rates and engaging in rampant exploitation. People, including the poor and common workers, are getting caught in the jaws of loan sharks. The victims are struggling to pay back the loans. Unable to repay the excessive interest, they are facing severe hardships.

In the united Adilabad district, some moneylenders are operating under the guise of finance companies, charging high interest rates on loans given to innocent people. In the agency areas of Adilabad district, like Uttoor and Ichoda towns, they have even put up boards with the names of different finance companies. They are going to tribal villages and collecting high interest. They do not hesitate to resort to violence if the money is not paid on time. Despite all this, the



A group of people waiting at a private finance company for loans in Adilabad district

concerned authorities are turning a blind eye.

Moneylenders are causing trouble for the borrowers who have paid back their loans on time by demanding monthly interest. If the loan is not paid, not only the borrowers but also their family members are being harassed. These moneylenders are even threatening to harass the women and parade them on the streets as a punishment for not repaying the loans. They threaten to kidnap and kill them, and even warn that they will abduct young girls from the house. Those who are unable to

repay their loans are at a loss for what to do, and are going through severe emotional turmoil. Unable to bear the harassment of the moneylenders, many are resorting to suicide. Recently, in Nirmal district, a person was beaten up by moneylenders for not paying back the money.

A family from Nizamabad recently committed suicide by jumping into the Godavari River at Basara in Nirmal district. An auto driver in the Bhains mandal committed suicide due to the pressure from moneylenders. Many such tragic incidents have

occurred, with sensitive individuals unable to endure the harassment of moneylenders, leading them to take their own lives.

Some white-collar professionals, who evade taxes and work in various government sectors, are routing their black money through the moneylending business. They provide loans to ordinary people at high interest rates. If the borrowers use the loan for business and succeed, they earn enough to pay off their debts. But if the company fails, they are unable to repay the loans and are subjected to severe harassment, leading to a loss of dignity in society, and many tragically end their lives. Moneylenders are spreading their tentacles across both towns and villages. They lend money at interest rates ranging from 5 to 15 per cent, and some even offer loans at 20 per cent interest rates. Despite the high rates, innocent people are taking loans without understanding the consequences and eventually find themselves in deep trouble, some resorting to suicide.

World Fishermen's Day celebrated in Nalgonda

PNS ■ NALGONDA

World Fishermen's Day was celebrated with grandeur on Thursday at the Gangaputra Sangh Bhavan in Nalgonda. The event was held under the leadership of Munasa Prasanna Kumar, district unit president of the Gangaputra Sangh.

During the event, Prasanna Kumar emphasised the need to raise awareness about the rights and welfare of fishermen in society. He called for greater focus on the problems faced by fishermen and the steps needed for their development.

Speaking at the event, Munasa Prasanna Kumar stated, "Fishermen are a vital part of our society, playing a crucial role in the country's economy. However, their issues, rights, and welfare need more attention. If we address these concerns and focus on their welfare, we can bring about significant change in society. It is essential that government welfare schemes for fishermen are implemented effectively." His speech inspired a thoughtful discussion on the challenges faced by fishermen and the measures that can be taken for their upliftment.

The programme also included an engaging discussion on various issues faced by fishermen, their rights, and potential development programs. Prominent community leaders and



Gangaputra Sangh district unit president Munasa Prasanna Kumar speaking at a meeting in Nalgonda on Thursday

Gangaputra Sangh members participated actively in the discussions. Among the key participants were Pilli Sathyayya, Munasa Venkanna, Mangilipalli Kishan, Singam Venkataiah, Gadiga Sreenu (Councillor), Gundu Venkateswarlu, Munasa Sathyanarayana, Koppu Krishnappa, Mangilipalli Shankar, Vaddaboyina Venkataramakrishnan, Munasa Vinay, Ambati Shivakumar, Ambati Anuradha, Singam Lakshmi, Ambati Ganga, and others.

The successful celebration of World Fishermen's Day highlighted the importance of addressing the issues and promoting the welfare of fishermen. It also served as a reminder to society about the need for greater awareness and action for their rights and development.

Govt pushing farmers into clutches of middlemen: Harish

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Former minister Harish Rao on Thursday accused the government of forcing the paddy farmers to sell their produce to middlemen. The government, he said, has pushed the helpless farmers into the clutches of the middlemen.

He was participating in the installation ceremony of the flagstaff at the Pedamma Temple in Masanpalle under Andole mandal in Sangareddy district.

Speaking to the media, he expressed that the government had completely failed in paddy procurement. He said that apart from failing to provide investment support to farmers under the Rythu Bharosa scheme, the government has also failed to ensure that every grain was procured at minimum support price (MSP).

When State Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that 90 lakh metric tonnes of paddy would be procured this season, and the Civil Supplies



Former minister T Harish Rao speaking to the media at Masanpalle village in Sangareddy district on Thursday

Commissioner stated that only 70 lakh metric tonnes of paddy would be purchased, Harish Rao questioned where the 20 lakh metric tonnes of paddy would end up.

Harish Rao also criticized the Chief Minister for accusing him of being a land grabber when he raised the issue of student suicides in schools. He also questioned whether any of the nine promises made in the Warangal Farmers' Declaration had been fulfilled.

Former MLA Chanti Kranti Kiran, former Trade Promotion Corporation Chairman Matham Bhikshapati, former DCCB District Vice Chairman Jaipal Reddy, State Vice President of the Mudiraj Association P Narayana, former Chairman of Joggipet Market Committee DB Nagabhusan, BRS Party leaders Chappal Venkatesham, Muddaipet Vijay and Masanpalle former sarpanch Siva Chander.



Sambar infested with worms

Residential schools lack basic facilities

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Students are often hailed as the future of the country, playing a crucial role in nation-building. However, this idealistic view can ring hollow when the reality they face is far from what they deserve. The students are raising the issue time and again.

It is alleged that in residential schools, students are raising serious concerns about their living conditions. Many of them are forced to bathe with cold water from open sources, even in the winter, and are deprived of basic amenities such as bathrooms with doors.

Their ability to have a full meal is compromised, and their grievances remain ignored. Worse still, these students have no means to share their struggles with anyone in authority.

At a minority social welfare school in town, students are accusing the school of serving rotten vegetables and rice infested with worms. Despite the onset of winter, they continue to endure the discomfort of cold water for bathing.

The lack of privacy in bathrooms without doors, especially for girls, is

a constant source of distress. Promises of funding for repairs to essential facilities like bathrooms, kitchens, and school buildings have been made but remain unfulfilled, deepening the students' frustration.

This situation is also raising concerns among the parents, who are beginning to question whether the government's commitment to education is sincere.

Despite the repeated appeals to the school principal and government officials, the issues persist without resolution.

The government's claims of prioritizing education seem empty, and suspicions are growing about the proper use of funds allocated for the development of school facilities.

There is increasing doubt that resources are being mismanaged by contractors. In light of these ongoing issues, students are urging district minister Ponnamb Prabhakar to take urgent action to improve the school's facilities, ensure students receive proper meals, and hold accountable the principal, warden, and the contractor responsible for the substandard food.

Panchayat secretary held for 'graft'

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

A Panchayat Secretary was caught by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) for allegedly demanding a bribe of Rs 30,000 from a house owner for issuing a house number.

According to details revealed by Medak Zone ACB DSP Sudarshan, Sachin Kumar, who

previously worked as the Panchayat Secretary of Jalapur village, was approached by a woman named Swarnalatha from the same village for a house number for her property. However, the secretary demanded Rs. 30,000 as a bribe for issuing the house number. She initially paid Rs. 10,000, and promised to pay Rs. 20,000 later. Swarnalatha's husband,

Malles, filed a complaint with the ACB about this demand.

Sachin Kumar was called to Raghavendra Hotel in the Ameenpur Municipality area to finalise the deal. During negotiations, he agreed to accept Rs. 15,000 as the bribe. The entire conversation was recorded on video and handed over to the ACB officials.

With this video evidence, ACB officials summoned Panchayat Secretary Sachin Kumar to the Ameenpur Municipal Office for questioning. During the investigation, it was confirmed that he had accepted the bribe, and Sachin Kumar was taken into custody. Sachin Kumar was serving as the Panchayat Secretary in Atmakuru, located in the



Sachin Kumar, Saddashivpet mandal at the time of arrest.

Food poisoning incident: Axe falls on headmaster, MEO



Narayanpet Collector Sikta Patnaik inspecting Manganoor Zilla Parishad School in Manganoor mandal on Thursday

PNS ■ NARAYANPET

Taking serious view of 50 students of Manganoor Zilla Parishad School taking ill after

eating mid-day meal at in the district, the school headmaster Muralidhar Reddy, in-charge headmaster Babu Reddy and mid-day meal in-

charge were placed under suspension. The services of the agency which provided mid-day meals were terminated. On Wednesday, in the dis-

trict headquarters school in Maganor mandal in Narayanpet district, not less than 50 students fell ill after consuming the midday meal. Following the instructions of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, an inquiry was ordered, and the Mandal Education Officer and the headmaster were suspended. Orders were also issued to cancel the midday meal agency.

District Collector Sikta Patnaik, who is inquiring into the incident, visited the school in Maganor mandal Thursday. She inspected the school kitchen and store rooms, checked the rice being provided to the students, and questioned Education Department officials and local villagers.

During this inspection, the District Collector stated that she is terminating the services of the midday meal agency and the formation of a mess

committee in every school in the district. This committee will have one or two teachers who will be responsible for ensuring the quality of food by tasting it before serving it to the students.

Meanwhile, students from Maganor Zilla Parishad High School, who have been admitted to the Government General Hospital in Mahabubnagar after they took ill due to suspected food poisoning, complained that they served breakfast that was infested with worms.

Videos showing the students complaining about the worm-infested food from their hospital beds quickly went viral on social media platforms.

Although the hospital management attempted to downplay the incident, the news soon spread. When a few BRS leaders visited the hospital, police tried to stop them,

leading to arguments.

Former Minister V Srinivas Goud visited the hospital to speak with the students. Addressing the media, he strongly condemned the incident, pointing out that students who had been admitted due to food poisoning were then served stale and worm-infested food.

"I personally spoke with the students and nurses on duty. They confirmed that worms were found in the upma (semolina breakfast dish) and other dishes, and the nurses told me that the food was quickly discarded in the trash bins," said Srinivas Goud.

He further questioned how the government could mishandle the situation when the students' health was already compromised. "If anything more serious were to happen, who will be held responsible, and who will answer to the parents of these students?" he asked.

Indian Bank SINDHI COLONY BRANCH
H no. 14-50/G, Plot no.12, PG Road, Street No 12,
Krishna Nagar Colony, Secunderabad

APPENDIX- IV-A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)]
Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Constructive/Symbolic (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank, Sindh Colony Branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is on 23.12.2024 for recovery of Rs. 10,24,520/- (Rupees Ten Lakh Twenty Four Thousand Five Hundred and Twenty Only) as on 15.11.2024 due to the Instant Bank, Sindh Colony Branch, Secured Creditor, from Mr. Tummala Ananthapadmanabham & Mrs. Tummala Sitaramadulal Flat No.311 in Third Floor in 'S5 RESIDENCY' on Plot No.50 farming part of Survey no 68/6 Situated at Shiva Ganga Colony, Mansoorabad Village, Saracornagar Mandal under GHMC LB Nagar Circle, Ranga Reddy District. (Name and address of the borrower/guarantor). The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed description of the Property: Residential Flat bearing No.311 in Third Floor in 'S5 RESIDENCY' having plot area of 567 Sq Feet (including common area and parking) together with undivided share of and addressing 50 Sq Yards equivalent to 41.90 Sq Meters out of total addressing 300 Sq yards on Plot No.50 farming part of Survey no 68/6 Situated at Shiva Ganga Colony, Mansoorabad Village, Saracornagar Mandal under GHMC LB Nagar, Ranga Reddy District. **BOUNDARIES:** For Flat 311, 3rd Floor North: OPEN to SKY South: OPEN to SKY East: Conster & LIFT West: OPEN to SKY.

Prior Encumbrances on property	NIL
Reserve Price	Rs 46.00 Lakhs
EMD Amount	Rs.4.60 Lakh
Bid incremental amount	Rs 10000.00
Date and time of e-auction	23.12.2024 10.00 am to 5.00 pm
Property ID No	IDB50336295321

Date: 16.11.2024 Place: Hyderabad **Authorised Officer**

Bidders are advised to visit the website (https://www.eibid.in) of our e-auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call 8291220220. For Registration status and for EMD status please email to support@ibid.in or psballiance.com. For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: https://www.eibid.in and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact PSB Alliance (Pvt. Ltd), Contact No. 8291220220. Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with https://www.eibid.in

Contact Person: 1. (Name and Mobile No. of Authorised Officer) Deepak K. Shrivastava & 2. (Name and Mobile No. of Branch Manager) Goutam Ravikiran. 9795607910

ACROSS THE STATES

Bid to boost India-US ties

RAJNATH HOLDS TALKS WITH US DEFENCE SECRETARY

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday held talks with US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin in Laos with a focus on implementing the new initiatives rolled out to bring peace in the Indo-Pacific under the framework of the Quad.

In perhaps their last meeting before the incoming Trump administration takes charge, Singh described Austin as a great friend of India and said his contribution to boost India-US defence partnership has been exemplary.

The defence ministry said both sides agreed to continue the momentum achieved in the last two-and-a-half years through growing convergence to strategic interests and enhanced India-US defence cooperation.

"It is always a matter of immense joy to meet my friend, Lloyd Austin. He has been a great friend to India.

"His contribution towards strengthening India-US defence partnership has been exemplary," Singh posted on X.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of a conclave in Vientiane, the capital city of Laos, of 10-nation ASEAN grouping and some of its dialogue partners.

It is understood that India's



"Both sides recognised the remarkable progress made under the US-India Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, including ongoing collaboration to advance priority co-production arrangements for jet engines, munitions and ground mobility systems."

plan to procure 31 Predator high-altitude long-endurance drones from American defence major General Atomics under the foreign military sales route at a cost of nearly USD 4 billion figured in the talks. The deal was sealed last month.

Singh also held separate talks with South Korean Defence Minister Kim Yong Hyun, Australia's Pat Conroy and Defence Minister of New Zealand Judith Collins.

"The two leaders commended the progress achieved by the India-US defence partnership, based on increased operational coordination, information-

sharing and industrial innovation," the defence ministry said on Singh-Austin talks.

"Both sides recognised the remarkable progress made under the US-India Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap, including ongoing collaboration to advance priority co-production arrangements for jet engines, munitions and ground mobility systems," it said.

In the talks, Singh emphasised the need for both sides to work together on the agreed deliverables including the new regional maritime initiative for training in the Indo-Pacific

and the first-ever Quad-at-sea ship observer mission.

The defence minister also referred to the launch of a Quad Indo-Pacific logistics network pilot project to support civilian response to natural disasters more rapidly.

"Both sides affirmed support to the growing defence innovation collaboration between the two governments, businesses and academic institutions fostered by India-US Defense Acceleration Ecosystem by providing them with more joint challenges, funding opportunities and visibility," the ministry said in a statement.

DELHI POLLUTION CRISIS



Centre announces staggered work timings for employees

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Thursday announced staggered working timings for its employees in view of the severe air pollution in Delhi, according to an order issued by the Union personnel ministry. Employees have also been asked to pool vehicles and use public transport to minimise vehicular pollution," it added.

"These measures may be adopted by ministries/departments/organisations as per their functional requirements ensuring that it should not have an adverse impact on efficiency and productivity in any manner," the order read.

Given the severe-plus air pollution levels in Delhi, various ministries, departments and organisations of the central government are advised to adopt staggered timing in respect of offices located in the Delhi-National Capital Region,

it said. The order said offices can be open from 9 am to 5.30 pm and 10 am to 6.30 pm.

"The officers/staff using personal vehicles should be encouraged to pool vehicles and to use public transport to minimise the vehicular pollution," it added.

After a week of 'severe' pollution levels, Delhi's air quality has improved slightly but is still in the 'very poor' zone.

At 9 am on Thursday, the national capital recorded an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 376, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

The move assumes significance as a body representing the Central Secretariat Service (CSS) officers had on November 18 demanded work-from-home, staggered working hours and air purifiers in all office buildings to mitigate the health impact of the severe pollution levels.



47 survivors of anti-Sikh riots handed out job letters

Delhi Lieutenant Governor VK Saxena on Thursday distributed appointment letters to 47 survivors of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots. According to a statement, six additional letters will be issued to successors of beneficiaries who have exceeded the age of service. Speaking at an event in the Tilak Vihar area of west Delhi, Saxena announced that 437 pending applications for appointments are under verification. The locality primarily houses the 1984 riot victims. He also directed the Revenue department to organise special camps to expedite their resolution, the statement said. Saxena announced that the colony, commonly referred to as "Widows' Colony," would be renamed based on residents' recommendations. He also approved a proposal seeking relaxation in recruitment qualifications for the victims' kin, saying that the 1984 riots were a blot on Indian democracy. Last month, the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee urged the LG to consider all eligible applicants, including those who had aged out or died, it added.



Malayalam actor Meghanadhan dies at 60

Renowned Malayalam film and television actor Meghanadhan, known for his iconic villainous roles, passed away in a hospital in the early hours of Thursday, industry sources confirmed. He was 60. Meghanadhan succumbed to respiratory-related ailments at 2 am, while undergoing treatment, sources said. His funeral was held at his residence in Vandanamkurissi, near Shoranur, on Thursday evening. Relatives, friends, and admirers from various walks of life gathered to pay their respects. His mortal remains were kept at his home until the afternoon for the public to bid farewell. Meghanadhan is survived by his wife, Susmitha, and daughter, Parvathi. Son of acclaimed actor Balan K Nair, Meghanadhan appeared in over 50 films, including notable works like 'Chamayam', 'Chenkol', and 'Ee Puzhayum Kadannu'.



11-yr-old killed by mother, stepfather in Meerut

The mother and stepfather of an 11-year-old boy were arrested for allegedly killing him in Sardhana here, police said on Thursday. The accused, Nasreen (32) and Sameer (26), were sent to jail after police found their involvement in the murder following an interrogation on Wednesday, they added. The body of Nasreen's son Sahil was found hanging from the ceiling fan in a store room of their house in the Garhi Khatikan locality Monday late night, said SHO Pratap Singh of Sardhana area. The parents were taken into custody after Sahil's grandfather, Hanif, lodged an FIR in the matter. He alleged that they had strangled the boy, the SHO said. Hanif further alleged that Sameer had harboured a grudge against Sahil ever since his marriage to Nasreen. During interrogation, Nasreen told the police that she had Sahil and a daughter from her first marriage to Anees, who died three years ago. She remarried six months after his death, the official said.

'Even Ajmal Kasab was given a fair trial'

SC remarks in Yasin Malik case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Even Ajmal Kasab was given a fair trial in our country, the Supreme Court on Thursday remarked and indicated it may set up a courtroom inside Tihar Jail for the trial of J&K separatist leader Yasin Malik in a kidnapping case.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih was hearing a CBI plea against the September 20, 2022 order of a Jammu trial court that directed Malik, serving life term in Tihar jail, to be produced before it physically to cross-examine the prosecution witnesses in the kidnapping case of Rubaiya Sayeed, daughter of politician Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

The bench, however, remarked, "How will cross-examination be done online? There is



hardly any connectivity in Jammu... In our country, a fair trial was given even to Ajmal Kasab and legal assistance was given to him in the high court." Kasab, the lone Pakistani gunman caught alive after the Mumbai terror attack, was hanged till death at the Yerawada Central Prison.

The bench told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the CBI, to take instructions on the total number of witnesses in the case.

Mehta pointed out security concerns and said Malik couldn't be taken to Jammu for the trial.

Army chiefs of India, Nepal discuss collaboration

PNS ■ KATHMANDU

Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi on Thursday held talks with his Nepalese counterpart General Ashok Sigdel here, focussing on collaboration between the two armies, officials said.

Dwivedi, accompanied by his spouse Sunita Dwivedi, arrived in Nepal on Wednesday for a five-day official visit at the invitation of Sigdel. Dwivedi met Sigdel at Nepal Army Headquarters and discussed matters relating to the collaboration between the two armies, officials said.

Earlier in the day, Dwivedi laid a wreath and paid homage at Bir Smarak (Martyr's Memorial) at the Army Pavilion in Tundikhel, Kathmandu. He also received the Guard of Honour at the Army headquarters.

EXCISE POLICY

Delhi HC refuses to stay ED case against Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to stay for now the proceedings against former CM and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal in a money laundering case linked to irregularities in the state Excise Policy 2021-22.

Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri issued notice and sought the response of the Enforcement Directorate on a plea by the former Delhi chief minister challenging a trial court's order taking cognisance of a chargesheet in the case.

The matter will be heard on December 20.

Kejriwal sought setting aside of the trial court order and argued that cognisance of the chargesheet was taken by the special court in the absence of the required sanction for his



prosecution as he was a public servant when the alleged offence was committed.

However, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the ED, submitted a sanction was obtained to prosecute Kejriwal and he would be filing an affidavit.

Kejriwal's counsel said the relevant document was not supplied to them along with the supplementary chargesheet and claimed there was no sanction

at the time of filing of the final report. The AAP convener's lawyer sought an early hearing after the court posted the hearing in January, 2025 and insisted an order on his plea for a stay on the proceedings be passed during the day owing to urgency.

Mehta opposed the submission and sought to file a reply to the stay application, pointing out such an approach was unfair.

'Rahul, Cong tried since 2002 to target Modi's image'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday slammed Rahul Gandhi's attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the US prosecutors' indictment of Gautam Adani on alleged bribery and fraud charges as part of his long-running efforts to target its leader and noted that none of the four states named in American courts had a BJP government.

Addressing a press conference, BJP spokesperson and MP Sambit Patra steered clear of the US Justice Department's allegations against the infrastructure behemoth, saying it is for the company to give an explanation and defend itself.

"Law will take its own course," he said while keeping the focus on Gandhi's allegations against the prime minister and the BJP government at the Centre.

Patra also pointed out that

PM's credibility remains high: BJP



four states -- Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu -- where government functionaries were allegedly paid bribes of over USD 250 million to secure favourable deals, were ruled by non-BJP parties during the period mentioned in the indictment.

While the Congress and its

ally were in power in Chhattisgarh and Tamil Nadu, the YSR Congress and the BJD, two regional parties unaffiliated to either the ruling or the opposition alliance nationally, ruled Andhra Pradesh and Odisha then, respectively.

The BJP spokesperson cited investments of tens of thousands

of crores of rupees by the Adani group, the ports-to-energy conglomerate, in states ruled by the Congress and its allies to question Rahul Gandhi over his party's dealings with the behemoth when he calls its boss Gautam Adani "corrupt".

Patra claimed that Gandhi's allegations on Thursday fitted the pattern of him, his mother Sonia Gandhi and the Congress trying to tarnish Modi's image since 2002, a reference to the communal riots in Gujarat when the BJP leader was the state's chief minister, but in vain.

Rahul Gandhi alleged corruption in the Rafale deal in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections and had also gone after the Central government over the Covid vaccines issue, he said, noting the Supreme Court had dismissed the bribery charges in the procurement of the fighter jet.

India shaping global climate action: Environment Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is playing a pivotal role in shaping global climate mechanisms while ensuring its own developmental priorities are upheld, Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav stated on Thursday, amidst the ongoing climate talks in Azerbaijan.

Speaking at the 97th Annual General Meeting and Annual Convention of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) under the theme 'Our Actions for Viksit Bharat' here, the minister also highlighted India's active role in shaping these global climate mechanisms, alongside its efforts to

ensure that domestic priorities remain central to its approach.

"Our initiatives to promote carbon and green credits align with global climate goals, while safeguarding India's developmental objectives," he noted.

Providing updates on the ongoing COP29 in Baku, the minister revealed that Article 6.4 will be fully implemented at the international level.

In a landmark decision on the first day of the global climate talks in Baku, COP29 officially adopted the new operational standards for a mechanism of the Paris Agreement under Article 6, setting the stage for a global carbon market.

Tampering with Ramakrishna Mission would cost heavily: HP Governor

PNS ■ SHIMLA

Tampering with organisations like Ramakrishna Mission will have a heavy cost, Himachal Pradesh Governor Shiv Pratap Shukla said on Thursday, days after a clash in Shimla between the members of the sect and another group.

"The office bearers of Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, Shimla, have submitted a letter to me and I have asked the officials to seek a report," Shukla said.

"No official has the right to tamper with such organisations and if someone does this, it is not



right," he said, adding, "We will not tolerate any disrespect to such a reputed organisation." Seven people, including three police personnel, were injured in a clash between members of Ramakrishna Mission Ashram and the Brahma Samaj late

Saturday night. The clash took place in the Ramakrishna Mission Ashram, located near the Vidhan Sabha.

Police booked more than 25 people in four FIRs, listing assault against public servant, causing hurt, obstruction, unlawful assembly, offence at place of worship, criminal intimidation and breach of public peace as crimes. On Monday, RK Ashram secretary

Swami Tanmahimanand termed the other group as "land mafia" which trespassed into the ashram as devotees to take over the property.

Union minister stresses foster care for children

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Union Minister of State for Women and Child Development Savitri Thakur on Thursday emphasised that the foster care system offers an alternative to children aged six years and above who often face challenges in finding adoptive families.

The minister was speaking at an event in Lucknow as part of the 'Adoption Awareness Month 2024', which focused on rehabilitating older children and giving them a new direction in life.

Mamata to initiate 'total reshuffle' in CID

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday announced the initiation of a "total reshuffle" in the state CID, accusing a section of police personnel in the lower ranks of indulging in corrupt practices.

She also directed DGP Rajeev Kumar to look into "complaints" received against some CID officers and take action in case those were found to be genuine.

"I will initiate a total reshuffle in the CID. I am giving you (Kumar) the responsibility... Give me proposals



and cross-check the complaints. At times, false complaints are also lodged. If those are found to be genuine, take strong action. Do not spare me even if need be,"

Banerjee said during a meeting at state secretariat 'Nabanna'.

Banerjee, who is also the state's home minister, also asked Kumar to take steps to

strengthen the Special Task Force (STF) and the anti-corruption bureau.

"I will not tolerate that a section of the police and the CISF will accept bribes, be involved in the theft of coal, cement and sand, and then people will blame the Trinamool Congress.

"If there is involvement of any political leader, nab him too and put him behind bars. Till today, I have not taken any bribe from anybody. Law should be equal for all," the CM asserted.

Brokers and middlemen are destroying the society, she added.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Mending fences with China

Faced with a slowing economy and increasing geopolitical challenges, Beijing seems eager to seek a thaw with India

In a notable shift, the Chinese government has signalled its intent to recalibrate its ties with India following a series of disengagement measures along their disputed border. The thaw reflects both strategic considerations and economic imperatives as Beijing grapples with slowing economic growth and rising geopolitical challenges. After years of strained relations exacerbated by the 2020 Galwan Valley clash, which resulted in casualties on both sides, the disengagement at friction points offers a moment to 'look into the future.'



Chinese officials and business leaders have expressed optimism about a potential reset in ties, framing peace and stability as prerequisites for deeper bilateral engagement. China's economy has been under pressure from multiple fronts: sluggish growth, weakening consumer demand and the looming threat of escalating tariffs from the United States under Donald Trump's proposed policies.

Beijing has already announced two rounds of monetary and fiscal stimulus packages, with a third expected soon, aiming to rejuvenate its domestic economy and strengthen trade ties with key partners like India. India, with its vast middle-class market and growing manufacturing sector, represents an attractive prospect for Chinese businesses.

Despite a persistent trade imbalance—India's imports from China stood at \$99.59 billion in 2023, dwarfing its exports of \$16.23 billion—there is scope for collaboration. Chinese businesses see opportunities in India's pharmaceuticals, services and burgeoning electric vehicle market. China's business leaders and scholars have called for a pragmatic approach that separates border issues from economic and cultural ties. Influential figures in China's economic hubs—Beijing, Shanghai and Shenzhen—have emphasised the benefits of collaboration. Companies like Shanghai Pharmaceuticals and carmaker BYD have expressed interest in leveraging the Indian market, highlighting areas like healthcare and electric vehicles as promising fields for cooperation.

PICTALK



A worker spreads 'Finger Fryums,' for drying under the sun at a factory on the outskirts of Agartala

Congress party's political opportunism



SYED ZAFAR ISLAM

The glaring contradiction between Congress party's diatribes against Adani and its actions underscores a deeper issue of political expediency eroding its trust

The relationship between the Congress Party and the Adani Group is a masterclass in political hypocrisy. For all its vocal criticisms of the Adani-BJP nexus, Congress's historical and current actions tell a different story—one of close collaboration and mutual benefit. While Rahul Gandhi and his party present themselves as crusaders against crony capitalism, the truth is that Congress has been instrumental in the growth of the Adani empire.

If anything, Congress's attacks on Adani only serve to highlight its duplicity. Adani's early growth can be traced back to the 1990s when the Congress Party was in power. In 1993, under the Chimanbhai Patel-led Congress government in Gujarat, Adani was granted land at just 10 paise per square meter for his Mundra Port project. Further land allocations were made by Shanker Singh Vaghela, who was supported by the Congress Party.

Interestingly, only about a third of Adani's total land acquisitions in Gujarat occurred during Modi's tenure as Chief Minister. Despite Rahul Gandhi's relentless attacks on Adani, Congress-ruled states continue to roll out the red carpet for the conglomerate. In Rajasthan, Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot's government has signed agreements with Adani for a massive 10,000 MW solar power project and handed over operational control of Jaipur International Airport.

In Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel's administration has approved Adani's role as a Mine Developer and Operator for coal blocks, while Himachal Pradesh's Congress Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu brokered a deal to reopen Adani-owned cement plants. These are not isolated incidents but part of a broader trend where Congress governments actively court the same group their leaders lambast at the national level. This two-faced approach isn't just political theatre—it's deeply cynical. The group's ability to



deliver large-scale infrastructure projects, attract investments, and create jobs makes it indispensable to state governments, including those led by Congress. Yet, instead of owning this reality, Congress chooses to vilify Adani on the national stage, using him as a convenient punching bag to score political points against the BJP.

It's a strategy designed to mask its complicity while hoping voters don't notice the glaring contradictions. Rahul Gandhi, in particular, has made Adani the centerpiece of his attacks on Modi, framing the group as a beneficiary of crony capitalism. But his rhetoric collapses under scrutiny. Congress's historical and ongoing engagement with Adani exposes its attacks as hollow. If Congress truly believes Adani is emblematic of everything wrong with India's economic system, why does it continue to facilitate his projects in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh? Why does it refuse to acknowledge its role in Adani's rise, from land allocations in the 1990s to the financial wind-



THIS DUPLICITY ISN'T JUST BAD POLITICS; IT'S BAD FOR INDIA. CONGRESS'S SELECTIVE OUTRAGE OVER ADANI DISTRACTS FROM THE REAL ISSUES OF ECONOMIC CONCENTRATION AND REGULATORY CAPTURE

falls his group enjoyed during UPA rule?

The answer lies in political expediency. Adani Group's growth and expansion have not been limited to any single political party or government. The conglomerate has secured projects, investments, and approvals from governments led by Congress, regional parties, and other opposition parties across various states. But at the state level, where governance realities take precedence over rhetoric, the result is a schizophrenic approach that undermines whatever credibility Congress hopes to claim in its critique of crony capitalism.

This duplicity isn't just bad politics; it's bad for India. Congress's selective outrage over Adani distracts from the real issues of economic concentration and regulatory capture. While concerns about corporate influence on politics are valid and must be addressed, it is crucial to have a balanced and fact-based perspective on the issue. Worse, it perpetuates the very system it claims to oppose, enabling Adani's expansion while pre-

tending to stand against it. For Congress, the cost of this hypocrisy is more than just bad optics—it's a loss of trust. Voters are not blind to the contradictions between what Congress says and what it does. Rahul Gandhi's crusade against Adani might make for compelling headlines, but it rings hollow when Congress-ruled states continue to partner with the group. This gap between rhetoric and reality exposes Congress as a party more interested in political opportunism than principled opposition.

The people of India are wise enough to see through the opposition's double standards and political opportunism. They understand that the BJP government has always prioritised the nation's interests and has worked tirelessly to promote inclusive growth and development. We will continue to focus on our agenda of good governance, economic reforms, and social welfare, regardless of the opposition's baseless attacks and allegations.

(The writer is BJP national spokesperson; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GANGA UNSAFE FOR BATHING

Madam — The National Green Tribunal has ordered Varanasi DM to put up a board as the Ganga is not fit for bathing. It is unfortunate. Ganga is a lifeline to tens of millions of people who live in its basin and depend on it for their daily life. But in the recent years, the Ganga has become not suitable for drinking purposes and more pathetically for bathing too since it is severely polluted with human waste and industrial contaminants. Three quarters of sewage from the northern plains is discharged into the Ganga without treatment. The Central Pollution Control Board states that BOD levels should be less than 3 mg per litre for bathing, but in the Ganges, BOD levels can be up to 6.4 mg per litre.

Therefore, swimming in the river, which has high levels of harmful bacteria and toxic chemicals, can increase the chance of developing diseases like viral fever, nausea, typhoid, hepatitis, gastroenteritis and so on. The Ganga Action Plan was launched in 1985 with the aim of improving water quality through interception, diversion and treatment of domestic sewage and to prevent toxic and industrial chemical wastes from identified polluting units from entering the Ganga should be strictly implemented. The Namami Ganga project was launched in 2014 with the objective of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga should be given life.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

BENGAL'S MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Madam — The article 'West Bengal's lost opportunity' (November 20), reshapes the genesis of Bengal's apathy for industry for decades and its doomed economy. The militancy of trade unionism under CPI(M) and TMC regimes has left Bengal de-industrialised for over five decades. CPI(M) and TMC are synonyms as the leftist cadre of CPI(M) has shifted en masse to TMC. Besides Tata Nano and Haringhata Dairy, the successive governments had opposed the Nuclear plant in

Winter smog chokes Delhi



The recurrent worsening of air quality in North India, particularly New Delhi, in the winter season is the cause for concern, which needs a comprehensive and long-lasting solution. This year the air quality index there reached 500 points, a severe plus range. Despite

the stubble burning being restricted, it has been frightening for one and all. The stubble burning in the fields of adjacent states has been considered a major contributing factor for the worsening of air quality there.

Apart from discouraging stubble burning, other measures like restricting the number of constructions, putting a cap on industrial emissions, and encouraging public transport should be implemented. Instead of passing the buck to the next, the centre and states should work in tandem to chalk out a comprehensive plan and implement it effectively. The authorities should involve the scientific community and include the people for better results. The public health, schools, transport, work and livelihood getting a halt with regularity every winter for decades in the capital region of India augurs no good at all.

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram

Haripur through violent agitations. In fact, the state governments and leadership of CPI(M) and TMC have been confrontational with Union Governments on setting up industries. The leftist agenda aims to weaken India and is subservient to the interests of China. The vote bank politics of CPI(M) and TMC have failed the state. Lakhs of youth have migrated to the other states for jobs.

The infrastructure of the state is in the worst condition and the political ecosystem thrives on violence. Therefore, alternative leadership outside CPI(M) and TMC has not emerged. Mamata Banerjee's leadership is more leftist than the Communist leadership of CPI(M) and CPI. Bengal is badly bruised on economy and GST and income tax collections are some of the poorest in the country with the size and population of the state. The successive governments of CPI and TMC have been oppressive, as evident from the recurrent violence in all Lok Sabha, Assembly, and Panchayat elections. A poor state with potential to be the most developed is very unfortunate for the

country. Bengali people deserve a better life and opportunity to grow.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

CASH CONTROVERSY

Madam — As Maharashtra hurtles toward a critical election, a political firestorm has engulfed the state, with BJP veteran Vinod Tawde and Bahujan Vikas Aghadi (BVA) leader Hitendra Thakur locked in a battle of accusations and counter-claims. Tawde, long embroiled in controversies and estranged from BJP heavyweight Devendra Fadnis, has found himself at the epicentre of fresh allegations of voter bribery. In Virar, BVA workers alleged that Tawde was caught red-handed with Rs 9.93 lakh in cash, sparking chaos. Thakur, claiming Tawde also possessed Rs 5 crore in cash and incriminating diaries listing names for monetary distribution, led the charge, insisting the BJP was attempting to buy its way to victory.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Are taxpayers getting their money's worth?

From understaffed schools and ill-equipped hospitals to failing sanitation systems, taxpayers are left wondering: where is their money really going?

Each month, countless individuals contribute a significant portion of their earnings to the government, with the expectation that it will deliver essential services and build a nation worthy of our pride. Despite decades of commitments and the collection of hundreds of billions in taxes, numerous regions still suffer from shockingly inadequate basic infrastructure. Educational institutions lack adequate classrooms and dedicated teachers. Instead, middle-class families find themselves having to extend their budgets to enrol their children in private schools. Government hospitals, which are meant to provide free health care, are often overcrowded, dirty and severely lacking in staff. The middle class has ultimately turned away from these facilities, leading them to seek costly private care—where once more, their taxes and the expected refunds were meant to support them.



Each year, governments amass billions in tax revenue, yet a significant portion frequently gets redirected to non-essential projects, bureaucratic inefficiencies, or, even more troubling, corruption. Extravagant government offices, regular overseas travel for officials and inadequately planned infrastructure initiatives consume resources that ought to be allocated to enhancing public services. Systemic leakages in public sector spending result in a significant portion of the allocated budget failing to reach those it was meant to benefit. It is not merely a matter of inefficiency; it represents a profound betrayal of public trust.

Taxpayers deserve clarity and results. Therefore, it is essential for governments to create detailed spending breakdowns that enable citizens to follow the flow of their funds. It is essential for governments to reassess their spending priorities. Rather than focussing on grand symbolic infrastructure projects, efforts will be directed towards grassroots enhancements—cleaning hospitals, recruiting skilled teachers, and ensuring proper sanitation in every school. Technology can play a crucial role in monitoring advancements on extensive spreadsheets and digital platforms, highlighting areas that

require urgent focus. The key takeaway is the importance of civic engagement. People must insist on greater accountability from those they elect. Advocacy, community assessments, and exerting influence can indeed compel a government to establish fundamental infrastructure for the public. If the government disregards the opinions of the taxpayer, the collective voting strength and lobbying activities can convey a different kind of message. Public funds should serve as a means for advancing the nation, rather than being squandered on wasteful expenditures or corrupt practices. The true measure of a nation's greatness lies not in its towering skyscrapers or grand monuments, but in the care and support it provides to its people. Quality education, hygienic healthcare facilities, and essential sanitation are not privileges—they are basic entitlements. Now is the moment to hold the influential responsible for fulfilling their commitments.

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

adequate classrooms and dedicated teachers. Instead, middle-class families find themselves having to extend their budgets to enrol their children in private schools. Government hospitals, which are meant to provide free health care, are often overcrowded, dirty and severely lacking in staff. The middle class has ultimately turned away from these facilities, leading them to seek costly private care—where once more, their taxes and the expected refunds were meant to support them. Each year, governments amass billions in tax revenue, yet a significant portion frequently gets redirected to non-essential projects, bureaucratic inefficiencies, or, even more troubling, corruption. Extravagant government offices, regular overseas travel for officials and inadequately planned infrastructure initiatives consume resources that ought to be allocated to enhancing public services. Systemic leakages in public sector spending result in a significant portion of the allocated budget failing to reach those it was meant to benefit. It is not merely a matter of inefficiency; it represents a profound betrayal of public trust. Taxpayers deserve clarity and results. Therefore, it is essential for governments to create detailed spending breakdowns that enable citizens to follow the flow of their funds. It is essential for governments to reassess their spending priorities. Rather than focussing on grand symbolic infrastructure projects, efforts will be directed towards grassroots enhancements—cleaning hospitals, recruiting skilled teachers, and ensuring proper sanitation in every school. Technology can play a crucial role in monitoring advancements on extensive spreadsheets and digital platforms, highlighting areas that



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

THE FRAGILE MIND AND OVERCOMING FEAR

understanding the causes of mental fragility and embracing methods of healing can help us fight fear



RAVI VALLURI

The cell rang and dropped from her hands. There was an agonising silence across continents. Her only son in the US, a brilliant student, committed suicide. Bill Maher writes, "Suicide is man's way of telling God: You can't fire me, I quit." But do brave men commit suicide? It appears to be a permanent solution to a transitory problem. Marcus Trescothick and Chetan Sharma come to mind. The former suffered from xenophobia in the subcontinent and Chetan Sharma after being hit for that last ball six at Sharjah by Javed Miandad lost his mojo and rhythm.

Fear, anxiety, emotional upheavals, unpleasant feelings, panic attacks and phobias are all symptomatic of a fragile and delicate mind. A fragmented mind is invariably a victim of irrational fear. Such an individual is unable to distinguish between what is logical and what is not. People harbouring fear suffer from panic attacks, sweaty palms, disturbed sleep, palpitation, shortness of breath, inability to remain calm, dry mouth and numbness of the feet and hands. A contributor to the magnification of fear is our pent-up emotions. These emotions are not based on a rational or scientific thinking pattern. We end up violently or irrationally reacting rather than responding in a coherent and clear-sighted manner. Humans should be prudent to ponder, that if left untreated this situation can become mourning regalia. A person can suffer from psychosomatic illnesses, loss of appetite, self-deprecatory behaviour or even schizophrenia. An element of fear is perhaps required, because then we can patrol our fences. Perhaps the only fearless people are sages and mentally deranged personalities! They are insulated from fear! The



brain is an organ and the mind is our intellect. It makes us aware and enhances the quality of consciousness. The mind is a movie theatre where the soap opera of our life is enacted. We play, rewind, and rerun an enormous number of movies. Thoughts are impacted by the kind of food we partake in (Tamasik, Rajasik, Sattvik), the company we keep and the amount of rest we take. The quality (guna) of food has a bearing on our disposition and approach to life.

Tamasik food makes us sluggish, Rajasik food makes us feverish or anxious in disposition and Sattvik food makes us feel calm. The first two lead us to fearful situations. If we are closeted with individuals who have a negative thought process, we imbibe such attributes and evince such a behavioural pattern. "Man is known by the company he keeps" is a very old adage and so is "man is born free but always in chains". It is cardinal to have adequate physical and mental rest. If we are rested, then we are at peace and do not complain or quibble.

Then we are physically and mentally alert and high-yielding. In our minds, we need to keep space to just dump the garbage which disappears into the recycle bin, NEVER to APPEAR again. We need to pursue passions, and hobbies, indulge in sports, participate in extracurricular activities, avoid negative company, take up initiatives, practice meditation, keep the mind occupied, footslog on the treadmill, go for long walks, go for treks and read autobiographies of entrepreneurs and achievers. There are others who adopt the spiritual path by practising pranayama, learning yoga, undertaking the Art of Living course, or observing the breath through the Vipassana technique. To conquer fear, we need to log out of our comfort zone so that the virus of fear does not enter our operating system. And if nothing works out, the magic is to surrender to the Divine and feel grateful.

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

Dedicated bank for MSMEs to boost credit access



A S MITTAL

This new initiative seeks to bridge that gap and stimulate job creation and economic activity by providing MSMEs with the financial support they desperately need

The government plans to establish a dedicated bank to lend directly to Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to enhance credit availability in this crucial sector. The industry has called for increased financial support, as current institutions like the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) primarily focus on refinancing loans rather than providing direct funding. In contrast, state financial and industrial development corporations do lend directly to MSMEs.

However, many, such as the Punjab State Industrial Development Corporation (PSIDC) and Punjab Finance Corporation (PFC), are experiencing funds crunch and have stopped credit flow. PSIDC gathered liabilities worth Rs 4700 crore, therefore, has not given any fresh loans to any company for the last 16 years. According to an Ernst&Young(EY) report, MSME credit penetration in India is only 14 per cent, significantly lower than in larger economies like the US and China, where the figures are 50 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively. Indian MSMEs face a critical credit shortage of? 25 trillion, indicating a substantial untapped credit market. Increasing lending to MSMEs can stimulate economic activity and create jobs. The proposed establishment of a separate bank dedicated to the MSME sector would help address these direct credit shortages. However, the government needs to finalise various details, such as the bank's ownership structure, which may adopt a hybrid public-private partnership model. Although large banks operate in the sector, they often struggle to meet the unique needs of MSMEs.

Countries in Europe provide valuable lessons by grouping MSMEs with home loan customers, both considered small borrowers. If the government does not establish a new bank, SIDBI could be transformed into a full-fledged bank focused on direct lending to MSMEs instead of merely refinancing. SIDBI plays a vital role in financing India's MSMEs and is owned by a consortium that includes the government and major financial institutions. In 2023-24, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) supported the agricultural sector with a loan portfolio of Rs 6.68 lakh crore, with the agriculture sector contributing 18 per cent to the country's GDP. On the other hand, SIDBI had a refinancing loan portfolio of? 84,000 crore in FY 2023-24, with the MSME sector contributing 30 per cent to the GDP. For micro and small enterprises to grow, obtaining capital remains one of their most significant challenges.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has designated MSMEs as a priority sector and directed banks to allocate 40 per cent of the Adjusted Net Bank Credit (ANBC) to priority sectors, including MSMEs. However, a study by ICR has found that most banks do not exceed 25 per cent for MSME credit. SIDBI's future growth depends on how effectively commercial banks fulfil their priority sector lending targets. A report by ICR warns that if banks successfully meet their quotas, there could be a reduced need for SIDBI's refinancing services. Challenges: Despite the vital role MSMEs play in the country's economy, access to adequate, timely, and low-cost finance poses a significant hurdle to the sector's growth prospects. Limited credit history, insuffi-



INCREASING LENDING TO MSMEs CAN STIMULATE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND CREATE JOBS. THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE BANK DEDICATED TO THE MSME SECTOR WOULD HELP ADDRESS THESE DIRECT CREDIT SHORTAGE

cient collateral, lack of knowledge about government support, and high borrowing costs complicate access to funding for MSMEs. Unlike large corporations, MSMEs often lack an established track record, making it challenging to secure loans from banks and other financial institutions. There are 64 million MSMEs in India, with 99 per cent classified as micro-enterprises. Despite global adversities, the sector has helped cushion the economy from shocks. In a nation marked by significant disparities between urban and rural areas, MSMEs contribute to the upliftment of less developed regions, thereby reducing regional imbalances and inequality. The sector provides over 110 million jobs, accounting for 23 per cent of the country's labour force, making it the second-largest employer in India after agriculture.

The importance of MSMEs to the Indian economy cannot be overstated. They drive innovation, generate employment, and contribute significantly to exports and GDP. By fostering entrepreneurship and supporting large-scale industrialisation, MSMEs play a pivotal role in reducing regional imbalances, uplifting economically weaker sections, and stimulating socio-economic development. Their adaptability and resilience make them indispensable in the face of economic adversities, ensuring the continuous dynamism of the Indian economy. With a contribution of 27 per cent to India's GDP, 38.4 per cent of total manufacturing output, and 45 per cent of the country's total exports, the MSME sector serves as the backbone of the economy.

Global Models to Emulate: However, the government has launched several initiatives to promote financing for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), including the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE), Pradhan Mantri

Mudra Yojana (PMMY), and Stand-Up India. While these efforts are commendable, the government must ensure awareness of and effective disbursement for these schemes so that more enterprises can benefit. Additionally, the private sector needs to step up and promote MSME financing.

Without public-private partnerships, alliances, and collaborations, MSME financing will continue to face challenges. One pressing issue is the introduction of interest subvention to address high borrowing costs, which range from 10 to 12 per cent. This creates an uneven playing field when compared to countries like China, where the borrowing rate is 3.1 per cent, the US at 4.37 per cent, and the European Union, which averages 5.1 per cent for MSMEs.

In the US, MSMEs can access funding through various federal and state programmes. The Small Business Administration (SBA) plays a vital role by offering loan guarantees and encouraging banks and other financial institutions to lend to small businesses. The Microloan Programmes provide capital for various business needs, including working capital, equipment purchases, and real estate acquisitions. Furthermore, the US government supports MSMEs through grants, venture capital initiatives, and state-specific funding programs tailored to local business environments. This diverse range of financial products ensures that MSMEs can find suitable funding options for their specific requirements.

In European Union countries, MSMEs benefit from robust financial support frameworks facilitated by institutions such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF). These entities provide funding through intermediaries like banks and microfinance institutions, offering loans, guarantees, and equity

financing. The EU also promotes MSME funding through programs focused on the competitiveness of enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, which emphasise innovation and competitiveness. In China, the government has implemented several measures to enhance MSMEs' access to finance through dedicated banks, such as the China Development Bank, which offers targeted lending. Local governments have established credit guarantee funds as well. Moreover, China's financial technology sector has significantly grown, with online lending platforms and digital financial services providing alternative funding sources for MSMEs.

Way Forward: The inherent challenges faced by MSMEs cannot be overlooked. It is essential to address the issues within the MSME sector that hinder financial accessibility. As recommended by the Parliamentary Committee on Finance, the comprehensive approaches in the US, EU, and China serve as valuable models for India to enhance its financing landscape for MSMEs, improve credit access, and make these enterprises globally competitive.

The government also proposed establishing a Merchant Credit Card (MCC) Scheme for traders and a Vyapar Credit Card (VCC) for micro-units, similar to the Kisan Credit Card (KCC). Under the Credit Guarantee Fund, a scheme to provide short-term loans with interest subvention is still awaited. There is still much work to be done to ensure that all MSMEs can access affordable and timely financing.

(The Author is vice-chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and president of Tractor and Mechanisation Association; Views expressed are personal)

India's gender gap in labour force participation: A missed opportunity

India must act swiftly to secure its digital future in an era where technological prowess is now essential for national security

A recent International Labour Organisation and Niti Aayog report shows that less than 50 per cent of women are in the labour force in India, compared to 80 per cent of men, and this proportion has not increased since 1990.

India is presently realising a demographic dividend, with the largest number of the young working population in the age group of 15-34. The above trend in women's labour market participation has serious implications for the economy, indicating a need for transition. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) conducted by the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), presents a slightly optimistic



KAJLEEN KAUR

picture, where women's participation in the labour force has notably increased to 37 per cent from 23.3 per cent in 2017-18. Although growing, these figures are disgracefully low compared to 69 per cent in China and 57 per cent in Bangladesh. A similar comparison of female literacy rate in India with Sri Lanka, China, South Africa and Russia between 2011-2021

shows a remarkable growth from 59.28 per cent to 69 per cent for India, but it is way below all other countries where the figure is greater than 90 per cent, due to their dedicated efforts to female literacy.

The female labour supply traces a U-shaped curve to economic growth in many developed countries implying an initial fall in the supply with an increase in the GDP of the country, but later showing a positive trend. However, in India, this upward trend is not realised implying that economic growth has not generated adequate jobs for women.

According to the OECD report (2019), women in India spend on average 352

minutes a day on unpaid work as against 52 minutes by men. The division emphasises that a woman's "appropriate" role may be dominated by patriarchal structures, societal expectations, and traditional bias, and are restricted to caregivers and homemakers.

There is also a considerable gender-based wage gap of about INR 4,014. On average, men earn INR 12,048 per month while women earn INR 8,034, or about 33 per cent less than men. This illustrates the stereotypes and gender biases that affect employment decisions, promotions, and wage negotiations. Recently, Indian policymakers and government have undertaken several initiatives and schemes



to raise the status of women with better access, eliminating barriers, and gender parity in the educational system.

Programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao, and the National Programme for Education of Girls at

Elementary Level (NPEGEL) aim to combat gender bias, guarantee inclusive education, and improve access to education for all.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) also introduced the "Udaan Scheme" in 2022 to encourage and facilitate female students to pursue higher education in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields.

This is relevant as the Indian global compatibility centres (GCCs) show only 6.7 per cent of women in executive roles and 5.1 per cent in deep tech organisations. According to the World Economic Forum's annual Gender Gap Report 2023, India ranks 127 out of 146

countries in terms of gender parity, an improvement of eight places from 2022. The underutilised talents and unrealised potential and skills of women are crucial for redeeming the benefits of demographic dividend. A comprehensive strategy including education beyond secondary schooling with a focus on skill development can design a long-term employment-oriented development strategy, acting as a catalyst in achieving goals set under United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

(Kajleen is an assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University; Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold jumps Rs 1,400 to Rs 79,300 per 10 gm

Gold prices jumped Rs 1,400 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to fresh buying by jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 77,900 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver traded flat at Rs 93,000 per kg on Thursday. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity zoomed Rs 1,400 to Rs 78,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 77,500 per 10 grams on Wednesday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for December delivery bounced Rs 568, or 0.75 per cent, to trade at Rs 76,602 per 10 grams. "Gold prices surged higher as geopolitical tensions reignited safe-haven demand, with renewed concerns over nuclear risks in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Reports of escalating tensions and global unrest drove gold prices on comex," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.



Ministry of Labour directs EPFO to ensure UAN is active

The Ministry of Labour & Employment has directed the EPFO to ensure the Universal Account Number (UAN) of employees is active to avail the benefits of Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme. EPFO will involve their zonal and regional offices for effective outreach, the ministry said in a statement. "To ensure that maximum number of employers and employees benefit from the ELI Scheme, it has directed EPFO to work in a campaign mode with employers and ensure activation of UAN of employees," the Ministry said. UAN activation provides employees with seamless access to EPFO's comprehensive online services, enabling them to efficiently manage their Provident Fund (PF) accounts, view and download PF passbooks, submit online claims for withdrawals, advances, or transfers, update personal details, and track claims in real time. This allows employees 24/7 access to EPFO services from the comfort of their homes, eliminating the need for physical visits to EPFO offices.



Sanjay Murthy takes over as Comptroller and Auditor General

Sanjay Murthy, former higher education secretary, on Thursday took charge as the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG). He belongs to Indian Administrative Service of Himachal Pradesh cadre (1989 batch). Murthy succeeds Girish Chandra Murmu, who demitted office on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, Murthy was sworn in as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India by President Droupadi Murmu at a function in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Prior to this, Murthy was Secretary, Department of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education. He has also served as Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and CEO, National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation, and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Murthy was named the new CAG by the Centre on Monday. Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, among others, were present at the oath-taking ceremony.

Price stability bedrock for sustained growth: RBI Guv

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank Governor Shaktikanta Das on Thursday said price stability acts as a bedrock for sustained growth, and the central bank's endeavour is to bring down retail inflation to 4 per cent on a durable basis.

Speaking on 'Balancing Inflation and Growth: The Cardinal Principle of Monetary Policy', he said resilient growth has given the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) the space to focus on inflation to ensure its durable descent to the 4 per cent target.

"A stable inflation or price stability is in the best interest of people and the economy. It acts as a bedrock for sustained growth, enhances the purchasing power of people and provides a stable environment for investment," he said.

He was addressing a high-level policy conference of central banks from the Global South here.

The Governor said when the RBI took a pause on the policy rate in April 2023 after



A stable inflation or price stability is in the best interest of people and the economy. It acts as a bedrock for sustained growth, enhances the purchasing power of people and provides a stable environment for investment

raising it by 250 basis points, it was important to anchor market expectations from running ahead or front running the central bank.

It was, therefore, emphasised that it was a pause and not a pivot. This was to ensure that past rate actions were transmitted fully to the broader economy, he said.

The focus was on anchoring inflation expectations by emphasising our firm commitment to re-align inflation with the target, he said.

"We also categorically said that it is not enough to be

within the tolerance band and that our job is not finished until we reach the target of 4 per cent on a durable basis," the Governor added.

He further said, while the global economy has managed to hold its ground in the highly stormy weather of the last few years, clouds of uncertainties still loom on the horizon.

Policymaking in this environment of heightened uncertainty is akin to driving a car through a foggy path ridden with speed bumps. These are conditions which will test the

driver's patience and skill.

Historical regularities are looking improbable, and policymakers are being put to test. When the history of our times is written, the experiences and learnings of the last few years will, in all probability, be a turning point in the evolution of central banking, Das said.

For the countries of the Global South, maintaining overall stability which includes sustained growth, price stability and financial stability continues to be a daunting challenge, he emphasised.

CEA asks India Inc not to seek protective cover of weak currency

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Thursday advised India Inc not to seek protective cover of weak currency as it is not a substitute for productivity and investment in research and development. A weak currency can be good for exporters, making their products relatively less expensive for buyers abroad.

Nageswaran further said the reliance on weak currency should not be instrumental to boosting exports, "if anything, it should be part of the policy arsenal to be deployed contextually, but not as a substitute for productivity, investment in R&D and quality, but as a complement at best".

"We should not be thinking about in terms of the transformation of competitiveness, which is to continuously expect the weak currency to bail us,"

he said at an event organised by the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development (ISID).

Noting that China relied on weaker currency but it was guided by domestic productivity leaps in the first decade and also in the last decade of the new millennium.

"In many other developing countries, including India, weak exchange rate actually has become a protective cover for lack of productivity.

"It was used to hide our inefficiencies. That should not be the case," Nageswaran said.

He pointed out that China's exchange rate policy accentuated the competitiveness that its domestic productivity gains were already conferring on its exports.

"But, we usually in the past has tended to shield, take cover behind the weaker exchange rate," the CEA said, adding that it should not continue.

Sebi abolishes 1% security deposit in public issues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday abolished the requirement of a mandatory security deposit with the exchanges before a public issue in a bid to facilitate ease of doing business for issuer companies.

The move will be applicable with immediate effect, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular.

Before this, any company that is looking to launch a public issue of equity shares has to deposit with the stock exchanges an amount equal to 1 per cent of the issue size. The deposit was returned to the company after the public issue. "In order to facilitate ease of doing business to issuer company, the requirement to deposit 1 per cent of the issue size available for subscription to the public with the designated stock exchange by the issuer company under...Sebi (Issue of Capital and Disclosure

Requirements) Regulations, 2018 (ICDR Regulations) has been dispensed with," Sebi said.

In February, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) floated a consultation paper proposing that the requirement of 1 per cent security deposit for public or rights issues should be done away with.

Explaining the rationale behind the move, the regulator had stated that the requirement of 1 per cent security deposit was put in place for public/rights issues so that an issuer resolves investor complaints relating to the transaction such as for refund of application money, allotment of securities and dispatch of certificates. However, considering various reforms and present framework for public or rights issues, the concerns relating to post-issue investor complaints regarding refund of application money, non-dispatch of physical certificates does not arise, it had added.

Tata Power, ADB ink pact for key energy projects

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Power on Thursday said it has signed an initial pact with Asian Development Bank (ADB) to evaluate financing worth USD 4.25 billion for its several strategic projects. A memorandum of understanding has been signed with ADB at Baku, Azerbaijan, Tata Power said in a statement.

"The MoU has been signed evaluate financing for its several strategic projects aimed at enhancing India's power infrastructure and promoting renewable and clean energy," it said. The total estimated project cost is about USD 4.25 billion, Tata Power said.

The MoU outlines the evaluation of financing for several key ongoing projects such as the 966-MW solar wind hybrid project and pumped hydro storage project and other projects in the pipeline around energy transition, decarbonisation, and battery storage as well as ongoing financing for capex towards strengthening the distribution networks.

Sensex, Nifty tumble amid broad-based selloff

Adani group stocks nosedive

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled on Thursday amid a sharp fall in Adani group stocks after billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani was charged in the US for alleged bribery and fraud.

Besides, relentless foreign fund outflows and weak trends in Asian and European peers also dragged benchmark indices lower.

The BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 422.59 points or 0.54 per cent to settle at 77,155.79. During the day, it lost 775.65 points or 0.99 per cent to 76,802.73.

As many as 2,736 stocks declined, while 1,237 advanced and 92 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The NSE Nifty slumped 168.60 points or 0.72 per cent to 23,349.90. "The domestic market faced renewed pressure due to escalating tensions in



the Russia-Ukraine conflict and heightened nuclear concerns. Additionally, the fresh Adani case with the US DoJ added to the market's woes.

"Although there were signs of a slowdown in FII selling, it surged again, adversely affecting market sentiment, particularly financials sector. We expect an improvement in the trend when global & domestic political issues stabilise," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports tumbled over 13 per cent after Gautam Adani was charged by US prosecutors over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay USD 265 million bribes to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts.

All other Adani group stocks, including Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Adani Green Energy, fell sharply by up to nearly 23 per cent.

NTPC Green IPO gets subscribed 93 pc on Day 2

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The initial public offer of NTPC Green Energy Ltd, the renewable energy arm of NTPC, got subscribed 93 per cent on the second day of bidding on Thursday.

The share sale received bids for 54,96,35,370 shares against 59,31,67,575 shares on offer, as per NSE data. The category for Retail Individual Investors (RIIs) attracted 2.38 times subscription while the Qualified Institutional Buyers (QIBs) part got subscribed 75 per cent. The portion for non-institutional investors received 34 per cent subscription. NTPC Green Energy has mobilised Rs 3,960 crore from anchor investors.

The Rs 10,000-crore initial share sale is entirely a fresh issuance of equity shares with no offer-for-sale (OFS) component.

RBI, Maldives Authority sign pact to promote use of local currencies

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The RBI and the Maldives Monetary Authority on Thursday signed an agreement here for establishing a framework to promote the use of local currencies -- the Indian Rupee and the Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR) for cross-border transactions.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Governor of Reserve Bank of India Shaktikanta Das and Governor of Maldives Monetary Authority Ahmed Munawar.

"The MoU encourages the use of INR and MVR in current account transactions, permissible capital account transactions and any other economic and financial transactions as agreed upon by both countries," the RBI said in a statement.



This framework would enable exporters and importers to invoice and settle in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of trading in the INR-MVR pair in foreign exchange market.

Use of local currencies would optimise costs and settlement time for transactions, the RBI added.

"This collaboration marks a key milestone in strengthening bilateral cooperation between RBI and MMA," it said.

Use of local currencies in bilateral transactions will eventually contribute to promoting trade between India and Maldives as well as deepening financial integration and strengthen the economic relations between India and Maldives, India's central bank said.

India needs up to USD 30 bn investment in EV charging infra: IESA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body IESA said on Thursday that India needs to invest USD 20-30 billion in EV charging infrastructure to double the segment's growth rate.

It is a very niche segment which has just started picking up in the country, India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) President Debi Prasad Dash said.

Sharing his estimates, Dash said the EV charging infrastructure segment is growing at a rate of 25-30 per cent currently in India.

To double this growth, investments worth USD 20-30 billion would be required, he said at the 'IESA India EV Fast Charging Summit' in the national capital. On PM E-Drive Scheme, Dash said "We

(industry) all are waiting for the scheme to be floated. A few of the things the government is considering before outing the full scheme is they are trying to (figure out) state-wise demand allocation, considering the density of the vehicles in different localities in states and cities."

It will give a boost to the EV Charging space and adoption of EVs in the country, Dash said.

In September, the Union Cabinet approved the PM Electric Drive Revolution In Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) Scheme with an outlay of Rs 10,900 crore for two years to boost adoption of electric vehicles in India, replacing the flagship FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles) programme that ran for nine years till March.

PLANS E-VISA FACILITY

Israel eyes 10,000 Indian tourists despite unrest

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Amid ongoing conflict in the Middle East, Israel is hoping that the number of Indian tourists will reach 10,000 in 2024 and is planning to launch an e-visa programme for the Indian market early next year to encourage travel to the West Asian country, an official said on Thursday.

According to the Israel Ministry of Tourism (IMOT) India Director of Marketing,

Amruta Bangera, around 8,500 Indian tourists visited the West Asian country till October this year.

"In 2018, the country hosted 70,800 Indian visitors, marking a record. Although the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global travel, Indian arrivals began recovering in 2022, reaching 30,900 despite minimal promotional campaigns. The momentum continued in 2023 with 41,800 Indian visitors. In 2024, 8,500



Indians travelled to Israel during the January-October period," she told PTL.

"We hope that by the end of this year, the number of Indian tourists travelling to Israel will

reach around 10,000," she said. Speaking about the impact of the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, which has kept West Asia on edge, Bangera claimed, "Israel is safe for tourists, and the conflict is confined to the bordering areas, where tourists are not allowed to venture."

"Yes, the conflict and the news emanating from the region have impacted tourist inflow. But we hope the situation will improve next year," she said.

The IMOT is optimistic about the Indian market's potential and is actively engaging with Indian travel agencies to promote Israel as a preferred tourist destination, she said.

"We are planning to launch an e-visa programme early next year to attract more tourists from India," she said.

Bangera stated that despite ongoing geopolitical challenges in the Middle East, Israel has witnessed a steady recovery in global tourism.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
 Online tenders are invited under 'e-procurement platform for 2 No of Road & 8 No CD works in Khammam District vide Executive Engineer(R&B) Division Sathupally NIT No.14/TSTO/EE/R&B/SPL/2024-25/ Date: 20.11.2024. Tender schedules can be downloaded from e-market place in www.tender.telangana.gov.in the last date of receipt of tenders before 02.12.2024 up to 3.30 PM. Further details can be seen at 'e-procurement market place www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer (R&B) Division - Sathupally R.O.No: 68B-PPCL/ADVT/11/2024-25, Date: 21-11-2024

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTICE
 NIT No. 28/EE-6/CRZ (GHMC/2024-25) Dt: 20.11.2024
 Nature of the Work: Beautification and Gym Equipments, Estt. Cost: Rs. 52.70 Lakhs. Download Start Date & Time: 21.11.2024 at 2.00 PM, Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 25.11.2024 at 2.00 PM, Name & Address Officer, Cell No: Sri. M. Prasanna, EE, Div-6, CRZ, GHMC, Hyderabad, Ph. No. 9154985051. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ www.tender.aprocurment.gov.in. Note: 1% EMD should be obtained after the date of tender notice. Sd/- Executive Engineer, R.O.No: 68B-PPCL/ADVT/11/2024-25, Dt: 21-11-2024 Circle No.6, Charminar Zone, GHMC

TRAVELOGUE ANKITA CHHETRI'S CAPRI ADVENTURE IN A NUTSHELL!

AARTI SREENATH
aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

Picture this: You're on a sun-drenched island surrounded by cliffs that seem to kiss the sky and waters so turquoise they practically sparkle. This was Capri, a destination so enchanting it could make even the most seasoned traveler pause and take a deep, contented breath. Ankita Chhetri recalls, "Capri was pure magic! The cliffs, turquoise waters and the Blue Grotto were incredible, but what I loved most was soaking up the island's unique vibe. Every view was mesmerising."

But Capri isn't just about postcard-perfect landscapes. It's the heartbeat of its culture that captivates every visitor. She shares, "The Italian charm was absolutely captivating! From artisans handcrafting leather sandals to colourful ceramics on every corner and traditional music spilling out into the streets, there's a calm, beautiful rhythm of life here that makes you want to slow down and savour it all."

And speaking of savoring, let's talk food! Capri's culinary delights aren't just meals; they're experiences. "The food was divine! I fell in love with fresh seafood pasta and, of course, their famous Limoncello. Every meal felt like a celebration of flavours," she beams.

Of course, no trip to Capri is complete without connecting with the locals and Aditi was welcomed with open arms. "The locals were incredibly warm. Our boat tour

Sunkissed and smitten, Ankita Chhetri recounts her whirlwind romance with the enchanting island of Capri, where crystal-clear waters, picturesque landscapes and la dolce vita left her spellbound, in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.



guide was especially sweet. He went beyond just showing us around, constantly checking to ensure everyone was safe and having fun," she recalls, remembering the genuine hospitality that turned a simple boat ride into an unforgettable experience.

Speaking of boat rides, let's dive into the highlight of the trip: sailing around the island. She vividly recalls the moment: "Sailing around Capri was like a dream! Drifting through the crystal-clear waters with cliffs towering above—honestly, it's an absolute must-do!" Beyond Capri, though, lies her hometown, Hamiltonganj in West Bengal. "It's so underrated and unique. Nestled near the India-Bhutan border, it's got perfect weather, amazing food, mountains and pristine rivers. It's my personal slice of paradise."

When it comes to lodging, her stay in Praiano, just 15 minutes from Positano, was nothing short of magical. "We stayed in an Airbnb with stunning coastal views—a perfect base for exploring the Amalfi Coast," she describes, the charm of the place still fresh in their mind.

But when the pressures of work start to mount, she has a favorite retreat to recharge: "Lonavala! It's close to Mumbai and offers the perfect mix of windy weather, nature, and relaxation. It's my quick getaway to find peace."

However, not all travels are without their hiccups. She remembers a particularly nerve-wracking moment in Capri: "My sister and I almost missed the last boat from



Capri to Positano! We panicked, shouted, and waved at the departing boat. Miraculously, it came back for us. Those 15 minutes of panic were nerve-wracking, but oh-so-memorable!"

But Capri wasn't just about the sights and adventures—it was also about slowing down and embracing the present. "The beauty of Capri made me slow down and appreciate the small moments—the waves, the breeze. Watching the sunset from Anacapri felt like time stood still." Islands, it seems, have a special way of disconnecting you from the world and reconnecting you with yourself. Capri had that serene, timeless quality that left her feeling grounded and free.

As for capturing the experience, Ankita

keeps a detailed journal, taking photos and videos to relive the journey. "Capri and Amalfi felt like stepping into a painting. I'll treasure those memories forever," they reflect, a nostalgic smile crossing their face.

And when it comes to dream travel companions, she has the perfect pick. "I'd love to travel with Anam! Her energy is contagious and we've known each other for years. It would be a fun, crazy adventure!"

Whether it's sailing the crystal waters, tasting the freshest pasta, or simply watching a sunset from an idyllic island, Capri left an indelible mark on her. And who knows? Maybe they'll take Anam along next time, and Capri will get even more adventurous.



Building healthy boundaries by protecting your emotional space

Building healthy boundaries is essential for protecting your emotional space and ensuring that you maintain well-being in your relationships and daily life. Boundaries serve as the invisible lines that define where one person ends and another begins, allowing for personal space and autonomy. Establishing and maintaining these boundaries is crucial for emotional health, as they help prevent feelings of overwhelm, resentment and burnout. Here's a guide on how to effectively build healthy boundaries:

UNDERSTANDING BOUNDARIES

Boundaries can be physical, emotional, mental, or time-based. Physical boundaries pertain to personal space and physical touch. Emotional

IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

• Gives you clarity:

When you set boundaries in your professional, personal and love life, it helps you give you clarity; you don't let other people disturb your mental peace for their sake or behaviour. It gives you clarity, keeps you focused and protects your mental health.

• Promotes self-growth:

When you set boundaries in your life, you don't allow others to cross the boundary; it helps you to make choices that support your goals and give you a sense of independence. It can also provide you with the freedom to grow on your terms; you don't let others interfere with your personal development.

• Maintains healthy relationships:

Everyone has a habit of oversharing and allowing other people to pass comments and judgments on their lives, but when we set healthy boundaries, it helps to strengthen our relationship. Long-lasting relationships are built on mutual respect; when you set boundaries, it presents misunderstandings, burnout and resentments. Boundaries help us connect with others without losing sight of our own needs, which leads to healthier relationships.

• Be clear and assertive:

Once you have identified your boundaries, communicate them clearly and assertively. Use "I" statements to express your feelings and needs without sounding accusatory. For example, saying "I feel overwhelmed when I have to respond to messages immediately; I need some time to process before replying" conveys your needs while minimising defensiveness from others.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

After establishing your boundaries, it's essential to remain consistent. People may test your limits, especially if they are used to a more permissive dynamic. Stay firm in your decisions and gently remind others of your boundaries when necessary. Consistency reinforces the importance of your emotional space and shows that you value your well-being.

(The author, Archana Singhal, is a counsellor, family therapist and founder of Mindwell Counsel in Delhi.)



boundaries involve separating your feelings from those of others, while mental boundaries relate to thoughts and beliefs. Time boundaries help manage how much time you devote to others versus yourself. Understanding these categories is essential for recognising where you need to establish limits.

Self-awareness: The first step in building healthy boundaries is self-awareness. Reflect on your needs, feelings and limits. What situations or interactions drain you emotionally? Identifying these triggers can help you understand where to set boundaries. Journaling your thoughts or discussing them with a trusted friend or therapist can provide clarity on your emotional space and help articulate your needs.

SPELLBINDING MELOMANIAC WITH HIS 'MADHUR-IC' MUSIC

With a voice that has captured the hearts of millions, **Madhur Sharma** has been making waves in the Indian music scene with his unique blend of classical and contemporary styles. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, rising music sensation Madhur Sharma opens up about his musical journey, his inspirations, his latest EP *Reversion* and more

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Madhur Sharma is a rising star in the Indian music scene, known for his soulful and melodious voice. This talented singer has captured the hearts of music lovers with his unique blend of classical and contemporary styles. With a strong foundation in Indian classical music, Madhur has released several popular singles and albums that showcase his vocal range and emotional depth. His notable releases include singles like *Kali Kali Zulfon Ke*, *Ek Dafa Tum Milo*, *Mere Baad Kisko Sataoge* (Lo-Fi), *Kehna Galat Galat* (Lo-Fi), *Tere Jeya Hor Disda* and *Woh Mulaqaat*, among many more.

Madhur's music often explores themes of love, longing and self-discovery, resonating with listeners across genres. His dedication to his craft and passion for music have

earned him a growing fan base and critical acclaim, marking him as an exciting emerging talent in the Indian music industry.

As we sat down to chat, Madhur shared with us the story of how his musical journey began. "My dad has been a huge influence on me. Since I was a kid, he would play all kinds of music for me and encouraged me to try new things." His time in a boarding school also played a significant role in shaping his passion for music. "We didn't have much to do in terms of entertainment, so I would spend most of my free time in the music room," he reminisced.

Sharma's latest EP, *Reversion*, is a proof of his innovative spirit. "I wanted to create something that would push the boundaries of traditional music," he explained. The EP is a beautiful blend of different genres, with each track offering something unique. Madhur's goal was to create music that would resonate with people across genres and he's thrilled with the response so far. When it comes to songwriting, he is humble about his abilities. "I'm actually very weak when it comes to writing songs," he laughed. However, he's fortunate to have collaborated with talented writers and composers who share his vision. Madhur's love for the Punjabi language is evident in his music and he's particularly fond of the song *Ranjhana Mera* from his latest EP.

As we wrapped up our conversation, he spoke about his experience performing live. "There's something special about connecting with your audience in person," he said. His Indian tour, which began in Hyderabad, has been a huge success, with audiences loving his unique blend of Bollywood and Sufi music. Madhur's love for Hyderabad is evident and he's grateful to have had the opportunity to perform there. "The city has a unique energy that's hard to find anywhere else," he said.

As Madhur Sharma looks to the future, he's excited to announce a new chapter in his musical journey. "After two back-to-back albums, I'm planning to release individual tracks," he shares. The first song, titled *Har Subah*, is a motivational track that's very close to his heart. "I've always wanted to create a song that motivates people to start their day on a positive note," he explains. Drawing from his own personal experiences, Madhur wrote *Har Subah* during a difficult time when he lost his parents. "Some songs really helped me get through that phase and now I want to pay it forward with my own music," he says. The title of his upcoming song encapsulates the song's message: to wake up each morning with a fresh perspective, leaving the past behind.



what's brewing?



Swarna



Marie Claire Salon, the renowned Parisian brand, has launched in Narsingi, with *Bigg Boss* celebrities Ashwini, Soumya Janu and Bebakka (singer Madhu) attending the opening.



Aswini



Mrs. Asia International 2024 Runner-Up Ratna Mehera, hosted a special meet and greet at Lanco Hanging Gardens in Khajaguda, to celebrate her journey. The event highlighted her achievements, including winning Mrs. India Telangana 2023, Mrs. India 2024 and securing multiple titles at the Mrs. Asia International pageant in Bangkok.



Madhu (Bebekka)



Soumya



Sameer

PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



The Almond Board of California hosted an insightful session at Taj Deccan, Hyderabad. The event featured renowned panelists, including nutrition & wellness consultant Sheela Krishnaswamy, popular actress Vani Bhojan and RJ Prateeka. The session focused on the significance of making mindful dietary choices, maintaining a balanced diet and the benefits of incorporating almonds into daily routines to enhance overall health and wellness amid today's hectic lifestyle.



Damson Technologies has announced the launch of an advanced manufacturing facility inaugurated by Bharat I Mehra, Astromancer & Technocrat, Business Advisor & Philanthropist.



Suchi Smita Sahu of Hyderabad has triumphed at Mrs. India Legacy 2024, winning the Dazzling Beauty title and securing a Top 10 spot.

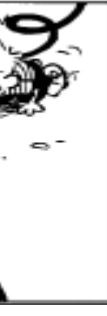


FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



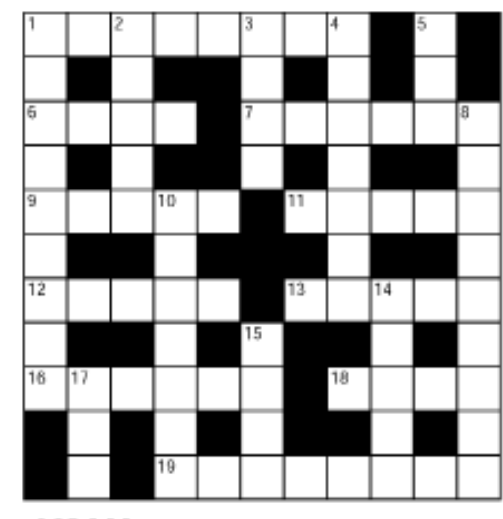
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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**
- 1 An extinct animal
 - 6 Not different
 - 7 Get away from
 - 9 Beneath
 - 11 Depart
 - 12 Footwear
 - 13 Doing a job with something
 - 16 Split into smaller parts
 - 18 Something that helps you find the answer to a puzzle
 - 19 Obsolete
- DOWN**
- 1 With your appearance changed so that people will not recognise you
 - 2 Labelled
 - 3 High playing cards
 - 4 Soaring fireworks
 - 5 Jump along on one foot
 - 8 A tree that doesn't shed its leaves
 - 10 Foes
 - 14 A house made of hard snow
 - 15 Restaurant's meal list
 - 17 Liquid inside a pen
- SOLUTION**
- | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | R | E | S | T | | | | |
| D | E | L | I | B | E | R | A | T |
| S | A | N | R | E | | | | |
| T | I | R | E | O | F | T | E | N |
| I | A | S | I | A | | | | |
| F | I | V | A | R | | | | |
| N | E | R | F | L | O | R | | |
| M | E | O | D | S | | | | |
| L | I | V | I | D | | | | |
| D | R | E | M | E | | | | |

GINGER MEGGS



BOYAPATI'S INFLUENCE IN ASHOK GALLA'S FILM

Ashok Galla, nephew of superstar Mahesh Babu, second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, has hit the cinemas today. In a candid conversation, he opens up about his film, his relationship with his uncle and his journey as an actor



SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Mahesh Babu's nephew Ashok Galla takes the centre stage once again as the lead in his second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. Directed by Arjun Jandhyala, the film carries the unique touch of acclaimed filmmaker Prashanth Varma, who provided the story. "It was around a year and a half ago that he narrated the story to me and I liked it instantly," shares Ashok. Prashanth Varma, known for his film *HanuMan*, pitched the story to Ashok even before its release. "The success of *HanuMan* is definitely a big advantage for us. It adds credibility and momentum to our film," Ashok notes, adding that director Arjun Jandhyala and his team made a few tweaks to the original story. Film maker Arjun Jandhyala, who has worked closely with Boyapati Srinu in the past, brings that influence to this project. When asked about the Boyapati connection, Ashok explains, "This film has the essence of a Boyapati-style movie, with a lot of action and emotional scenes. You can definitely see his mark in it." Much of the filming took place in Vizianagaram. Was the regional accent incorporated into the dialogue? Galla clarifies, "No, we didn't stick to the accent. Since this is a commercial film, we decided against it." He also feels that shooting in live loca-

tions enhanced his performance as an actor. Reflecting on the differences between his debut film *Hero* and this project, he says, "We wanted to showcase some variation in my look and character. For this film, both Prashanth Varma and Arjun Jandhyala envisioned a rugged appearance for me. They also asked me to gain weight, which I initially didn't understand. But during the action sequences, I realised why it was necessary—my co-actors playing villains are massive, like bouncers! It all made sense then." While the film promises commercial appeal, Ashok emphasises its emotional core. "The mother-son relationship is a major theme. My character does everything his mother says, which adds a strong sentimental layer to the story," he reveals. Ashok also shared a moment with his superstar uncle on social media, answering questions from fans. On Mahesh Babu's feedback, he says, "He's supposed to watch the film on Thursday, but I prefer not to sit with him during my films. It's nerve-wracking for me! I can watch any other movie with him, just not of my own." Addressing comparisons with his famous uncle, he admits he's eagerness to carve his own identity. "I know people still associate me with being Mahesh Babu's nephew and I want to move past that. To do so, I need a big hit. I'm working hard on every project to make that happen," he says. Did Mahesh Babu offer him advice after his debut? "He rarely comments on my acting, but he did say, 'If you want to succeed, you need to use your mind and stay focused.' That advice keeps me grounded and motivated," Ashok shares. Ashok's passion for acting dates back to childhood. "I first felt the urge to become an actor when I appeared in a cameo role in *Nani*. Later, during my boarding school years in Singapore, I attended advanced theatre classes. By the time I graduated from high school, I was certain about my career choice," he recalls. Though his father, Jayadev Galla, is a prominent politician and businessman, Ashok rules out any interest in politics. "That's definitely not for me. I want to focus solely on acting," he affirms. Speaking about his co-star Manasa Varanasi, who makes her debut with this film, Ashok praises her dedication. "She's a city girl but worked really hard to adapt to her role and prove herself," he says. When asked about future projects, Ashok reveals he's signed on with Sithara Entertainments for a "drama-comedy." As for exploring roles beyond the lead, he says, "I'm open to playing strong, meaningful characters if the opportunity arises."



Celebrating 50 glorious years of Mohan Babu in cinema

The Telugu film industry celebrates a monumental milestone as the legendary Mohan Babu marks 50 years in cinema. Renowned for his versatility and magnetic screen presence, he has shaped five decades of cinematic brilliance with iconic performances and transformative contributions to the industry. From redefining villain in *Swargam Narakam* to leading blockbusters like *Pedaryyudu*, Mohan Babu's journey is filled with groundbreaking achievements. His 1993 production *Major Chandrakanth* stands as a cinematic and political landmark, while his visionary efforts in education continue to empower thousands through Sree Vidyaniketan and Mohan Babu University. To honour this remarkable legacy, yearlong celebrations will kick off in December 2024, leading to a grand tribute in November 2025. With Kannappa on the horizon, Mohan Babu's passion for cinema remains as vibrant as ever.



'We used a footage of KCR garu in this story'

Jabardasth fame Rocking Rakesh, who is debuting as a lead actor in the upcoming film *KCR: Keshava Chandra Ramavath*, opens up about the film and the reasoning behind its intriguing title.

Rocking Rakesh, widely recognised for his comedy on the *Jabardasth* show, is now stepping into a lead role with the film *KCR: Keshava Chandra Ramavath*, set to release this Friday. Known for his comedic timing, Rakesh is now venturing into a serious role in this film. "Comedians have the ability to experiment with any kind of role, unlike others. This has been proven by legends like Chalam, Rajababu, Brahmanandam and many others. So, I believe I can handle any role," Rakesh stated confidently. He revealed that the film's story was initially pitched to others, but they insisted he take up the lead role himself. "The original title I had in mind was *Mera Naam KCR*, but I couldn't proceed as I didn't get the required objection clearance from the party. Since my character's name is Keshava Chandra Ramavath, I decided to stick with *KCR*. A title like this adds buzz and curiosity around the film," he explained. Rakesh added that the protagonist in the film is a staunch admirer of KCR, the leader of the Telangana Movement. "There's a connection between KCR and the story. In fact, KCR sir himself appears in

the film. He doesn't know it, though—I used a footage to include him," Rakesh shared with a laugh. Addressing rumours that he initially approached another political party but was later backed by the BRS party, Rakesh clarified, "That's not true. If I had BRS support, I would've secured more theatres in Telangana. My intention was to honour KCR sir and the Telangana Movement. I've ensured his fans won't be disappointed." He also dismissed claims of political backing at the film's pre-release event, which was attended by Harish Rao. "I invited many people, including DIL Raju garu, but he didn't come. Most of the Jabardasth artists supported me, even those who campaign for Jana Sena. I've worked with Jana Sena too and I even invited the Communist party," Rakesh said. Rakesh noted an interesting observation during promotions in Andhra Pradesh. "Surprisingly, I got 26 theatres in Andhra, more than in Telangana," he explained. To make the film more accessible, Rakesh has also reduced ticket prices. "The maximum ticket price is set at Rs. 100 to ensure more people can watch the film," he concluded.



Vijay Deverakonda appreciates Priyadarshi

Priyadarshi is set to lead the upcoming film *Sarangapani Jathakam*, directed by Mohanakrishna Indraganti and produced by Sivalenka Krishna Prasad. On Thursday, actor Vijay Deverakonda released the film's teaser and expressed his admiration for Priyadarshi. Speaking on the occasion, Vijay praised Priyadarshi's growth as an actor. "Darshi has been doing great films, taking on lead roles in intriguing stories. I just

watched the teaser of *Sarangapani Jathakam*, where his character believes in horoscopes. Personally, I don't know much about true horoscopes, but seeing his journey makes me proud. When we worked on *Pelli Chooopulu*, we never imagined reaching where we are today. Destiny has brought us here, and I'm thrilled for him," he said. Vijay also spoke fondly about director Indraganti Mohanakrishna. "I can't express how much I laughed

watching his film *Ashta Chamma*. At that time, it was such unique content, and I thoroughly enjoyed it," he shared, wishing success to the entire team, including producer Sivalenka Prasad. The film stars Roopa Koduvayur as the female lead opposite Priyadarshi, alongside actors like Vennela Kishore and Avasara Srinivas. The teaser hints at a hilarious entertainer, marking a potential comeback for Indraganti after a few setbacks.

MALAVIKA MOHANAN, PRABHAS SET TO SIZZLE IN THE RAJA SAAB

Malavika Mohanan who is carving her name in the pan-India cinema with her remarkable performances so far is set to mark her Telugu debut in the upcoming film, *The Raja Saab*. The actress will be seen romancing pan-India superstar and box office king, Prabhas. Fans are eagerly anticipating to witness the sizzling on-screen chemistry between Malavika and Prabhas and their pairing has already sparked immense curiosity and excitement among audiences. According to a source, the duo will soon be shooting for a romantic song. "Malavika and Prabhas will be shooting a hot romantic song for *The Raja Saab*. The song's shooting will take place in Europe around January and February," revealed the source close to the production house. *The Raja Saab* is touted to be a horror-comedy and is poised to be one of the most talked-about films of the year. The film is written and directed by acclaimed filmmaker, Maruthi. It will also star Nidhi Agerwal as another female lead. Malavika began her career with notable performances across different regional film industries— from her debut in *Pattam Pole* (2013) to her impactful roles in films like *Christy* (2023) and *Thangalaan* (2024). The actress recently debuted in Bollywood, playing the lead in *Yudhra* alongside Siddhant Chaturvedi. Apart from *The Raja Saab*, Malavika also stars alongside Karthi in the spy thriller, *Sardar 2*.



RAP022 kickstarts with a bang!

Ustaad Ram Pothineni had already announced *RAP022* on the auspicious occasion of Dasara and now we have another interesting development pertaining to the project. This film was formally launched with a pooja ceremony on Thursday in the presence of several guests. The launch ceremony was graced by directors Hanu Raghavapudi, Venky Kudumula and Gopichand

Malineni. The principle lead of the film, Ram Pothineni and Bhagyashri Borse also partook in the launch event. It was Hanu Raghavapudi who sounded the first clap, followed by Gopichand switching on the camera, and lastly, Venky Kudumula directing the first shot featuring Ram and Bhagyashri. The event was a starry affair and it had a super pleasant vibe. The script was handed over to

director Mahesh Babu P by Naveen Yerneni, Y Ravi Shankar, Mythri CEO Cherry, directors Hanu Raghavapudi, Gopichand Malineni, Venky Kudumula, Shiva Nirvana and Pavan Sadineni. Director Mahesh Babu has brought together the aesthetic looking pair of Ram and Bhagyashri for the film as he promises another fun and sensible film after *Miss Shetty Mr Polishetty*. He is evidently cooking up something super interesting with Ram, much to the delight of fans.



STANDALONE

Prime Video hosted the world premiere of its first-ever celebrity chat show, *The Rana Daggubati Show*, at the prestigious 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) on Thursday. The first episode of the unscripted Telugu Original series, featuring Nani, Teja Sajja and Priyanka Arulmohan, received a remarkable reception from the audience present in the packed auditorium at the special screening, just days before its worldwide launch on the service.



It's going to get more attritional: Pat Cummins

PTI ■ PERTH

Australian captain Pat Cummins expects the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against arch-foes India to be more "attritional" as the two heavyweights of world cricket spar over five Test matches instead of the traditional four games. And given the enormity of the series, Cummins believes players would not have the time to be distracted by the IPL auction that would take place in Jeddah on Sunday, the third day of the match. The blockbuster series will be a survival of the fittest as Australia look to avenge successive losses on home soil when they go head-to-head from Friday.

"The Border-Gavaskar Trophy has always been very tight every series, five Test-match series gets really attritional, it's a big one really," Cummins said at the pre-match press conference here on Thursday. Australia will be without their assistant coach Daniel Vettori, who was granted permission to leave the Perth Test and be at the two-day auction with his IPL franchise SunRisers Hyderabad.

"Yeah, I think he is there in the auction. I don't think so (it will be a distraction). Dan has



flown over there, but he has been here for the whole prep. Done all the meetings, done all the chats, watching it. We came to know that anyway," Cummins said. "So, for the players, I don't think so. Most of these guys have been there in the auctions before. They know

they can't really do anything. "You are a sitting duck and seeing whether you get selected or not. It doesn't... Doesn't make a difference to how we go about the first two days. It is not a distraction as far as I can see it," he added. The Australian captain admitted there will be

pressure on the home team, especially after it lost the last four Test series against India, including the two humiliating reverses on own soil. "There will always be pressure when you are playing at home. India are a very talented side and it will be a good challenge. But we are

not looking too far ahead," Cummins said. "It would be great to win the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. India are a great side but we are well prepared." The leading pacer also said that newcomer Nathan McSweeney should not try to imitate David Warner, the

legendary opener who retired from international cricket earlier this year. "He should play his natural game. He shouldn't try to imitate David Warner. That's not his game. As long as he makes the bowlers bowl again and again, that's his game," Cummins said of the man who is going to be handed his Test debut at Optus Stadium. Asked about India's talented all-rounder Nitish Reddy, Cummins said they shared the dressing room for IPL franchise SunRisers Hyderabad and praised the 21-year-old. "He is an impressive youngster. Didn't bowl much for SRH. He can swing the ball and is a really talented kid."

Interestingly, both Australia and India will be led by fast bowling captains, a rarity in international cricket. While Cummins will lead Australia, Jasprit Bumrah will be in charge of the Indian team as regular skipper Rohit Sharma is currently on a paternity leave. "It should happen more (pacers leading teams)," Cummins said. In the past four series between the two teams, India have won on all four occasions, including back-to-back away Test series wins in 2018-19 and 2020-21.



We are not carrying baggage from New Zealand series, says Jasprit Bumrah

PTI ■ PERTH

India's stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah on Thursday insisted that his team is not carrying any baggage from the unprecedented 0-3 defeat at home against New Zealand as it embarks on a challenging Test series against fierce rivals Australia. The five-match Test series starts here on Friday. "When you win you start from zero but when you lose, then also you also start from zero. We are not carrying any

baggage from India. Yes, we have our learnings from New Zealand series but those were different conditions and our results here have been different," said Bumrah, who is leading in the opening Test in the absence of Rohit Sharma, who is on paternity leave. Bumrah also said that the team has finalised its playing XI although he will reveal it only at the toss. "We have finalised our playing XI and you will get to know tomorrow morning before the start of the match," the skipper said.

Pujara backs KL Rahul at No. 3, believes Jaiswal can do a Warner



PTI ■ PERTH

Cheteshwar Pujara, who knows a thing or two about grinding the Australian attack in their den, on Thursday backed KL Rahul to bat at the vital number three slot in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, and said the swashbuckling Yashasvi Jaiswal is capable of doing what David Warner did in his prime. The five-match Test series begins here on Friday. "I don't know the batting order. I would prefer him (Rahul) at No. 3 because he has the experience to bat there," Pujara said in Star Sports press room. Rahul, however, is expected to open with youngster Yashasvi Jaiswal, while Karnataka's Devdutt Padikkal is being considered for No. 3 to maintain a left-right combination. "It seems the team is preferring Devdutt (Padikkal) at No. 3 for the left-right combination. He has batted at 5-6 and in the middle order. It will be easier to bat at No. 3 than opening. If he can bat at No. 3, it will be good." Pujara, currently sidelined from the Test set-up, praised Jaiswal and compared his batting with that of Australian great David Warner. "One of the most talented cricketers India has produced... I'm very confident that going forward, he has a lot to prove. I know he will play a key role in this series if we have to win.



"His role would be one of the most important ones. He can play a role similar to what David Warner used to do for the Australian team. "Being an opener, he holds the key. He's mentally tough. He loves batting, hits a number of balls. He has a long way to go across the formats." Pujara said the youngsters must play with self-confidence and without the fear of failure. "I will tell them the first battle is a mental battle. Self-confidence and belief are needed to make runs in these conditions. When there is pace and bounce, there is a chance of the ball hitting the body. You have to come out of that fear," Pujara said. On tackling short-pitch deliveries in Australian conditions, Pujara said the batters will have to identify the deliveries they should leave. "As a batter, you need to understand your strengths. We often end up playing hook shots we aren't quite capable of. On Indian pitches, most short-pitched deliveries are below shoulder level. But in Australia, they're often above shoulder height. "As a batter, you need to identify which balls to leave and which to play. Those below the shoulders are the ones you can pull, but you need to be in control of the shot. Sometimes you leave the ball, and sometimes you pull. You can't have a set rule -- you just need to look at the ball

and play according to the situation. Be in the present moment," he said. **Kohli needs a start** Virat Kohli may be going through a lean patch but Pujara believes his past success in Australia will help him to turn things around. "There is a lot of expectation of him. The number of matches he's playing and the athlete Virat is, he doesn't get enough breaks in between. That is why sometimes, when you're not getting enough breaks, your body and confidence go down a bit. That's normal. "He has got some break. He's at a place where he likes to compete. If someone is having a go at him, he would like to give it back to the bowlers -- that's how he started his journey. "He has set high standards for himself. He has that awareness. He has been a leader and is probably the best in the circuit. He's aware of what's expected of him and how many runs he has to make." Under Kohli's captaincy on the 2017-18 tour of Australia, Pujara aggregated over 500 runs and played a significant role in India's historic Test series triumph. "I'm confident that once he gets going, he needs to spend some time in the game. He's capable of doing all things. Always leading from the front, it's about getting a 50-60-70. If he gets a hundred, then he will have a great series ahead," Pujara said of Kohli. "In every match, he is motivated, whatever the format. Definitely, he has worked on it. It's about getting that start and spending time at the crease." **Pant 2.0 a lot smarter** Rishabh Pant has been the architect of their epic triumph in the 2020-21 series and the wicketkeeper-batter has returned after surviving a horrific car accident two years ago. Pujara feels the left-hander is a lot smarter now and will be one to watch out for. Australian bowlers struggle a bit to bowl to lefties. There's a different kind of enjoyment watching him. He's an attacking player who puts pressure on the bowlers. It becomes easy for me to play my natural game as they try to stop runs.

Spanish star Juan Mata joins ownership group of MLS expansion franchise San Diego FC

AP ■ SAN DIEGO

Spanish star and World Cup Champion Juan Mata has joined the expansion San Diego FC's ownership group, making him the first active international soccer player to hold an ownership stake in Major League Soccer. Mata joins David Beckham as only the second international player to be involved in MLS ownership. "Joining San Diego FC as a partner is an exciting opportunity to help build something truly special in a city and league that are experiencing incredible growth," Mata said in a statement. He added that the commitment to the community by both the club and the Right to Dream



Academy "aligns perfectly with my own values. I look forward to contributing my experience and passion for the game and working alongside everyone here to build a club that inspires both on and off the pitch." He has been with the Western Sydney Wanderers of the Australian A-League since September.

Mata has been a big name in international soccer for years. He won club honors in England, Spain, Turkey and Japan, and was a key player in the golden era of the Spanish men's national team which won the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 UEFA European Championship. A product of Real Madrid's youth academy, Mata began his professional

career with Real Madrid Castilla before transferring to Valencia CF in 2007, where he won the Copa del Rey the following year. Mata signed with Chelsea FC in 2011, where he was pivotal in helping the London club capture the UEFA Champions League, FA Cup, and UEFA Europa League titles, earning Chelsea's Player of the Year honors twice in that span. He joined Manchester United in 2014, winning the FA Cup, Europa League and EFL Cup in nine seasons. He joined Turkish side Galatasaray in 2022, where he celebrated his first league title, before signing with Japan's Vissel Kobe in 2023, where he won the league again. Mata founded the Common Goal initiative, pledging 1 per cent of his salary to social causes.

Liga Deportiva Alajuelense threatens FIFA with legal action in bid for spot at Club World Cup

AP ■ SAN JOSE

The winningest team in Costa Rica is asking FIFA for a spot in next summer's Club World Cup and is willing to take legal action if denied. Liga Deportiva Alajuelense, which has won 30 league titles, wants FIFA to enforce the rule that forbids clubs from the same ownership to participate in the tournament. "The claim is based on the principles of eligibility set in the rules of the tournament," the club said in a press release. Team spokesman Marco Vazquez noted that Mexican clubs Leon and Pachuca belong to the same owner, Jesus Martinez, of Grupo Pachuca. "Those are the rules that FIFA established -- there cannot be multi-ownership,"



Vazquez said Wednesday. "There are two Mexican clubs from the same owner and the rulebook is clear. What we are asking is to review what FIFA itself established." The FIFA-run competition has been expanded from seven teams to 32 and will be staged in the United States from June to July next year. "We hired a law firm in Spain, and they have all the

details," Vazquez said of potential legal action. FIFA has not publicly reacted to the team's announcement and didn't immediately answer a request for comment. Alajuelense is the best-ranked team in Central America for the CONCACAF but 40th overall in the region. CONCACAF has four spots in the Club World Cup. The teams that qualified are the Seattle Sounders, Monterrey, Leon and Pachuca. Lionel Messi's Inter Miami will participate as a guest of the host. All five clubs were announced for the Dec. 5 draw in Miami. In Mexico, besides Leon and Pachuca, there are another two companies that own two or more clubs in the first division. Grupo Caliente owns Tijuana and Queretaro, while Grupo Orlegi controls Atlas and Santos.

Indian women's hockey team starts 2028 Los Angeles Olympics' qualification journey

PTI ■ RAJGIR (BIHAR)

A new-look and much-fitter Indian women's hockey team started its 2028 Los Angeles Olympics' qualification journey in the most perfect manner, producing a scintillating, unbeaten performance during its title-defending Asian Champions Trophy campaign here. It marked a resurrection of sorts for the side that had been left deflated after failing to qualify for the Paris Olympics this year. It marks a fresh beginning for the team and its seasoned coach Harendra Singh. Since taking over in April, Harendra's vision has been crystal clear -- to qualify for the 2028 Games. He always believed and emphasised that a successful ACT campaign will be the right start for the team's journey towards the 2026 World Cup and the 2028 Olympics. And Harendra couldn't have asked for more from his wards. "I truly believe this victory will inspire more young girls to take up

hockey and further elevate the sport in India. We are thrilled to be able to bring this win to our fans and our nation," said captain Salima Tete after the brilliant campaign. His primary focus since taking charge has been to improve the team's fitness, and fortitude and the Indian players performance in the just-concluded ACT was a testament to the fact that they have worked tremendously on these core areas and lived upto their coach's expectation. "While we celebrate this win, our focus remains on long-term goals. We are working hard every day, trusting the process, and staying dedicated to delivering our best in every tournament," Salima said. "Our ultimate aim is to bring more laurels to India and make the country proud," she added. The Indians were impressive in most departments of the game and remained unbeaten in seven matches, including the semifinal and final. What has been heartening for India was their ball transition from the backline to the opposition circle using both the



flanks. The resolute show by the defensive line was also one of the hallmarks of India's performance as they conceded just two goals in seven games, while scoring as many as 29

themselves. Out of these 29 goals, 15 came from field efforts -- a heartening statistic --, 12 from penalty corners and two from penalty strokes.

The ACT produced many stars for India, the prominent among them was 20-year-old young striker Deepika, who was the tournament's highest scorer with 11 goals to her name, including

four from field play, six from penalty corners and one penalty stroke. In fact, five Indians were there in the top-10 scorers' list. Besides Deepika, Sangita Kumari (4 goals), Preeti Dubey (3), Navneet Kaur (3) and Lalrmsiami (3) were also impressive. Harendra worked extensively on the fitness of the players in the run up to the tournament and it was clearly visible on the turf as the side played fast-paced, one-touch hockey throughout the tournament to trouble opponents, including reigning Olympic silver-medallists China whom they defeated 1-0 in the final to retain the title. If Deepika was a sensation upfront, vice-captain Navneet Kaur, Lalrmsiami and Neha were the fulcrum of India's midfield. Besides Deepika, young Sangita too was brilliant inside the circle, while Salima and 17-year-old Sunelita Toppo simply broke down the opposition defence with their dribbling skills and brilliant runs from the flanks. The defensive line was brilliantly

held together by Udit, Sushila Chaudhary, Jyoti and Ishika Chaudhary. So good was their performance that Indian goalkeepers Savita Punia and Bichu Devi Kharibam were hardly called into action in the tournament. But going forward, there is a vital area of concern for Harendra -- conversion rate from penalty corners. The statistics might show India scored 12 from penalty corners but the team's conversion rate was very poor. The Indians earned penalty corners aplenty in all the matches but lacked in execution and variation despite having as many as four options in the side in the form of Deepika, Udit, Navneet and Manisha Chauhan. But the future augurs well for the Indian team as the players look to gain much-needed exposure by rubbing shoulders with the best of the world in the first-ever four-team women's Hockey India League, starting in Ranchi on January 12 and finishing on January 26.