

# the pioneer

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**Vikram**

**'READY TO SHINE'**

with Roti Kapda Romance

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**QUOTE OF THE DAY**

The pioneer

In just 10 days 100 students fell ill due to food poisoning. How many more students must suffer or lose their lives before the government wakes up? The Chief Minister's promise of strict action against those responsible for serving contaminated food has proven to be hollow



- Harish Rao, BRS MLA

P2

**DON'T MISS...**

**40 students take ill eating midday meal**

In Narayanpet district, nearly 40 students from Zilla Parishad High School in Maganoor took ill due to suspected food poisoning on Tuesday. It may be recalled that not less than 50 students fell ill six days ago due to food poisoning. Once again the Zilla Parishad School is again in the news for the wrong reason. As many as 40 students have been admitted to hospital with symptoms of food poisoning. The students complained of stomach ache, vomiting and diarrhoea after eating a midday meal.

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**Rahul, Priyanka to lead agitation**

The Congress said on Tuesday that it will launch protests, both inside and outside Parliament, under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, against the lack of Central assistance for the landslide survivors of Wayanad. Party leader and Kalpetta MLA T Siddique described the Centre's alleged reluctance to provide financial aid to the people in landslide-affected areas as an "inhuman" approach. He said that, besides Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, he, as the local ...

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**Milk production up despite fall in output**

India's milk production rose nearly 4 per cent annually to 239.3 million tonnes in 2023-24 on better productivity, even as milk output of buffaloes declined 16 per cent annually, according to government data on Tuesday. The milk output of India, the world's largest milk producer, stood at 230.58 MT in 2022-23. However, the annual growth rate has slowed down in the previous two fiscal years, the data showed. The growth rate was 6.62 per cent in 2017-18; 6.47 per cent in FY19; 5.69 per cent in ...

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**'Getting Venky was our main priority'**

Former West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, who is now the mentor of reigning champions Kolkata Knight Riders, has defended the team's strategy of "going all out" for Venkatesh Iyer to keep the "core" of the IPL championship-winning side intact. Seen as a potential captaincy candidate for KKR, Venkatesh's acquisition has sparked some criticism over why he wasn't retained if leadership was part of the team thinktank's plan for him. "Getting Venky (Venkatesh Iyer) was one of the main ...

-SPORTS

## AP likely to suspend Adani power deal

**BJP refuses to defend Adani in the case**  
**State govt to ask Centre and SECI to probe bribery charges**

REUTERS ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh is likely to suspend a power purchase deal linked to the Adani Group due to the US indictment of the group's billionaire founder Gautam Adani over an alleged bribery scheme, Reuters news agency said quoting two State government sources.

The southern state will ask the federal government and the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI), which awards power supply contracts to companies like Adani, to investigate the charges, the sources said. The suspension, likely to be announced soon, would be the first such action by an Indian state government after U.S. prosecutors charged Gautam Adani and seven others with agreeing to pay bribes of \$265 million to unidentified Indian government officials to obtain solar



The suspension, likely to be announced soon, would be the first such action by an Indian state government after U.S. prosecutors charged Gautam Adani and seven others with agreeing to pay bribes of \$265 million to unidentified Indian government officials to obtain solar

power supply contracts. Meanwhile, the BJP sources refused to defend Adani in the case. "We have nothing to defend him and we are not involved. Let him defend himself," BJP spokesperson Gopal Krishna

**POINTS**

- The indictment accuses Adani and others of paying \$265 million in bribes, with \$228 million paid to influence Andhra Pradesh's electricity distribution companies.
- The SECI agreement for power supply to AP was set to begin next year. Clauses in the contract allow termination if serious misconduct is proven.
- Gautam Adani has denied the bribery allegations, calling them baseless.
- The YSR Congress Party, the previous ruling party in the State, has denied any wrongdoing related to the case.

Agarwal said by phone to Reuters. "We are not against industrialists."  
Continued on Page 2

## DEFENCE LAND TRANSFER, KEY PROJECTS

### CM Revanth seeks speedy approval

**Holds discussions with Rajnath**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy held discussions with Union Ministers in New Delhi, urging speedy approvals for key projects in Telangana, including the transfer of 222.27 acres of defence land for the development of Babu Ghat and permissions for airports in Paloncha, Antargam, Adilabad and Warangal. The Chief Minister met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, requesting the transfer of defence land to facilitate the "Gandhi Sarovar Project" at Babu Ghat in Hyderabad. Highlighting its significance as a site where Mahatma Gandhi's ashes were immersed, Revanth proposed the development of a global hub for Gandhian philosophy. The plan includes providing a Knowledge Hub, Meditation Centre, handloom promotion centre, landscaped ghats, a Statue of Peace and public spaces aimed at boosting tourism and preserving cultural heritage.



During a meeting with Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu, the Chief Minister detailed Telangana's industrial growth and emphasised the government's focus on improving transport infrastructure. He sought swift approvals for airport projects, underscoring their potential to enhance regional connectivity.  
Continued on Page 2

## Govt okays Rs 196 crore for 2BHK colonies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government sanctioned Rs 196.46 crore for providing essential facilities in 2BHK housing colonies under its flagship double-bedroom housing scheme. The funds will be used to ensure water supply, electrification and sewerage systems making the houses habitable. The order, issued by the Transport, Roads & Buildings Department comes after a proposal from the Managing Director of the Telangana Housing Corporation Limited (TGHC). The request, based on an assessment of the immediate requirements in these colonies, received concurrence from the Finance Department.

According to the directive, the Managing Director of TGHC has been tasked with overseeing the provision of these facilities, ensuring timely action in line with the government's commitment to provide quality housing to weaker sections.

## TG BJP MPs, MLAs meeting Modi today

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-SPORTS

## Govt launches projects costing Rs 1 L cr in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government has unveiled a transformative vision for Hyderabad's growth under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, focusing on the expansion of urban facilities and infrastructure development through the '2050 Master Plan'. Official sources said that in its first year, the government has launched projects worth around Rs 1 lakh crore aimed at establishing Hyderabad as a future business hub. Elevated corridors and double-decker flyovers are being constructed to tackle traffic congestion. A Rs

2,232 crore elevated corridor near Alwal on Rajiv Rahadari and a Rs 1,580 crore double-decker elevated corridor on the Hyderabad-Nagpur NH have been approved. The long-pending acquisition of defence land for the Mohdipatnam Skywalk and other projects were resolved in just three months after the government took charge. Special attention is being given to rejuvenating water bodies like the Musi River and the twin reservoirs of Himayatsagar and Osmansagar. The government has proposed 39 sewage treatment plants (STPs) to purify wastewater flowing into the Musi and is working on a multi-purpose project to  
Continued on Page 2

## Many factors behind Congress led MVA defeat in Maharashtra

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU  
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■ HYDERABAD

In Mahabharatha Karna's death had many reasons and like that, there were many reasons for the defeat of the Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi in the Maharashtra elections. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy who campaigned during the Maharashtra Assembly elections said on Monday the Maharashtra people did not believe Prime Minister Modi and defeated the BJP candidate in the Nanded Lok Sabha constituency and ensured the victory of Congress candidate Ravindra



Vasant Rao Chavan. However, the Maharashtra people believed in the Eknath Shinde, Devendra Fadnis and Ajith Pawar combo rather than Modi.  
Continued on Page 2

## 'One State One Digital Card' on hold

NAVEENA GHANATE  
naveena.ghanate@gmail.com  
■ HYDERABAD

The 'One State One Digital Card' initiative has been put on hold, sparking uncertainty over when it will resume. A Congress legislator confirmed to 'The Pioneer' that the project, which aimed to streamline citizen services into a single digital identity, is no longer progressing. However, there is no clarity on whether the initiative will resume at a later stage. The MLA said that the caste survey, which encompasses a comprehensive demographic and socio-economic assessment, contributed to the decision to halt the project. "The caste survey covers every-

**Despite the explanation, ambiguity prevails, with no official communication from the government outlining the reasons behind holding the initiative or providing a roadmap for its revival**

thing we need to understand about citizens, and perhaps the priorities have shifted for now, as they need enumerators for it," the legislator remarked. Despite the explanation, ambiguity prevails, with no official communication from the government outlining the reasons behind holding the initiative or providing a roadmap for its revival.

The lack of clarity has left citizens and experts alike speculating about the issue of new Ration Cards and Health Cards. Sources indicated that the pilot project which was initiated in the Cantonment area will be studied and then a comprehensive plan may be drawn up. The 'One State One Digital Card' initiative aimed at streamlining access to welfare schemes through a unified digital platform, was officially launched by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on October 3, 2024, during a public meeting in the Secunderabad Cantonment area.  
Continued on Page 2

## KALESHWARAM PROJECT

### Engineers' conflicting answers anger Justice Ghose

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Justice PC Ghose-led Kaleshwaram Commission has expressed concern over the construction of Block 2A of the Sundilla Barrage, which was reportedly undertaken without proper design. Sixteen field-level engineers appeared before the Commission on Tuesday to provide clarifications based on affidavits submitted earlier. Expressing dissatisfaction, Justice Ghose criticised the inconsistency between the information provided in affidavits and statements made

during the hearing. "How can work be done without proper designs? Providing conflicting information under oath during a public trial is unacceptable and will have consequences," he warned. Justice Ghose questioned the design and quality issues of not only Sundilla Barrage but also the Medigadda and Annaram barrages. The engineers admitted that the construction of Block 2A began without a design and claimed that it was carried out as per the orders of the then Chief Engineer. Justice Ghose rejected this justification, stating that  
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## MUSI'S CRY FOR HELP!!



The Musi River, once the lifeline of Hyderabad, flows through the heart of the city, carrying centuries of history along its banks. A tributary of the Krishna River, it was known for its vibrant waters that nurtured life and agriculture in the region. However, the devastating floods of 1908 prompted the construction of Osman Sagar and Himayath Sagar reservoirs to control its flow and ensure the city's safety. Over the years, this historic river, which once defined Hyderabad's culture and economy, has turned into a grim spectacle of neglect and pollution. The Pioneer travelled along with a hydrologist its length, from Gandipet to Gowrelli within the limits of ORR, and brought to light the alarming realities of its current state. As the river's rejuvenation is on the cards, From Thursday The Pioneer will bring to light the ground reality of Musi across the 55km stretch.

**Exclusive Ground Reports from TOMMORROW**

## PAN 2.0: More user-friendly and efficient

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government has announced the PAN 2.0 project. The upgrading of PAN includes adding a QR code. This will be rolled out free of cost for all taxpayers. Existing Permanent Account Number (PAN) card holders are not required to apply for a new one under the upgraded PAN 2.0 system that is primarily aimed at introducing a 'common identifier' for all business-related activities, the Income Tax Department said on Tuesday. CBDT also clarified that the "QR code is not a new feature, and it has been incorporated in PAN cards since 2017-18" and the same will be continued under PAN 2.0 project with enhancements (dynamic QR code which will display latest data present in PAN database). PAN 2.0 Project is an e-

Governance project. The project is being undertaken by the Centre for re-engineering the business processes of taxpayer registration services through technology-driven transformation of PAN and TAN services and also for enhancing the digital experience. The PAN 2.0 project aims to enable the use of PAN as a common identifier for all digital systems of specified government agencies. The addition of a QR Code on an individual's PAN card has already been done by the Income Tax Department recently. According to Income Tax laws, a PAN will become invalid only if it is not linked to Aadhaar. Merely not having a QR code on the PAN card will not make the existing PAN card invalid. However, it is recommended that individuals having PAN cards without a QR code must upgrade their

**CBDT also clarified that the "QR code is not a new feature, and it has been incorporated in PAN cards since 2017-18" and the same will be continued under PAN 2.0 project with enhancements (dynamic QR code which will display latest data present in PAN database)**

PAN to the new design to avoid problems. The existing PAN card will not become invalid if there is no QR code on it. The existing PAN card will remain valid and taxpayers have an option to get

numbers are expected to remain unchanged. However, a new PAN card with an embedded QR code will be issued as a soft copy version. Additionally, it has been announced that a 'PAN Vault System' will be introduced to enhance the safety of PAN information. This system may imply that like Aadhaar usage an OTP authentication process could become mandatory before accessing or using an individual's PAN. This initiative aims to strengthen security and ensure better control over the use of PAN data. Your PAN card will not become inactive if you don't apply for PAN 2.0 immediately. The Income Tax Department has not yet issued a circular clarifying the process of how and when individuals can apply to upgrade their PAN as per the PAN 2.0 project.



# City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | NOVEMBER 27, 2024

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## Minority welfare pleas top at Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 574 applications were received during the Prajavani programme held on Tuesday at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Prajaghavan in Hyderabad. Of these, Minority welfare applications were mostly received. The programme saw active participation from citizens seeking resolution of issues across various departments.

According to officials, the applications included 198 related to the Minority Welfare department, 99 to the Electricity department, 98 to the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development department, 55 concerning revenue matters, 26 to the Education department, 4 to the Pravasi Prajavani initiative and 94 to other departments.

State Planning Commission Vice-Chairperson Dr Chinnareddy and Special Officer for Public Governance Divya participated in the event, personally receiving applications and interacting with attendees to understand their grievances.

## RTO generates Rs 52.52 lakh from fancy vehicle numbers

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Khairatabad Transport Office has collected a revenue of Rs 52.52 lakh through the auction of fancy vehicle registration numbers. Hyderabad JTC Ramesh stated that the highest bid was for the number \*\*TG 09 D 0001\*\*, which fetched Rs 11,11,111, purchased by online bidding by Rudra Raju Rajeev Kumar.

The number \*\*TG 09 D 0009\*\* generated Rs 10,40,000, acquired by Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited. Similarly, \*\*TG 09 C 9999\*\* earned Rs 7,19,999, bought by Sriyan Constructions.

Porus Agrofood Products Private Limited secured \*\*TG 09 D 0006\*\* for Rs 3,65,000, while Vega Srigold and Diamonds L.L.P obtained \*\*TG 09 D 0005\*\* for Rs 3,45,000.



## CITY EVENTS

### Stand up special

A stand up special by Zakir Khan

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika  
November 27  
starting from 6:00 pm

### Telugu Drama

By Rasaranjani Group

Venue

Ravindra Bharati,  
Hyderabad  
November 27  
From 6 pm to 10 pm

### Bashir-K-Safeer

Talk By Urdu poet Dr Ravindra Kumar Choudhary

Venue

Lamakaan,  
Hyderabad  
November 27, at 4:00 pm

### Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

Venue

Culinary Guru Institute,  
Hyderabad.  
Till January 11, 2025.

### Zakir Khan live

Stand up comedy show

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika  
November 27

### Sweccha-Nela Nela Naatakam

Exhibition-cum-sale

Venue

Ravindra bharathi  
November 27

### Arijit Singh Live in concert

HSBC presale is live for now. General sale on October 23, 1 pm. Get tickets only on insider.in and paytm.

Venue

Concert in Hyderabad on December 7.

## Water supply disruption tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Metro politan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) has announced a temporary disruption in water supply on November 28 due to maintenance work being carried out by TSSPDCL at the Aliabad 33/11 KV sub-station.

The power outage at the Aliabad Reservoir Pumping Station will impact water supply in several areas.

Affected areas: Badam Masjid, Bala Gunj, Mahankali temple, Lala Darwaja, Mithra Club (back and front), Chatrinaka, Gandhi statue (front and back), Srinivas High School area, Sriram Nagar, Panduranga Rao Galli, CIB Quarters, Harijan Basthi, Gowlipura Mekala Mandi, Sardar Patel Nagar, Laxmi Nagar, Hamam Bowli, Boiguda, Kandikal Gate, DK Colony, Rajanna Bowli and Quadri Chaman area.

HMWSSB has expressed regret for the inconvenience caused to its customers and assured that the water supply will be restored as soon as the maintenance work is completed.

## PJTAU to celebrate Diamond Jubilee in Dec

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Professor Jayashankar Telangana Agricultural University (PJTAU) will celebrate Diamond Jubilee in December. Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao has expressed hope that the Vice-Chancellor's appointment will improve the conditions in the university.

The Minister has called upon the scientists to work towards making the PJTAU the number one among agricultural universities in the country.

The Minister was speaking at the launch of the logo and flyer for the proposed Diamond Jubilee celebrations of PJTAU.

The Agriculture Minister said that the university, which was started 60 years ago, has been neglected in the recent past.

He expressed hope that with the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor, the university would be revamped.

## AIMS FOR 15-20 LAKH RIDERSHIP BY 2028

# L&T to continue collaboration with TG govt for Metro Phase II

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

L&T will not exit Hyderabad Metro, instead fight criticism and will work with the Telangana government for Phase II to begin from January, said NVS Reddy, Managing Director, Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited (HAML).

In a press conference at the Metro Rail Bhavan in Hyderabad on Tuesday, NVS Reddy shed light on Hyderabad Metro completing seven years.

"The cumulative ridership of Hyderabad Metro in the last 7 years: 63.40 cr (63 crore 40 lakh passengers) and the everyday ridership of Hyderabad Metro to increase from 5 lakh to 7 lakh.

With the 2nd phase it will add 10 lakh making it between 15 to 20 lakh ridership until 2028. This is our expectation," said Reddy.

"HAML is the wing working for the Telangana government to take up the Phase-II of Metro Rail construction along with the Central government.

The work will begin in the Old City from MBGS to Chandrayanagutta - from January first week as we are instructed by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy that instead of awaiting Central government works, we should begin the pending project," said Reddy. "We will start demolishing the properties acquired through the Land Acquisition Act on the route in December last week and also begin to take up geo-technical studies."

The Centre's nod for the five corridors of 76.4 km with 54 stations is estimated to cost Rs 24,269 crore.

From this, Government of Telangana will spend Rs 7,313 crore, Government of India Rs 4,230 crore, Debt/Loan component from MDBs is Rs 11,693 crore and PPP complement is Rs 1,033 crore.

"We are in an urgency for Metro expansion. Otherwise, the State



HAML Managing Director NVS Reddy

will fall to 9th position from 3rd position and hence the Chief Minister has conducted over 10 meetings and has already released money for the works, he added.

NVS Reddy said that there are 100 religious structures and nearly six historical monuments in the Old City but one of them will be touched for Metro expansion.

Airport route can be accessed from three lines and extensions. Once completed, travellers can access the airport route from any of the three existing lines and extensions.

A special highlight is that HAML and National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) are planning to have a double-decker flyover-cum-metro rail for a 1.6 km stretch between Miyapur and Madinaguda.



## US govt and Sesame to train kids in 644 Anganwadi centres

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The US government and Sesame Workshop India Trust have launched the 'Learn Play Grow' programme as part of International Education Week.

They have selected 644 Anganwadi centres in Bhupalpally district to train foundational skills in literacy, numeracy and hygiene.

The programme is a collaboration between the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and

Sesame Workshop India Trust designed to support early childhood education and health practices for young children and their families across India.

With interactive learning led by Sesame Street characters Chamki, Elmo and their friends, 'Learn Play Grow' will provide foundational skills with digital content in Telugu and Hindi.

The programme is expected to engage with over 14,000-16,000 children and their families.

## Drone usage for sustainable farming in 'Rythu Nestham'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's flagship initiative 'Rythu Nestham' has been empowering farmers with advanced agricultural techniques and innovations. Launched on March 6, 2024,

the programme enables direct interaction between farmers and experts through audio-visual setups in 110 Rythu Vedikas, covering all Assembly constituencies. Held every Tuesday, the programme has already conducted 34 sessions, providing extensive training to farmers.

In the latest session on November 26, the focus was on 'Drone usage in agriculture' and 'Zero tillage for maize cultivation.' With labour shortages emerging as a significant challenge, drones were introduced as a viable solution. Experts highlighted how drones can plant seeds efficiently, requiring just 5-6 kilograms of seeds per acre. They also noted significant cost savings in pesticide application, as drones can spray an acre in 5-6 minutes compared to the 1-2 hours needed with tra-

ditional methods.

On zero tillage, the session emphasised its benefits, such as reduced labour and input costs. This method involves sowing crops without plowing the fields, using herbicides and other practices for weed management

and maximizing the use of available water resources. Scientists from Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University shared insights into ongoing experiments in Basavapuram, Raghavapuram and Ramakrishnapuram villages in Chintakani mandal, where 100 hectares are under zero-tillage and maize cultivation. Progressive farmer Narasimha Rao from Chintakani mandal shared his success story, inspiring other farmers across the State.

The session saw participation from 566 Rythu Vedikas, district agricultural officers, department staff and farmers. Experts, including Dr D Srilatha from RARS Jagitval and Dr N Ramgopal Varma from RR Rajendranagar, provided practical demonstrations and guidance.



## 1,336 petitions received during BC Commission public hearings across TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana BC Commission has successfully concluded its public hearings, conducted as part of the study on the socio-economic conditions of Backward Classes (BCs) in the State. The hearings, held in two phases across 10 erstwhile districts and at the State level over two days, provided a platform for various community representatives and organisations to present their concerns and demands.

The Commission received affidavits from caste associations, voluntary organisations and individuals highlighting their grievances and requests. Key demands included population-proportionate reservations for BCs, recognition of Nai Brahmins as temple employees, reserving 50% of fishponds for Gangaputras and constructing self-respect buildings for various communities.

Issues like reclassification within BC groups, strengthening caste federations and

addressing backwardness were also brought to the Commission's attention.

BC Commission Chairman G Niranjan, along with members Rapolu Jayaprakash, Thirumalagiri Surender, Balalakshmi Rangu, Deputy Director U Srinivas Rao and Special Officer G Satish Kumar, presided over the hearings.

Addressing the media after the hearings, Chairman Niranjan revealed that the Commission had received 1,336 petitions during the public hearings held in the district headquarters and at the State level.

He assured that a comprehensive report based on the findings and representations would be submitted to the government soon.

The Chairman also expressed gratitude to all those who supported and participated in the public hearings, acknowledging their contributions to the successful completion of the initiative.



## CONSTITUTION DAY



Governor of Telangana Jishnu Dev Varma participating as the chief guest at the 75th Constitution Day celebrations at the High Court of Telangana on Tuesday

# Mayor orders closure of unhygienic chicken shops

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a continued effort to ensure the safety and quality of food consumed by the public, GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi conducted a surprise inspection at Azad Market, Chaderghat.

During the inspection, two dressed chicken shops were found to be maintained in unhygienic conditions with rats running freely inside the shops. Disturbed by the situation, the Mayor instructed the GHMC officials to close down the shops immediately.

Following the Mayor's orders, a team conducted a thorough inspec-

tion of the two chicken shops operated by Rasheed Hussain and Kalim Hussain.

The team discovered over 1,600 live birds, 30 kgs of dressed chicken and 7 kgs of chicken liver being sold under unhygienic conditions. The Veterinary department confiscated the dressed chicken and liver, citing concerns for public health, and gave the shop owners a two-hour deadline to remove the live birds.

This action follows previous warnings issued to the shopkeepers for violating public health norms. Notices under Sections of the GHMC Act, 1955 were also served, demanding the shop owners to vacate their stalls.



## Bandi Sanjay asks govt to resolve scribes' housing issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said the BJP is ready to fully cooperate with the State government to resolve journalists' housing issue. However, if the government continues to neglect this matter, the BJP will not remain silent, Bandi Sanjay warned and said, "We will formulate an action plan alongside journalists to launch a massive movement. We will ensure Congress faces the same fate as the BRS."

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Sanjay said that the Supreme Court's decision to cancel the allocation of housing plots given to the JNJ Journalist

Housing Society is deeply distressing. "While we must respect the verdict of the highest judiciary, the primary responsibility for journalists not receiving housing plots lies with the BRS party, which was in power for a decade and the current Congress government," he slammed.

Sanjay said that 17 years ago, journalists mortgaged valuables, borrowed money and collectively contributed Rs 2 lakh each, amounting to Rs 12 crore, to secure plots under the JNJ Housing Society. However, both the BRS and Congress governments have repeatedly delayed justice by citing one excuse after another, denying journalists access to their rightful housing plots.

Despite these warnings, the shopkeepers ignored the notices, which were eventually pasted on the shop walls and sent via registered post.

The GHMC has emphasised that public health is its primary responsibility and the unhygienic conditions observed in these shops and poor cleanliness posed significant health risks.

The closure of the shops is necessary to protect the well-being of the community.

The GHMC has urged all stakeholders, including shop owners to ensure strict adherence to hygiene standards and cooperate in maintaining a clean and safe environment.







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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Yet another flashpoint

All stakeholders must demonstrate utmost restraint to prevent any escalation of communal tensions in Sambhal

The town of Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh has become the epicentre of intense communal tension following a violent confrontation over a court-mandated survey of the historic Shahi Jama Masjid. The incident, which unfolded on Sunday, has claimed three lives, injured numerous others and raised pressing concerns about the fragile communal harmony in the region. The Shahi Jama Masjid, situated in Chandausi, Sambhal, is a centuries-old structure recognised as a 'Monument of National Importance' by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI). Protected under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, 1904, the mosque became the subject of legal contention following a petition filed on November 19. The petitioners, a group of eight individuals including advocate Hari Shankar Jain and Mahant Rishiraj Giri, alleged that the mosque was built by demolishing a Shri Hari Har Temple in the 16th century under the orders of Mughal Emperor Babur. They claimed that the temple held immense religious significance for Hindus as the prophesied site of Lord Vishnu's Kalki avatar.



The petition sought ASI intervention and public access to the site, accusing the mosque administrators of obstructing entry and the ASI of negligence in protecting the monument. The legal dispute led the Court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) in Sambhal to order a survey of the mosque, with a report due by November 29. The initial survey on Tuesday was reportedly incomplete, prompting authorities to schedule a follow-up on Sunday. However, tensions escalated as the survey team arrived, resulting in a violent clash between opposing groups. The confrontation saw stone-pelting, arson and the deployment of security forces. Three lives were lost, and several were injured, including police officers and administrative personnel. The violence has since been condemned across the political spectrum, though it has also sparked a heated debate over the motivations behind the survey and its handling. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of instigating communal divisions. BJP spokespersons, however, defended the legal process. The situation in Sambhal remains tense, with heightened security measures in place to prevent further unrest. But are we seeing a pattern here? Some politically motivated individuals deliberately file petitions raking up controversy where none exists. Communal tension ensues and some people and party backs up the claim and polarisation is complete for politicians to exploit the situation. We have had enough of communal violence and surely this one can be avoided as 'The Place of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991' is clear that all places of religion must be preserved as they were at the time of independence. The Shahi Jama Masjid row reflects the broader challenges of navigating historical grievances, communal sensitivities and legal mandates in a pluralistic society. The need for restraint and dialogue among all stakeholders is crucial to restoring peace and preventing further loss of innocent lives.

The petition sought ASI intervention and public access to the site, accusing the mosque administrators of obstructing entry and the ASI of negligence in protecting the monument. The legal dispute led the Court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) in Sambhal to order a survey of the mosque, with a report due by November 29. The initial survey on Tuesday was reportedly incomplete, prompting authorities to schedule a follow-up on Sunday. However, tensions escalated as the survey team arrived, resulting in a violent clash between opposing groups. The confrontation saw stone-pelting, arson and the deployment of security forces. Three lives were lost, and several were injured, including police officers and administrative personnel. The violence has since been condemned across the political spectrum, though it has also sparked a heated debate over the motivations behind the survey and its handling. Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav accused the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of instigating communal divisions. BJP spokespersons, however, defended the legal process. The situation in Sambhal remains tense, with heightened security measures in place to prevent further unrest. But are we seeing a pattern here? Some politically motivated individuals deliberately file petitions raking up controversy where none exists. Communal tension ensues and some people and party backs up the claim and polarisation is complete for politicians to exploit the situation. We have had enough of communal violence and surely this one can be avoided as 'The Place of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991' is clear that all places of religion must be preserved as they were at the time of independence. The Shahi Jama Masjid row reflects the broader challenges of navigating historical grievances, communal sensitivities and legal mandates in a pluralistic society. The need for restraint and dialogue among all stakeholders is crucial to restoring peace and preventing further loss of innocent lives.

### PICTALK



People buy groundnut during the inauguration of the 'Kadalekai Parishes', in Bengaluru

# K P Sharma Oli walks a tightrope on China

## Will Oli's stance on the BRI and his decision to prioritise China over India define his political legacy or deepen Nepal's internal divides?



ASHOK K MEHTA

In Kathmandu, I observed that Nepal Prime Minister KP Oli's visit to China has become a hot potato in the chilly Kathmandu valley. The China visit is being portrayed by his Unified Marxist Leninist Party (UML)-led coalition government as a bold initiative by Oli to resolve the long-pending BRI Implementation plan. The BRI Framework Agreement 2017 signed by Nepal figured during the maiden visit of President Xi Jinping in 2019 when Xi announced NC Rs 60 bn in grants under BRI. Since 2008, China has announced NC Rs 80 bn in grants. It seems the government could not use the aid for projects under BRI due to some issues. Several delegations from both countries have interacted over the BRI Implementation plan for a long but the plan has not been signed. Oli last visited China in 2016 after the Indian blockade and signed several agreements including energy trade but almost none has materialised. China is insisting that BRI projects that were truncated at Beijing's request from 35 to 9 be under loan whereas Nepal, especially Nepali Congress, the senior coalition partner, wants them under grant. There were fears Oli might sign in to please the Chinese which resulted in considerable squabbling between them. A high-level task force of the two parties has been meeting to arrive at a consensus. Opposition lawmakers wanted all the agreements signed so far to be made public and discussed in Parliament and with civil society. At a UML meeting, Oli recently announced he would not sign BRI for the sake of coalition unity. Chinese envoy Chen Song who had been lobbying with lawmakers to sign the BRI plan has clarified that Chinese-built Pokhara airport would not be converted from loan to grant. Foreign Minister Arzu Rana is going to China on November 28 to prepare for Oli's visit with some plans on BRI. The other troubling issue was 'the first where - China or India' visit of Oli. Traditionally barring two exceptions - Prime Ministers Tanka Prasad Acharya and



Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) - all others on becoming PM have first gone to New Delhi. Prachanda had clarified that his was not a state visit to China but he had gone for the Beijing Olympics. India has not invited all PMs - like Madhav Nepal, Jhalanath Khanal, and Sushil Koirala - from both Left and Centre-Right parties but New Delhi has historically favoured Nepali Congress. Oli had said some pretty undiplomatic, even unkind things about India during his second term as PM after he had internationalised the Kalapani dispute and made it into a national issue. But later, Oli did work with India. Oli going to China without Beijing making any concession on BRI is cocking a snook at India. During the annual Kantipur Conclave in Kathmandu this month, he clarified that as a sovereign nation, a PM can visit any country first. He compared the 'first visit India or China conundrum' to visiting Nizamuddin or Ajmer Sharif first: which made little impact on the mainly Nepali audience, adding that his visit to China will not harm relations with India. For Nepal maintaining balance between India and China is a vital strategic mission that the founding father of Nepal,



OLI LAST VISITED CHINA IN 2016 AFTER THE INDIAN BLOCKADE AND SIGNED SEVERAL AGREEMENTS INCLUDING ENERGY TRADE BUT ALMOST NONE HAS MATERIALISED

Prithvi Narayan Shah had described as a yam between two boulders. Geography and social and cultural factors have favoured India. The de-throned Maoist leader and four-time PM Prachanda, Oli's erstwhile short-term partner, accused him in an interview with an Indian journalist who had come for the Kantipur Conclave, of playing the China card. UML was incensed by the allegation, demanding an apology from Prachanda. At the Kantipur Conclave, Prachanda informed the audience that he was happy he was no longer heading the government as he could atone for his party's mistakes and serve the people better. He clarified that with 32 seats, he had never sought power but others (NC and UML) had come to him to form the government. He asserted he had made a direct assault on corruption - the no 1 bane of Nepal - and put many corrupt leaders including members of his party, and those who had supported his government in jail. This included the newsmaker and former Home Minister, Rabi Lamichhane from the Rashtriya Swatantra Party who is at present in jail, being investigated for fraud. In Kathmandu, I discovered that Lamichhane has created a problem for the government

on which jail he should be lodged in, due to massive protests by his supporters. They took him to the Terai towns but not to his citadel in Chitwan and brought him back to Pokhara as they were unable to present him before a Kathmandu court to avoid creating law and order issues. Every other day there are massive traffic jams in Kathmandu over some issue or the other. Oli was cool about Rabi, saying at the Kantipur Conclave that he had 'once given Rabi a job (in Nepal Television)' but did not know much about his case. The parliamentary probe that was ordered on him as demanded by the Nepali Congress was at the behest of PM Prachanda and Rabi himself who was the Home Minister in the coalition government. He added: "let law take its course". Oli's China conundrum was grabbing headlines. By declaring he won't sign the BRI Implementation plan on Chinese terms for coalition unity he has taken the fizz out of the champagne that was to be popped after his visit. (The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### HISTORIC WIN AT PERTH

Madam — Apropos to the news headline "Team India rises like a phoenix at Perth" (November 26). Kudos to Team India! After the drubbing from the Kiwis in our own backyard 0-3, India dominated the first Test in Perth, crushing Australia by a massive 295 runs. Chasing a daunting 534, Australia crumbled for 238. This historic win marks India's largest victory by runs in Australia, surpassing their 222-run win in Melbourne in 1977. What is more redeeming is the way the Indian team played the 2nd innings. Not many teams have come back after being 150 all out on the first day, but this Indian team has time and again shown that it is built differently. Bumrah, leading in only his second Test, was left with a lot to do and fewer options to work with. While Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli and KL Rahul will be among the heroes with their solid second innings batting performances, it was the stand-in skipper Jasprit Bumrah's unbelievable skill set and self-belief during Australia's first innings rout that formed the cornerstone of India's win. Hope, after this Test, players should be retained based on their current performance, not on past achievements. The selection process should send a clear message that no player is above the team's performance standards. If a replacement player has excelled, they should be given priority and retained for their contributions. Senior players, regardless of their past glory, must earn their place back through demonstrated performance. This ensures that performance, consistency, and fairness drive the selection process, keeping the team competitive and motivated.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

### HOUSE ADJOURNED OVER ADANI

Madam—On the first day of the winter session, i.e., Monday, the House was adjourned due to the demand for a discussion on Adani. Now it does not seem that much work or meaningful discussion will be done in this session. Because of the kind of allegations that have been made against

## SC rejects plea challenging Preamble



In a landmark ruling, the Supreme Court has dismissed a batch of petitions challenging the inclusion of the terms 'Socialist and Secular' in the Preamble to the Constitution as per the 42nd Amendment passed in 1976. The Preamble declares India a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic republic. The objectives of the Preamble are to secure justice, liberty and equality for all citizens and promote fraternity to main-

tain the unity and integrity of the nation. The Preamble is considered the soul and spirit of the Constitution. It still plays an important role when there is ambiguity in Articles' provisions or when an interpretation of the Constitution becomes confusing.

The Preamble, which highlights guiding principles and some fundamental values of the bases of which the Indian Constitution was written, will become invalid and insignificant when important terms 'Sovereign, Socialist, Secular' are removed from the Preamble. Knowing the importance of the Preamble, in 1973, in the Kesavananda Bharati case, a 13-judge bench of the Supreme Court declared that the Preamble would be considered as part of the Constitution. In the 1995 Union Government vs LIC of India case, the Supreme Court once again held that Preamble is an integral part of the Constitution.

P Victor Selvaraj | Tirunelveli

Gautam Adani and his entire team in America, it is obvious that the Opposition of the country will raise its voice on it. Now our Prime Minister wants to defeat every solid allegation through his electoral victory (Maharashtra). That is why when the House was not functioning on Monday, he told the Opposition that "those who have been rejected by the people are indulging in hooliganism in the House."

Is this really so? Obviously, the people who are sitting in the Opposition are sitting there because they are in the minority. Does minority mean that they should not even talk about such a big stain on the country's reputation? Why does this government repeatedly stand in favour of Adani? Charge sheets have been filed in a New York court against Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani and six others. It is impossible to file a charge sheet there without proof. The US Securities and Exchange Commission has alleged that Gautam Adani and his associates paid a bribe of more than \$250 million, i.e., about two thousand crore rupees, for their renewable energy company in

India and hide this information from investors while raising capital in America. Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

### SAMBHAL MOSQUE DISPUTE

Madam — The horrific incident that occurred in Sambhal highlights the authorities' alarming reaction, where, without conducting a proper hearing or trial, they initiated a survey within just two hours. The incident has spread a curtain of fear and horror across the country.

The assertion of replacing a mosque with a temple is intensifying over time, threatening the diversity and unity of our nation. Mohan Bhagwat's statement should be taken into account: it is not right to dig beneath every mosque in search of a Shilving and claim it as a temple. Such actions are detrimental to the harmony of society. Early recognition can help us to take immediate measures to limit any damages.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Prasar Bharati unveils WAVES app amid criticism and challenges

### Prasar Bharati launched its much-anticipated app, WAVES touted as a strategic leap for India's national broadcaster

In a vibrant ceremony during the 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Goa, Prasar Bharati unveiled its long-awaited app, WAVES. Marking a strategic step forward for India's national broadcaster, the launch was graced by Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant.



However, the event's significance was overshadowed by the absence of central ministers, drawing criticism that this oversight represented a missed public relations opportunity. A Shift from OTT to App: A Branding Challenge Originally envisioned as an OTT platform, WAVES has undergone a rebranding as an app. This shift has sparked speculation that the change may be linked to limited new content. Critics have argued that the current branding does little to leverage Doordarshan's rich legacy, potentially alienating audiences, particularly in rural areas where Doordarshan's identity is deeply entrenched. Many users remain unclear about the relationship

between Prasar Bharati and Doordarshan, adding to the confusion about accessing the app.

Delays and Controversies The WAVES launch comes after multiple postponements, with its original debut planned for August 15. These delays have raised questions about Prasar Bharati's preparedness to compete in the fast-paced digital media environment. Observers have highlighted internal issues, including allegations of favouritism and mismanagement. Notably, the consultancy hired to guide WAVES has faced criticism for lacking expertise in the OTT domain and allegedly sidelining experienced officials in key roles.

Adding to these challenges are unresolved trademark issues surrounding the name "WAVES," which could further complicate the app's rollout. Private broadcasters, wary of potential regulatory challenges, have shown reluctance to collaborate with the platform, dampening its industry reception. Content and Vision Despite the hurdles, WAVES aims to differentiate itself in the competitive Indian media landscape. Offering over 65 live channels and content in 12+ languages, the app seeks to combine nostalgia with fresh appeal. Iconic Doordarshan programmes like 'Ramayan' and 'Mahabharat' are set to feature alongside new productions such as 'Fauji 2.0'. WAVES also plans to support emerging talent by showcasing student films and works by National Creator Awardees. Operating on a revenue-sharing model, WAVES aspires to empower creators while ensuring the protection of intellectual property. However, stand-

ing out against global giants like Netflix and Amazon Prime Video, known for their vast libraries and advanced technology, presents a formidable challenge.

The Road Ahead The launch of WAVES is a critical juncture for Prasar Bharati, offering a chance to redefine public broadcasting in the digital era. However, success will hinge on resolving internal discord, addressing operational concerns, and crafting a user experience that resonates with audiences. While the launch at IFFI has created a momentary buzz, sustaining momentum will require robust strategies, consistent content quality, and a clear brand identity. As WAVES ventures into the competitive digital media space, its journey will be closely watched. For Prasar Bharati, the app represents both a bold opportunity and a test of its capacity to adapt and thrive in an evolving media ecosystem. (The writer is a journalist; views are personal)



AMIT KR ROY



## FIRST COLUMN LESSONS IN HUMILITY AND FAITH

Are we ready to confront the truth of our smallness in the grand scheme of existence?



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Have we realised that we are intrinsically small souls? That we only play small roles, yes, of different levels, but always small. I will cite many examples to substantiate this fact in this article. The only big is God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. He controls everything. We shouldn't be surprised by the reality of us being small. What did we expect? There are billions of us and all interdependent.

We cannot exist without the support of others right from our birth. Ravana was puffed up because he thought that he was big, having defeated important entities. But he was made to bite the dust and he accepted that his highly bloated ego was his undoing. Hitler thought that he was big and was going to control the world. What happened? He committed suicide having realised his smallness. Nixon was President of the USA – a large and prosperous nation. He was forced to resign, because of his underhanded activities. Napoleon was similarly humiliated when he was banished from his country to live in Elba – an Italian island, away from his dear country France.

Smallness is only one of our handicaps; ignorance is another. Despite the vast knowledge Ravana possessed, he was ignorant like most of us; he ignored the reality of God. Only the most fortunate like



Sant Tulsidas transcend the barrier of ignorance. What will you call Kansa? He kept on trying to kill the child Krishna without realising that the Lord cannot be killed. Ultimately, Lord Krishna had to kill him. Duryodhana saw so much of Lord Krishna, but somehow it didn't sink in that the Lord was different; He was God. He saw how the Lord protected Draupadi from being disrobed; how Arjuna was protected by bringing back sunlight; and many such instances. His ignorance was quite deep-seated. What will you call persons, who outwardly pretend to be servants of God, but molest unsuspecting children?

Their depth of darkness, which engulfs their consciousness does not let them see that punishment is coming. Only after they are hit with severe punishments they realise that they are quite helpless really. Draupadi realised it and cried for the Lord's help, which the merciful Lord provided. Arjuna knew in his heart that he was enjoying the protection of the Lord. That is how he was able to triumph over very powerful adversaries. In the modern era, famous film stars have committed suicide.

We become very impressed by the fame they enjoy but little do we realise that they are just as helpless as we are. Wealthy people are no better when they are hit with mental trauma as a result of extraordinarily stressful events, which shatter their sense of security, making them feel insecure in this dangerous world we live in. Yes, this world is a place of misery (The Bhagavad-Geeta 8.15), as long as one does not take shelter from God. Both external and internal dangers exist. Demonic forces are out there to harm us in order to gain some pecuniary advantage like by stealing from us. Then, one does not know what is in store due to our past sinful acts. The smart thing is to come under the protection of God. So, what do I do? Having done my duty, I try to leave it to my Lord. Believe me, He takes care of me better than I could have imagined. It sounds like a fairy tale, but I am one of millions, who are benefiting in the present and have benefited thus in the past.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Realigning India's economic strategy



ATUL SEHGAL

Achieving the ambitious goal of becoming a developed nation by 2047 demands a decisive overhaul of current economic policies



The world is undergoing rapid political changes. With these geopolitical changes underway, it becomes imperative to relook at the current strategy for economic development to meet the declared target of achieving a developed nation status by 2047. It becomes necessary to realign and readjust the policy points with the changing circumstances. Countries become rich by producing and selling globally valuable and value-added products. India's share in global trade has to grow rapidly from the present mealy 1.8 per cent in goods exports and 2.8 per cent in goods imports. In the service sector too, India needs to enhance its share of delivered services upwards from the present 6 per cent. How will this happen? We need to take quantum measures and hard steps without caring for internal political expediency. Global political scenario may affect the choice of strategic steps but it can have, at best, limited effect if we as a nation are determined, focused and forthright.

Nothing can come in the way if we act united and our government performs its actions without fear or favour. The government's backtracking on the Agriculture and Farm Bills of 2019 was an unfortunate incident. Such incidents should not recur. The government buckled under the fake protests by agro market middlemen masquerading as farmers who created a false show of protests to put spokes in the wheel of the Bills and sabotage them. The government, under fear of burgeoning vandalism by anti-national elements to prevent the promulgation of Bills, backed by foreign enemy countries capitulated and rolled back the Bills. This should not have happened. The country paid a heavy price for this as agriculture is still the mainstay of India's economy. If only those important Bills had been passed, we would have witnessed an economic growth rate increase of at least 2 per cent over the existing. Let our government bring back those Bills at the earliest appropriate time to provide a vital booster to our economy. The other important area



THE GOVERNMENT BUCKLED UNDER THE FAKE PROTESTS BY AGRO MARKET MIDDLEMEN MASQUERADING AS FARMERS WHO CREATED A FALSE SHOW OF PROTESTS TO PUT SPOKES IN THE WHEEL OF THE BILLS AND SABOTAGE THEM

that needs the urgent attention of the government is the MSME sector which continues to lie stagnant. This sector is the prime driver of employment growth and needs steps to facilitate the establishment of new units and expansion of the existing ones. These steps are—bureaucratic reforms to cut red tape and reduce unnecessary regulatory compliances that engender corruption and impede growth. To boost Indigenous manufacturing and increase the share of manufacturing in the national GDP from 16 per cent (almost stagnant since 2015) to upwards of 20 per cent, rebooting the entire Make in India program is needed. The blueprint of this otherwise visionary plan was, alas, not implemented seriously.

Too much dependence on foreign capital and FDI was never forthcoming and efforts should have been made to utilise domestic capital. The central sector and state sector Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) should have taken the initiative in enhancing domestic manufacturing. Also, Make in India should have emphasised Make by India. Bureaucratic reforms, an increase in domestic manufacturing especially by PSUs by increasing import tariffs and further increasing fiscal concessions are some of the steps needed. Good work has been done in the area of defence and space in this context by encouraging and promoting startups.

This should be extended to other sectors of the economy. Value-added manufacturing in agriculture, food, healthcare and education will go a long way in boosting indigenous manufacturing and even exports. It is quite a pity that in spite of the wonderful success of the BJP government in the cleanup of the Banks, its benefit has not percolated to domestic manufacturing. Why out of the

100 smart cities conceived in 2014, only about 20 have seen the light of the day and that too partially? The establishment of special economic zones and specialised product production zones was blueprinted but its implementation has also got stuck in the legislative and bureaucratic quagmires. Bureaucratic reforms, I reiterate, are an emergent necessity. Large imports from China over the last ten years have indeed prevented the growth of MSMEs in the country. Many pre-existing factories faced closure and many manufacturers turned traders. India's exports to China in 2023-24 were USD 16.65 billion, while imports stood at USD 101.75 billion, leaving a trade deficit of more than USD 85 billion. Efforts were made by the ruling NDA government to contain Chinese imports. But most of the curtailment took place in lower-end consumer goods and less dent could be made in import of industrial goods. Irrespective of government policy, if our countrymen had decided to boycott Chinese goods that can be produced in India, we would have made a huge dent in Chinese imports and facilitated the growth of the domestic manufacturing industry. But this did not happen. The land acquisition Amendment Bill was presented in Parliament on 10 March 2015 but could not be passed due to opposition by non-BJP lawmakers in the Rajya Sabha where the ruling NDA lacked a clear majority in numbers. The opposition party MPs called the proposed amendments anti-farmer and anti-poor. The proposed amendments sought to remove requirements for approval from farmers to proceed with land acquisition under five broad categories of projects. Its passage continues to hang fire. It is the foundational base of the Make in India program. When will it be

passed? Political expediency has been truly the bane of our country and the main impediment to our fast-track economic progress. In the above context, it would be appropriate to mention that strongly nationalistic citizens can collectively create conditions conducive to the growth of the domestic industry. The economic resurgence of Germany and Japan post World War 2 are case in point. Though the USA lent economic support to these countries, their citizens were patriotically driven to establish their domestic manufacturing base and the countries developed into major industrial and economic powers in a period of barely two decades following their defeat and total devastation in 1945, the end year of the war. Both these countries lay stress on manufacturing, innovation and technology development. Their emphasis was on production and value-added exports. A similar strategy is needed. India has been the world's major economic power for millennia and in keeping with its inherent potential; it is capable of a long-term economic growth rate of 12 per cent. For this to happen, the aforesaid steps brook no delay. In the destiny of nations, there are some phases when it becomes necessary to take bold steps in line with progressive principles of economic development rather than get bogged down by over-strategising and political expediency. Our revered political and economic scholar Chanakya had stated that Dharma (righteousness) should take precedence over everything else in governance and even strategy should be aligned with universal divine Dharma. We need to proceed further in our economic journey accordingly.

(The author is a management consultant based in New Delhi; views are personal)

# Reaping our demographic dividend: Can skilling be the secret sauce?

With coordinated action, innovative strategies and a commitment to scalable skill development, India can emerge as a global economic and workforce leader

With a staggering 1.44 billion people 68 per cent of them between the ages of 15 and 64, India stands to gain from an immense, globally unmatched, demographic dividend that presents an unprecedented opportunity for economic growth amidst global challenges of declining birth rates and labour shortages. The vast labour force positions India to realise the government's vision of becoming the world's third-largest economy and the skills capital of the world.

This, coupled with the global shift towards diversifying talent supply chains – particularly to countries like India – can significantly enhance our geopolitical standing. East Asia offers compelling evidence of



ARUNESH SINGH

reaping the demographic dividend. UNFPA reported that Korea saw its per-capita gross domestic product grow about 2,200 per cent between 1950 and 2008, and Thailand's GDP grew 970 per cent. The pressing question now is whether India can fully capitalise on this demographic dividend, and can the skills ecosystem be the key to unlocking this potential. The

Challenge Effectively leveraging the demographic dividend requires addressing several critical challenges. The primary challenge is the need to create sufficient job opportunities to absorb the increasing number of young people entering the workforce.

Another key challenge is to bridge the 'skills gap' – the discrepancy between the skills that job seekers possess and the skills that employers require, thereby creating opportunities for meaningful employment. This must be achieved on a large scale as the country is already home to 103 million youth categorised as NEET (not in education, employment or training) and millions of youth enter working age annually. Crafting Scalable Solutions To leverage India's demograph-

ic dividend effectively, scalable solutions for skill development are imperative. This involves creating an ecosystem – support large-scale skill enhancement initiatives. Firstly, systemic change cannot occur in isolation; therefore, it is vital for government bodies and private companies to collaborate and pool resources, expertise and funding.

Therefore, fostering public-private partnerships (PPPs) is essential for expanding skill development initiatives. It is important to align training programs with market demands, focus on outcome-based skilling, leverage technology and design effective, replicable, and adaptable programs. This collaboration can significantly contribute to cre-



ating a more resilient and practical skill development ecosystem.

Several initiatives in the realm of skill development highlight the transformative impact of targeted training and strategic partnerships. One such initiative is Project AMBER, a unique public-private partnership (PPP) where each stakeholder—government, training partners, and the pri-

private sector (philanthropy)—contributes to the model. This initiative aims to enhance overall employment and retention outcomes by prioritising the quality of training, mentoring, and retention. Such initiatives not only help achieve success at an individual level but also lay the groundwork for broader systemic changes that can redefine the impact of the skilling ecosystem.

Secondly, aligning skilling programs with market demand is crucial. Collaborating with businesses provides valuable input on course content which ensures that learners are trained on skill sets that are relevant for the industry. Employer feedback mechanisms enable continuous adjustments to training programs, which are in sync with

industry requirements. This approach addresses the skills gap by equipping learners with relevant skills, helping them adapt effectively to the workplace. Ultimately, this strategy offers a solution to talent scarcity and unemployment by bridging the gap between workforce skills and market demands.

To ensure training programmes remain dynamic, it's important to integrate data-driven insights to evaluate the progress of the trainees. Thirdly, focusing on outcome-based skilling is essential as it prioritises employment and retention rather than just training. Outcome-based skilling is an approach to training that focuses on achieving specific, measurable outcomes rather than merely completing a set

curriculum or an instructional programme.

Finally, with the right use of technology, we can design skill development programmes that are both effective and scalable and create significant impact. Technology can greatly expand the reach and accessibility of these programmes through online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and mobile-friendly resources, even in remote areas. At the same time, standardised models like 'train-the-trainer' programmes ensure that rapid expansion does not come at the cost of quality, maintaining consistency across different regions.

(The writer is CEO, Generation India Foundation with inputs from Sourabh Anand, views are personal)





## It's now 'sensationalism over substance':

# DEEPA BHATIA ON LONG-FORM DOCUMENTARY EDITING



TEJAL SINHA  
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

In the realm of filmmaking, where stories have the power to transform and transcend, Deepa Bhatia is a masterful storyteller who is redefining the boundaries of creativity and social impact. With a career spanning over two decades, this visionary editor, producer and director has consistently pushed the envelope, leveraging her exceptional craft to bring to life narratives that are both deeply personal and universally relatable. From the intricacies of human emotion to the complexities of social justice, her films are an attestation to her unwavering commitment to amplifying marginalised voices and sparking meaningful dialogue.

As a leading figure in Bollywood, Bhatia has edited some of the industry's most commercially successful films, including *Taare Zameen Par*, *My Name is Khan*, *Rock On*, *Kai Po Che*, *Student of the Year* and *Raees*. Her projects are not just refined to these but also include the critically acclaimed films *Kedarnath*, *Drive* and the highly anticipated biopic on Sachin Tendulkar, *Sachin: A Billion Dreams*. With her hands on the pulse of contemporary storytelling, she continues to inspire audiences and push the boundaries of cinematic excellence. As a BAFTA Breakthrough 2024 participant, she is poised to take her creative vision to new heights, solidifying her position as a trailblazing filmmaker and a beacon of inspiration for generations to come.

This recognition marks a significant milestone in her career and we had the opportunity to discuss its impact on her future projects and aspirations.

Deepa's eyes light up as she discusses her selection for BAFTA Breakthrough 2024: "The word is so laden with meaning for me," says our guest for the day, who has been into editing for a long time, for about 25 years. She feels this recognition comes at a perfect time as she transitions into independent filmmaking. "First Act was my first baby step towards that. I'm writing my own film now. So, it's really given me a lot of strength, encouragement, hope and energy that yes, something's changed. Some kind of pattern has broken." Looking at her influences with the international exposure and opportunities, she's seen it coming from Britain like Gary Dollner's *Fleabag*. She hopes to engage with industry experts like



Jon Harris and Chris Smith to gain guidance and inspiration.

Her current project that she's writing at the moment is a period film set in India's pre-independence era, an adaptation of P Sainath's *The Last Heroes*. "Just imagine getting a conversation with Peter Morgan," she exclaims. "Oh my god!" As a woman in the industry, she's drawn to exploring specific issues and admires writers like Sharon Hogan in *Bad Sisters* and Sally Wainwright in *Happy Valentine*. "So, there are a whole lot of people that I would love to talk to to get some guidance, inspiration, more so since this is my first feature. Period projects are very difficult and in India, they often fall into a certain genre that is jingoistic and hyper-nationalist. I want to do something authentic and I'd love to have conversations with people who share my vision." The *Hawaa Hawaii* editor's admiration for the British film and television industry's writing is evident. Well, talking of *First Act*, the project has garnered critical acclaim and recognition. "My husband, Amol and I have been making films for children and we realised that the film industry's treatment of children is governed by parents and the industry's shortcomings in handling their well-being." She hopes to achieve a change in the industry's approach to working with children through the documentary's storytelling.

Looking at her journey, the *Fitoor* editor has worked on various genres, from feature films to documentaries. She shares her approach to editing across dif-



ferent forms. "Every project demands to be treated in a certain way. I listen to the material and navigate its unique requirements." She emphasises the importance of understanding the audience and finding the right balance for each narrative. There was something apart from the storytelling that *Taare Zameen Par* won our hearts and let's not forget, it was the editing. Kudos to the way Deepa had done it all! She further discusses the challenges of working with children in the film industry and the need for change. "Nothing has changed where children are concerned. It's the same exploitative cycle, being a star-driven industry." She highlights the importance of the industry looking inward and enforcing change on sets.

She approaches each project with honesty, aligning her editing style with the filmmaker's goals and aspirations. "Every project has an aspiration and the edit must align with that aspiration and with the call of the material," she explains. By mixing up genres and roles, Deepa avoids complacency and stays challenged, ensuring her work remains fresh and authentic.

When faced with creative and technical challenges, the *Drive* fame embraces discomfort and growth. While working on *Guests* (2009), a documentary film about the agrarian crisis and farm suicides in India, she was pushed out of her comfort zone. "I was a little out of my depth and I was afraid because I didn't know enough," she admits. However, by taking risks and facing her fears, she

grew both personally and professionally. Through her experiences, Bhatia emphasises the importance of taking risks and facing challenges head-on. "I always try to put myself into these situations so that I'm really taxed and challenged," she says. By doing so, she continues to evolve in her art, pushing boundaries and creating meaningful content. When asked about the future of long-form documentary editing, the *Raees* fame expresses concern about the industry's increasing focus on fast-paced content. "Downhill is what my answer is...the platforms are now more and more interested in certain kinds of sensational storytelling."

Also known for *Kai Po Che!* she believes that the film industry can benefit from innovation and change to support more inclusive and diverse voices. She emphasises the importance of including people from non-urban centers in teams and creating opportunities for young talent from far-flung areas.

Her experience with Instagram has led her to discover a new relationship with young people from remote areas, asking her editing questions and seeking mentorship. "I've become friends and a mentor to so many young people...trying to include people for whom this ecosystem is far away." She highlights the need for inclusivity and diversity in the film industry, encouraging others to do the same.

"If there's a way we can find ways to include them in our creative teams, in our production teams, I think that will take the narrative," she says. By including people from non-urban centers and providing opportunities for young talent, she believes that the industry can become more representative and diverse. She had also worked with an NGO on a project that empowered women to tell their own stories after the Gujarat earthquake. "We trained them to use the camera, to do interviews and I mentored them and they made their own film documenting the conditions in the villages," she recalls, highlighting the importance of technology in making storytelling more accessible and inclusive.

"Whatever you believe in, you go after that," says the *My Name is Khan* fame, as she heads towards the end of the chat and as she shares her message for the aspiring filmmakers. By staying true to oneself and telling stories that matter, she believes that aspiring filmmakers can make a meaningful impact in the industry.

Behind every great film, there's a master storyteller and editor, who weaves magic with their craft. With a remarkable career spanning over two decades, Deepa Bhatia has left an indelible mark on Indian cinema, expertly editing, producing and directing some of the most iconic films in recent history, including *Taare Zameen Par*, *My Name is Khan*, *Rock On*, *Kai Po Che* and *Raees*. Now in this exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she takes us on a journey into the heart of her creative process, revealing the secrets of her storytelling genius

## 'More authentic we are to our stories, farther they travel'

AARTI SREENATH  
aarti.sreenath9@gmail.com

Monisha Tyagarajan, not long ago, named a 2024 BAFTA Breakthrough honoree, stands at a pivotal moment in her career. Known for her work on globally resonant projects like *The Hunt for Veerappan*, the International Emmy-winning *Delhi Crime* and the Oscar-selected *The Glassworker*, she is using this prestigious recognition to amplify untold narratives and foster international collaborations.

"A lot of what I'm pursuing involves international collaborations and co-productions," she explains. Current ventures include a climate action documentary with Sarvnik Kaur, an animated series co-produced with Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal and the groundbreaking *The Glassworker*, a hand-drawn animation by Usman Riaz.

From the controversial *The Hunt for Veerappan* to *Delhi Crime*, she has consistently sought authenticity while navigating sensitive narratives. For *Veerappan*, she immersed herself in the forests where the notorious bandit once roamed, working with indigenous communities and experts like wildlife filmmakers Krupakar and Senani. "Every story we told had to honour its teller's truth," she says. The project was bolstered by extensive archival research and insights from lawyers, activists, and storytellers like Selvamani Selvaraj, the director.

Her approach to *Delhi Crime* was equally meticulous. "Richie Mehta's crystal-clear vision drove the narrative," she explains. She took on the logistical challenges of securing real locations, managing tight budgets and executing complex sequences like protest scenes, all while maintaining the story's emotional integrity.

"Emerging talents bring new voices to the forefront, but navigating this vast industry can be overwhelming," she notes. Programs like these provide the crucial support and guidance necessary to turn ideas into impactful realities.

As a creative producer, her projects often focus on underrepresented themes,

from gender and climate issues to wildlife and social constructs. "Stories have the power to shift perspectives, even subtly," she says. She carefully chooses projects that raise questions and foster dialogue, often inspired by filmmakers whose unique points of view challenge her own understanding.

Her mission is clear: to bring India's rich and diverse narratives to a global audience. "India's content landscape is a treasure trove of stories," she says. "Our diversity is unmatched and each project reveals a new layer of culture, geography, and lived experience."

Monisha recalls her time in the forests for *The Hunt for Veerappan* as transformative. "It was surreal to live amidst nature, meet indigenous communities and gain a new perspective on harmony with the wild," she reminisces.

Even in high-pressure situations, she prioritises authenticity. "When dealing with sensitive topics, cultivating empathy within the crew and stakeholders is key," she shares. Thorough research and trust-building ensure that her work remains true to its subjects.

Looking ahead, she is committed to expanding the global reach of Indian stories. "The more authentic we are to our stories, the farther they travel," she says. She also recognises the importance of tools like dubbing and subtitles in bridging cultural divides and making stories accessible to wider audiences.



With a portfolio that's a masterclass in innovative storytelling - from the pulse-pounding *The Hunt for Veerappan* to the Emmy-winning *Delhi Crime* and the Oscar-selected *The Glassworker* - Monisha is the driving force behind some of India's most groundbreaking narratives. Join us for an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, where she pulls back the curtain on her creative process, shares her passion for amplifying untold stories and reveals the secrets behind her innovative approach

## FROM SCARS TO SMOOTH SKIN

Burns can damage multiple skin layers, leading to scars. These scars can cause discomfort, itching, tightness and more importantly, impact emotional well-being. In the last few decades, the aesthetic segment has seen tremendous advances in research and development. Burn injuries that were once considered fatal are now successfully treated. Scar appearance can vary; they can be flat, discolored, or sunken, depending on factors such as skin texture, the type of injury and an individual's age.

Here's a comprehensive guide to surgical and non-surgical treatments for burn scars. It is important to consult with a qualified dermatologist or plastic surgeon to identify which treatments will be most effective based on individual needs.

### NON-SURGICAL BURN SCAR TREATMENTS

Non-surgical treatments are often the first line of treatment for mild to moderate burn scars. They aim to improve the appearance of scars, curb discomfort and recondition skin elasticity without invasive procedures.

#### Bio remodeling

Bio remodeling, also known as Profilo, is a minimally-invasive treatment that involves minimal discomfort and little to no downtime. It utilises stabilized ultrapure hyaluronic acid to hydrate and rejuvenate the skin on a deeper level, thereby, encouraging natural tissue repair. Profilo, unlike traditional dermal fillers, spreads evenly under the skin, promoting elasticity and helping scars become softer. For those whose burn scars are mildly textured or raised, this is a preferred technique, as it restores hydration, improves tissue quality and leaves the skin looking smoother.

#### Derma pen with PRP scar reduction

Microneedling using a derma pen, combined with Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy, is another method for scar reduction. While the derma pen creates tiny punctures in the skin to promote natural healing, PRP, on the other side, accelerates tissue regeneration. It's minimally invasive and the dual approach assuages burn scars and improves their texture over time.

#### Steroid injections

For hypertrophic and keloid scars, steroid injections work well. It's a targeted treatment that requires multiple sessions, spaced a few weeks apart, but helps achieve the desired effect. By injecting corticosteroids directly into the scar tissue, inflammation is reduced and the scar becomes flatter and less noticeable.

### SURGICAL BURN SCAR TREATMENTS

Surgical interventions provide a more definite success, especially when burn scars cause functional impairments or are resistant to non-surgical methods. These procedures focus on removing scar tissue and restoring the skin's natural appearance and mobility.

#### Microvascular therapy

Microvascular therapy is typically useful for scars that restrict movement or have poor blood supply. It involved reinking small blood vessels to restore circulation in scarred areas. The procedure promotes skin healing and to a large extent reduces the visibility of burn scars by improving vascular health.

#### Flap surgery

Flap surgery is used for intense scars that involve extensive tissue loss. It is a more progressive procedure where healthy skin, along with underlying blood vessels, is transferred to the scarred area from a donor site. The transferred flap merges well with the surrounding skin, warranting both functional and aesthetic repair.

#### Skin grafting

Skin grafting is a familiar treatment to many. One of the most common surgical treatments for burn scars, it is effective for large scars. Here, healthy skin from another part of the body is transplanted onto the scarred area. It uses the top layers of the skin, also known as split-thickness grafts or full-thickness grafts, which is including the dermis, chosen depending on the scar's depth. The choice of treatment depends on factors and is to be decided by the expert and patient mutually. In some cases, a combination of surgical and non-surgical treatments is recommended to achieve optimal results. Whatever the treatment is, post-treatment care is a must for maintaining results and preventing complications. Regular follow-ups with your specialist will ensure the treatment progresses as expected.

(Dr. Shweta Sawalka Nangalia, dermatologist, cosmetologist and trichologist at Skin Glow Clinic.)



# what's brewing?



● Khushboo



● Hema Jain and Manisha Singhi

● Anika Khara

Nethra Star presented a premium fashion and lifestyle exhibition, specially curated for the wedding season, at Kutchi Bhavan in Ram Koti. The expo, inaugurated by Amruth Kumar and organisers Hema Jain, Manisha Singhi, Mohini and Heena, will end today.



● Khushboo



● Mohini and Heena



● Kavita



● Simran



The annual program "Sangam" for Sr. Seeds Primary Campus, part of The Creek Planet Schools, at Vediri Township, HMT Colony, Miyapur and Seeds Arion Campus at Srivani Nagar, Ameerpet, was held at Vishwanaadha Gardens, marking a resounding success. The event saw the participation of guests, including Pandu Ranga Chary, vice-chairman, Narendra Prasad Edpuganti, founder and managing director and Dr. Jayashree Nair, academic head.

## PARTY



The 52nd Pandit Motiram Pandit Maniram Sangeet Samaroh, organised by the Pandit Jasraj Cultural Foundation, continues to enchant music and dance enthusiasts with its stellar lineup of artists. Day 2 of the Samaroh presents a rich blend of traditional art forms featuring celebrated performers in Pakhawaj, Bharat Natyam and Carnatic vocal music.



## PHOTOS BY - SV CHARY

Sadhana Infinity International School celebrated its much-awaited Annual Day, with the theme, Twisted Tales – Fantasy Meets Reality, celebrating the timeless relevance of traditional narratives in shaping the minds of today's learners. The event marked the presence of Ajay Mishra, Retd. IAS Officer, along with Chairman Sunand Surapaneni, Chairperson Padmapriya Surapaneni, Chairperson and managing director Sadhana Surapaneni, among the other dignitaries.

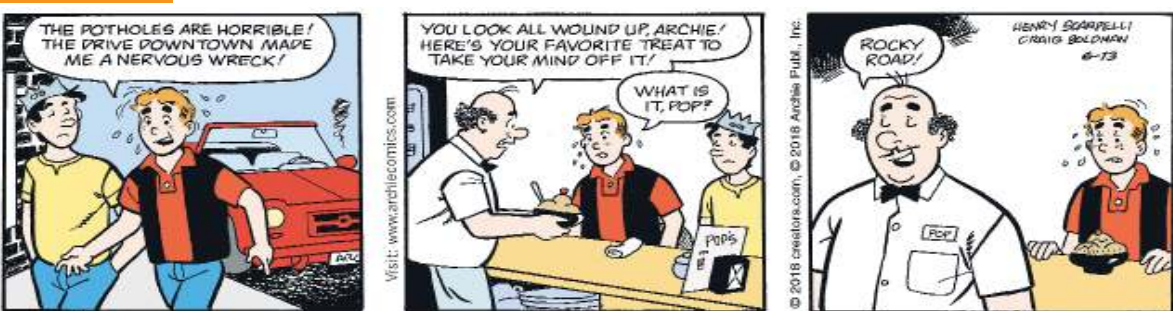


The Huddle, at The League Hyderabad, recently celebrated the start of the Christmas season with a joyful cake mixing event. Brimming with tradition and merriment, the event brought together guests for an afternoon filled with festive cheer, laughter and a taste of Christmas joy.

Gravton Motors Pvt Ltd launched its flagship electric motorcycle, Quanta, at T-Hub in Hyderabad. This is designed and manufactured at Gravton's state-of-the-art facility in Chertlapally, Hyderabad.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



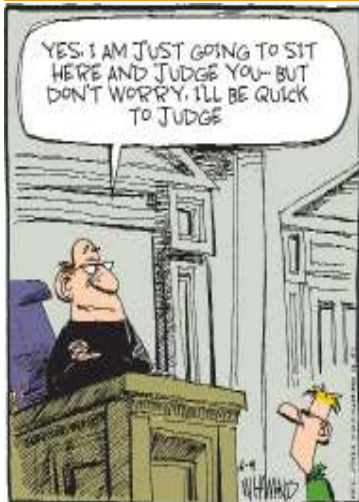
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



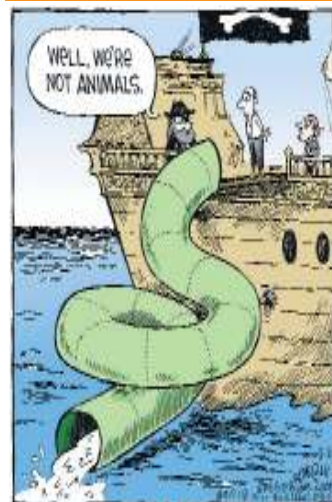
### GARFIELD



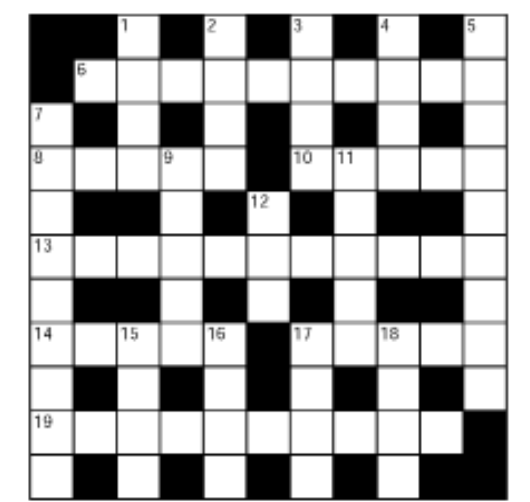
### REALITY CHECK



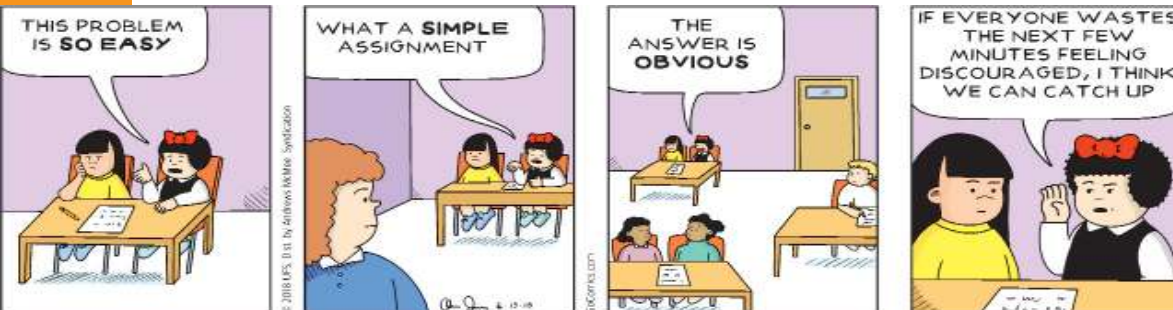
### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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

- 6 Snapshot
- 8 Bees make this
- 10 Exchanges for money
- 13 Make
- 14 Hair in ring shapes
- 17 Smashed to pieces
- 19 People who work in libraries
- 9 Of exactly the same size
- 11 Go in
- 12 A month
- 15 Bones in your chest
- 16 A line of sewing where cloth is joined
- 17 The edge around the top of a container
- 18 A noise made by a pig

### DOWN

- 1 Part of your face
- 2 Don't go
- 3 Birds lay these
- 4 Many animals have one of these behind them
- 5 Spoke very quietly
- 7 A person in a laboratory mixes these together

### SOLUTION

T	U	N	N	E	L	O	P	I		
R	A	R	E	T	U	R	N	I		
N	O	R	O	S	E					
A	W	E	T	E	D					
N	C	O	U	N	T	E	R			
S	S	B	O	A	O					
W	A	T	E	R	S	T	E	L		
R	A	G	S		U	R	A	N	I	S

# VIKRAM 'READY TO SHINE' WITH *ROTI KAPDA ROMANCE*

SURESH KAVIRAYANI  
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**IT'S NO CAKEWALK FOR ANYONE TO ENTER INTO TOLLYWOOD WITHOUT ANY CONNECTION. SO HAS IT BEEN FOR VIKRAM REDDY, WHO HAS NOW TURNED INTO A DIRECTOR WITH THE FILM *ROTI KAPDA ROMANCE*. AHEAD OF THE RELEASE, HE SHARES HIS JOURNEY AND STRUGGLES FROM BEING RAISED IN LB NAGAR BASTI TO DIRECTING THIS FILM**

Every year, many debutant directors emerge with innovative ideas, some of whom achieve success while others continue to strive for it. Becoming a film director is no easy feat; it's a challenging journey. Vikram Reddy's journey is proof of this. Now, Reddy is eagerly awaiting the release of his upcoming film, *Roti Kapda Romance*, on November 28.

"I was born and raised in LB Nagar Basti," said Vikram, as he reminisced about his early days. At the tender age of four, he developed a passion for films, courtesy of his mother, who would watch new films every Friday with her friends. "She took me along and that's how I got introduced to films." His first film was the Balakrishna-starrer *Muddula Mavaya*. During his intermediate studies, Vikram saw a poster for the film *Chitram* and decided he wanted to become a director. This was around 2000. "I didn't know how to write a script or screenplay, but I started writing stories," Vikram said.

After completing his degree in B.Sc. Computers, he chose not to look for a job, as he wanted to pursue his dream of becoming a filmmaker. "I wanted to see a script and understand how it was written. One of my friend's acquaintances took me to Warangal, where the famous Surabhi theatre group was performing. Seeing my passion for films, the director of the play handed me a script and cautioned me about its importance, advising me not to lose it. That was the first time I saw a script and learned how to write one," he recalls.

After writing a few stories, he decided to work as an assistant director. However, he didn't have any connections in the film industry. "I tried to meet Krishna Vamsi for three years, but I couldn't even get a chance to see him. During that time, he made three films—*Chakram*, *Danger* and *Sri Anjaneyam*—but I couldn't get through him. The same thing happened with director V.V. Vinayak while he was working on *Bunny*," he shared. Despite these setbacks, he never lost his confidence.

Determined to meet Puri Jagannadh, he regularly went to his office and waited in front of the gate. "I couldn't get access to speak with him," he said. At that time, Puri Jagannadh was working on a film with his brother. After several months, the security staff noticed Vikram's persistence and informed him of the place where Puri Jagannadh would often rest.



Finally, Puri Jagannadh called Vikram and asked about him. "I want to join as your assistant," he told Puri. However, Puri gave him a stern lecture, saying that there were many aspiring directors like him in Krishna Nagar and advised him not to waste his time. From that moment, he decided not to pursue the role of an assistant director and instead set his sights on becoming an independent director. "I started watching films from various countries, including French, Korean and Iranian cinema, to learn about filmmaking, screenplays, editing and the overall craft. I immersed myself in world cinema for a few years and then began writing my own story," Vikram said. In 2013, he met producer Bekkem Venugopal and narrated the story of *Roti Kapda Romance* to him. "Discussions were ongoing and Venugopal suggested partnering with producer Dil Raju garu for the film. When I met Dil Raju, he asked me to make some changes to my story. While I was open to small adjustments, he wanted significant changes that I wasn't willing to make. So, he refused to produce the film," Vikram shared. Refusing Dil Raju, a prominent producer, was no small decision. Bekkem Venugopal cautioned Vikram and urged him to reconsider, but Vikram stood firm. "It took two and a half years of back and forth with Dil Raju during that time," he said.

Eventually, Vikram returned to Bekkem Venugopal and the project finally took off. "It was almost seven years of struggle to bring *Roti Kapda Romance* to life. It's like a baby to me," he said, recalling how his younger son was born during the film's development and is now seven years old. Over the years, Vikram sifted through nearly 1,500 to 1,600 profiles to cast the best actors for his film. "I chose whoever suited my characters best. The story revolves around eight characters—four boys and four girls—and explores their love stories, breakups and various emotions," he explained.

Releasing the film posed another set of challenges.

"We initially announced October 4 as the release date but postponed it to October 25 because many films were releasing around the same time. The satellite and OTT rights were bought by ETV Win and the distribution rights were also sold, so the release was not entirely in our control," he said.

The release date was later pushed to November 22, but even that was changed. "There were other releases on November 22 as well, and my distributor wanted a wider release, so it was postponed to November 28. I was frustrated because we had already spent a lot on promotions and pre-release events. The films released the previous week didn't perform well at the box office, but *Armaan* was still doing well."

Finally, *Roti Kapda Romance* is set to release on November 28. "We've secured good screens across the country and I'm confident the film will perform well," he said. He also revealed his ultimate goal. "I have many stories ready, but my dream is to direct Chiranjeevi and his son Ram Charan together in a film. I already have a story prepared for them and I will work tirelessly to achieve this goal," he concluded.



## Fear all set to send chills down your spine on Dec 14

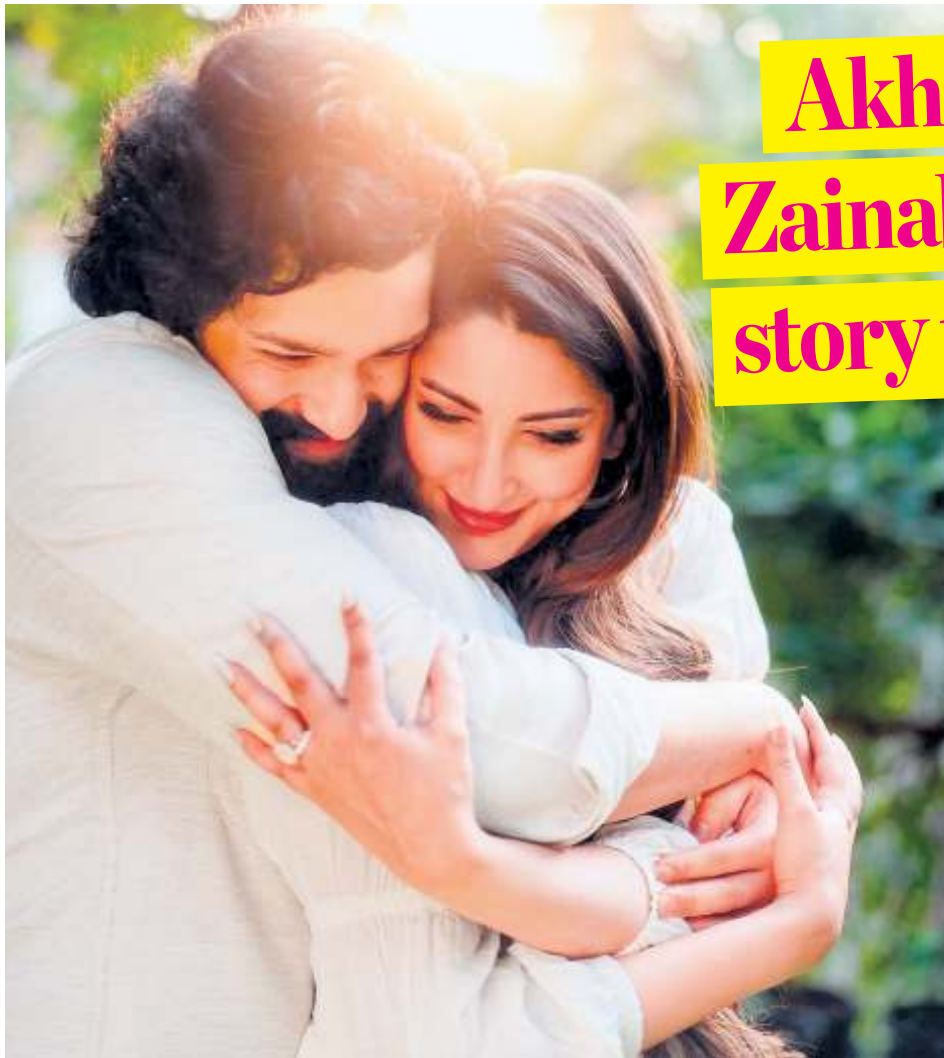
It's time for small films to hit the screens before the end of this year. Although *Pushpa 2* is releasing on December 5, many other small films are releasing before and after that big film. One of them is *Fear*, which is releasing on December 14.

Vedhika plays the main lead in the suspense thriller directed by Haritha Gogineni. The film is produced by Dr. Vanki Penchalayya and AR Abhi. *Fear* is set against a suspenseful thriller storyline and Arvind Krishna will appear in a special role. Before its release, *Fear*

had already set a remarkable record, winning over 70 awards at various prestigious international film festivals. On Tuesday, the makers officially announced that they plan to release the film on December 14.

The producer stated that the film will be released in all languages. He added that the teaser, released in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, has generated a good response. The film's achievement of winning over 70 awards at international film festivals has further fuelled excitement around its release, the producer said.

## Akhil Akkineni and Zainab Ravdjee's love story takes new turn!



The Akkineni family has announced the engagement of their younger son, Akhil Akkineni, to Zainab Ravdjee, daughter of Zulfi Ravdjee. The engagement ceremony took place in an intimate gathering with close family members, marking the beginning of a beautiful new chapter in their lives.

Zainab Ravdjee is an accomplished artist who has spent her life between India, Dubai and London, bringing together her love for creativity and culture. The two met a couple of years ago, and their relationship has blossomed into a meaningful bond rooted in shared values and mutual respect.

The engagement ceremony was held at the Akkineni family home, a warm and

intimate setup reflecting the family's preference for privacy and heartfelt celebrations. While the wedding dates are yet to be finalised for sometime next year, the couple and their families are delighted to share this joyous milestone with their well-wishers.

On this special occasion, Nagarjuna Akkineni expressed his happiness, saying, "As a father, it brings me immense joy to see Akhil take this significant step in his life with Zainab, someone who complements him beautifully. Zainab's grace, warmth and artistic spirit have truly made her a wonderful addition to our family. We are overjoyed and look forward to celebrating this new journey with both families."



**GADDAR'S LASTING LEGACY:**

## Ukku Satyagraham hits theatres on Nov 29

The popular poet, singer and activist who fought for Telangana statehood, Gaddar, acted in a film titled *Ukku Satyagraham*. Gummati Vittal Rao, popularly known as Gaddar, also fought against the privatisation of the Visakh Steel Plant. P Satya Reddy, the director and producer, made the film *Ukku Satyagraham* and announced that it will be released on November 29. The producer recalls Gaddar's contribution to the film. Gaddar, renowned for his activism and inspiring poetry, made significant contributions to the film. He sang three songs, performed in two, and acted in key message-driven scenes. Popular writers Goret Venkanna and Suddala Ashok Teja penned a few other songs, and the music was composed by Sriko. The producer stated that the film promises to be thought-provoking. He added that the film is deeply rooted in real-life struggles.

Former CBI Joint Director VV Lakshmi Narayana attended the event and said it is a good thing that Gaddar acted in this film. "I have seen some scenes and it is inspiring. Gaddar used to greet me as 'Lachchanna Etunnava'. He has infused his inspiration into this film. I hope that this film will be a huge success," said Lakshmi Narayana. Gaddar's daughter Vennela said that her father spent a lot of time on this movie. "His intention was that the steel plant should not be privatised," she said. She wished this movie a great success.

## Telugu cinema loses a gem: Popular lyric writer Kulasekhar no more

Popular lyricist Kulasekhar passed away on Tuesday morning at Gandhi Hospital. His life was a tragic story of a talented individual who began his journey as a journalist and later became a renowned lyricist with many hit songs to his credit. He worked on nearly 100 films as a lyricist.



Kulasekhar started his career as a journalist in a popular Telugu daily. He later transitioned to lyric writing, making his debut with the film *Chitram*, directed by Teja and produced by Ramoji Rao. Kulasekhar collaborated with music director RP Patnaik on many films, becoming a sought-after lyricist in Tollywood. His notable works include *Jayam*, *Gharshana*, *Vasantham*, *Ramma! Chilakamma*, *Nuvvu Nenu*, *Mrugaraju*, *Subbu* and *Dadagiri*. Kulasekhar's life took a dramatic turn when he was diagnosed with kleptomania, a rare mental health disorder. In December 2013, he was arrested in Kakinada for stealing a silver crown from a temple. The next day, he attempted to return the crown, but it was found in his

bag, leading to his arrest. Kulasekhar admitted to the crime and was later sent to Rajahmundry for treatment.

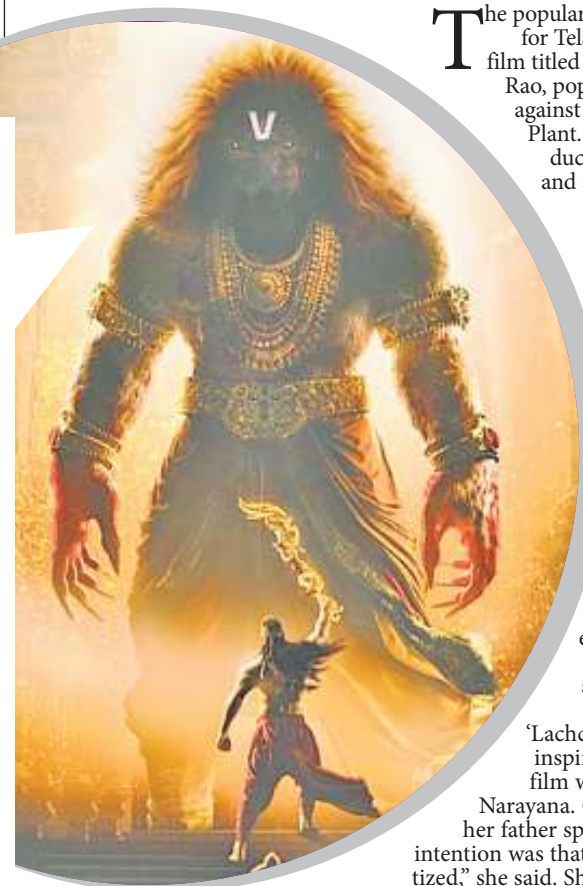
After the incident, Kulasekhar's health declined and he distanced himself from the film industry, friends and family. On Tuesday, news broke that he had passed away at Gandhi Hospital, leaving the Telugu cinema industry in mourning.

## Mahavatar Narsimha premieres at 55th IFFI

Marking a significant milestone in the history of Indian cinema, *Mahavatar Narsimha* had its world premiere at the prestigious 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI). This cinematic gem, directed by acclaimed filmmaker Ashwin Kumar, takes viewers on a spiritual and visually captivating journey and depicts the epic narratives of Lord Vishnu's third and fourth avatars, Varaha and Narsimha. Taking about the film at the 55th IFFI, the director expressed, "This is not just an animation film; it's a labour of love and a tribute to our rich cultural heritage. Drawing from the *Vishnu Purana*, *Narasimha Purana* and *Shrimad Bhagavat Purana*, we have stayed true to the original sources to present a story that resonates with all generations. I wanted to preserve these stories not as myths but as part of our collective history and consciousness."

The film shows the epic battle between the demon king Hiranyakashipu, who wants to exact revenge on Lord Vishnu and his son Prahlad, whose

unshakable faith forces the Lord to take on the form of Narsimha. With a cinematic experience that appeals to all age groups, *Mahavatar Narsimha* seeks to elevate the standard for Indian animation. This film took four and a half years to make, with lifelike animation and careful attention to detail. Ashwin Kumar addressed the notion that animation in India is mostly meant for young audiences, saying, "We wanted to challenge this perception and create a film for everyone. No one believed in our vision initially, but we've proven that Indian VFX and animation can be of world-class quality." Talking about how the film is just a part of his larger vision, the director added, "This is not just a movie, it's a legacy. Art that is rooted in research and depth resonates deeply and we are committed to upholding this standard in our future endeavours." *Mahavatar Narsimha* is directed by Ashwin Kumar. Produced by Shilpa Dhawan, Kushal Desai and Chaitanya Desai, the film has been made under the banner of Kleem Productions and Hombale Films.



# ICC board to meet on November 29 to finalise Champions Trophy schedule

PTI ■ DUBAI

The all-powerful board of the International Cricket Council will meet virtually on November 29 to finalise the much-delayed schedule of the Champions Trophy to be held in Pakistan in February-March next year. The cause of the delay has been India's refusal to play in Pakistan considering the tense relations between the two countries. India has not toured Pakistan since the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks. The BCCI wants the tournament to be played in a hybrid model with India games scheduled in a third country, preferably UAE, something that its Pakistani counterpart has not agreed to thus far. "The ICC board will meet on November 29 to discuss the Champions Trophy schedule," an ICC spokesperson told PTI on Tuesday. The crucial virtual meeting takes place two days before BCCI secretary Jay Shah takes over as ICC chairman on December 1.



He and other board members would be keen to resolve the matter before the new regime takes over. With the deadlock over the schedule and venue yet to be broken, questions have been raised against the current dispensation of the ICC

including chair Greg Barclay and CEO over why it did not resolve the issue earlier and left it for the 11th hour. With the Indian government firmly sticking to the status quo, Champions Trophy in a hybrid model with India games outside Pakistan is the

most likely option. Sources said that PCB will be offered financial incentives, over and above the hosting fees of USD 70 million, to agree to the hybrid model. A similar model was followed last year when India played their Asia Cup

matches in Sri Lanka while four group games were hosted by Pakistan. The PCB has spent millions of dollars to renovate stadiums in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi for what will be its first ICC event since it co-hosted the 1996 World Cup. Major teams including England and Australia have toured Pakistan recently after years of isolation following the horrific attack on the Sri Lanka team bus in 2009. Since the ICC awarded Champions Trophy hosting rights to Pakistan in 2021, PCB has been facing constant pressure from the fans to host all the games in the country. PCB has also threatened that it won't send its national teams to India for future ICC events if the latter doesn't cross the border for Champions Trophy. Having said that, Pakistan toured India for the ODI World Cup last year, the team's first visit to the country in seven years. Both India and Pakistan only play each other in ICC events and Asia Cup.



# Gukesh draws with Liren in second game of World Championship

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh bounced back to draw a largely uneventful second game against defending champion Ding Liren of China in the World Chess Championship here on Tuesday. Playing with black pieces, Gukesh made a comeback of sorts, having lost to Liren in the opener of the 14-game showdown, on Monday. It was a good recovery by Gukesh as Liren could do very little with his white pieces and had to share the point. "Draw with black in the world championship match is always nice and it's too early, we still have a long match," the Chennai-based GM said in the post-game press conference. "I think after I was surprised in the opening, I reacted pretty decently, and I didn't give him any chances. It was a solid game with black, which is nice," he added. If Monday was the day when nothing he did worked according to plan, Tuesday changed everything for Gukesh as he could not have asked for a better start. Liren did not press at all while Gukesh just followed the basics as the game ended in a draw via repetition soon after black had completed the 23rd turn. It was one of the quietest variation in the Italian opening as Liren probably did not want to rush things having grabbed a full point advantage in the first game

itself. It may be recalled that the Chinese had won the last world championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia after coming back from behind as many as three times. The 32-year-old said he was happy with how he performed in the second round. "In the first game I played something new in the opening and of course it requires a lot of memory. Today I also played not a common move (for me) 1.E4 and I prepared a lot," Liren said. "I think it will be a big fight tomorrow. He's a point down and he will have the white pieces, so I am ready for a fight," he added. Liren's fifth move, when he moved his Queen's knight, was indication enough about his peaceful intentions. There have been many top-level games that have ended in draws through this manoeuvre and this game was no exception. Gukesh just had to develop his pieces randomly and the game never really got off to a situation where it could be truly called complicated. Both the Bishops and the Queens were off the board early and what remained were a couple of Knights, the Rooks pair and eight pawns each for both players with hardly any real chances for a breakthrough. The draw was a just result but there was no denying that it was a morale-boosting moment for Gukesh who can

now look up to his next game with optimism with the slightly favourable colour in the game. In head-to-head encounters, Liren has a handsome three-point lead in Classical games and Team Gukesh will now be focused on bringing it down in the USD 2.5 million prize money championship. The 18-year-old Gukesh is the youngest ever challenger to the world crown and is looking to become the first Indian after the iconic Viswanathan Anand to win the title. "There is obviously some pressure for anyone playing in a World Championship; there is a lot of pressure. But I also see it as a privilege that I can represent so many people and my country," he said. "I am just focusing on one game at a time. Hopefully, things go my way," he added. The first player to reach 7.5 points among the two will claim the coveted crown in the USD 2.5 million prize money event. Anand, who has played a major role in shaping Gukesh's career, held the title five times in his illustrious career before Norwegian superstar Magnus Carlsen dethroned him in 2013. The Moves: 1.E4 e5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bc4 Bc5 4.D3 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.A4 d6 7.0-0 h6 8.Be3 Be6 9.A5 Bxc4 10.Dxc4 0-0 11.Bxc5 dxc5 12.B3 Qxd1 13.Rfxd1 Rd8 14.Rdcl Nd4 15.Ne1 Rd6 16.Kf1 g6 17.Rd1 Rf8 18.F3 Kg7 19.Kf2 h5 20.Ne2 Nc6 21.Nc3 Nd4 22.Ne2 Nc6 23.Nc3 Nd4 game drawn.



# My backstory always gives me confidence to tackle any situation: Yashasvi Jaiswal

PTI ■ PERTH

Brought up in penury, the sensational Yashasvi Jaiswal says he now uses the experience gained from those difficult days as ammunition to conquer the battles on and off the field. Jaiswal stamped his class with a masterful hundred in the first Test against Australia, and is poised to take over the mantle of being India's batting mainstay from the great Virat Kohli, who also made a century after a long time. Having moved to Mumbai from Uttar Pradesh's Bhopal at age 11 to train at Azad Maidan, Jaiswal lived in tents with the groundsmen and sold paani puri at night to earn money for food. "It's something (his backstory) that always gives me confidence that I can come out of any situation. I always fight, I always look to fight, I want to be in the battle, I want to enjoy the

battle and I want to win the battle," Jaiswal said during a chat with Australian television broadcaster Mark Howard. The 22-year-old opener added, "So this is what it gives me and I am really blessed that I have this life, that can give me a lot of confidence, learnings about myself, how I can believe in me, and how I can go through with different emotions, different situation in my life. "So I think it's just incredible and I really want to thank god for where I am and what I am doing, and I am doing what I love, so I am just happy at the moment. I want to enjoy this with every ball." His journey to fame is a fascinating tale of a strong-willed man making his own destiny. His swashbuckling hundred more than made for the first-innings duck at Perth, where the five-match Test series began from November 22. Asked about his unusual

celebration after getting to the three-figure mark, Jaiswal said, "Yes, it was (an unusual) way to bring up the hundred. In my mind, I was like, I will do this or that, and then suddenly, something happened, and I was like, oh my god, what should I do. "So, I was like, okay, I will just celebrate, and I will enjoy this moment. I was blessed, I was grateful. I enjoyed it, this feeling will stay with me for a long time. "I give kisses to all my loved ones, all my fans who have supported me. I just wanted to give them my love with the kisses. He spoke to his family after the fine achievement. "I just called my family on whatsapp, getting everyone along and celebrate with them. My brother always talks to me about cricket." India won the first Test by a huge margin of 297 runs and the second match will be played in Adelaide from December 6.

# Gambhir flies back home for 'personal emergency,' to rejoin in Adelaide

PTI ■ PERTH

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has flown back to India with his family due to "personal emergency" and is unlikely to be present during the two-day pink ball warm-up game in Canberra starting November 30. Gambhir, however, is slated to directly link up with the squad in Adelaide before the 'Pink Ball Test' starting December 6. It is understood that Gambhir has sought permission from BCCI brass with regards to his return. "He left with his family on early Tuesday morning for India. It is an unavoidable

personal emergency. He will be back in Adelaide before the start of the second Test match," a BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity. The Indian team will leave for Canberra on Wednesday, November 27 where the entire team is expected to attend an official reception thrown in their honour by the Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. The two-day pink ball match will give the Indian team a chance to get some game time under its belt. PMXI is a squad full of youngsters but India will get some good match practice with pacer Scott Boland expected to play the game.

# Getting Venky was one of our main priorities, says Bravo

PTI ■ JEDDAH

Former West Indies all-rounder Dwayne Bravo, who is now the mentor of reigning champions Kolkata Knight Riders, has defended the team's strategy of "going all out" for Venkatesh Iyer to keep the "core" of the IPL championship-winning side intact. Seen as a potential captaincy candidate for KKR, Venkatesh's acquisition has sparked some criticism over why he wasn't retained if leadership was part of the team thinktank's plan for him. "Getting Venky (Venkatesh Iyer) was one of the main priorities for us, as you could see, we went all out for him," said Bravo, a four-time IPL winner at Chennai Super Kings. "It's good that we have 90 per

cent of the players from the championship-winning team. That in itself is a positive sign. "It's important to keep your core because when you have to build from scratch, it becomes complicated to make combinations and all." "We started planning while I was in Trinidad. We had come with a proper plan, the players we wanted to target," added Bravo, who will be in charge of all the franchises of the Knight Riders label in T20 leagues. At a staggering Rs 23.75 crore, the 29-year old Madhya Pradesh all-rounder, who has represented India in nine T20Is and two ODIs, emerged as the third most expensive player at the two-day IPL mega auction that concluded here on Monday. Only Rishabh Pant (Lucknow, Rs 27 crore) and Shreyas Iyer



(Punjab, Rs 26.75 crore) were ahead of Venkatesh on the list of most expensive players as he even eclipsed experienced Indian batter KL Rahul, a former Lucknow Super Giants captain, who was picked up by Delhi Capitals for Rs 14 crore. Bravo was also excited that KKR roped in fiery pacer Umran Malik.

"The pace at which he operates, I always admire him -- his work ethic, energy and all. Happy that we're able to nail him down." KKR CEO and MD Venky Mysore added: "The way the retention rules are set up, the RTM rules, the salary caps, marquee players, and the two-day auction -- this was definitely more demanding,

for sure. Quite nerve-racking because of the nuances. "The think tank's unanimous view was to maintain the structure, which we have done. In certain areas, we have also improved and upgraded. Hopefully, it will continue to work well." Mysore also highlighted the value Rovman Powell would bring to the Kolkata Knight Riders setup, emphasising his extensive experience and leadership qualities. "Rovman Powell, over the years, we have seen what he has done in the CPL, other leagues, and, of course, the IPL as well. He's highly experienced, leads West Indies -- that leadership experience, captaincy, and what he has achieved -- all of it put together makes him really, really special. Great to have him in the side."

# Australia to retain squad for Adelaide Test, Marsh's fitness will be monitored: McDonald

PTI ■ PERTH

Australia will not make any change to the squad that took a 295-run hammering from India in the opening Border-Gavaskar Trophy Test here but there are some fitness concerns over all-rounder Mitchell Marsh's ability to bowl, coach and selector Andrew McDonald has said. Following the crushing loss, McDonald revealed that the team would land in Adelaide for the day-night second Test beginning December 6 earlier than planned to allow an additional net session. "The people in that change-room (for Perth Test) are the same people that will be in Adelaide," McDonald was quoted as saying by 'cricket.Com.Au'. "It (making changes) is always a consideration, wherever you go in the world

in terms of the personnel you pick for conditions." Marsh, who bowled just 17 overs in the first Test for a match haul of three wickets, has been dealing with "niggles" since the white-ball tour of England in September. Skipper Pat Cummins has already revealed that Marsh finished the first Test "a little bit sore." McDonald expressed satisfaction with Marsh's bowling performance in the first innings but said his fitness would be monitored closely moving forward. "Has he (Marsh) pulled up okay? We'll wait and see," McDonald said. "No, we didn't feel that (was a weakness). We knew that Mitch (Marsh) was slightly underdone coming in, but I thought the performance in the first innings was satisfactory."

Another player under scanner is top-order batter Marnus Labuschagne, who has struggled for form with an average of just 13.66 in his last 10 Test innings. However, McDonald said he has faith in Labuschagne's abilities, describing him as "the player we need" and urging him to rediscover his form. "That's an ongoing discussion and that ebbs and flows in players' careers, so at the moment he's in one of those patches and no doubt he'll be getting critiqued externally," McDonald said. "But internally we're really confident that, at his best, he's the player that we need." When asked if Labuschagne's struggles were due to a technical issue, McDonald responded: "It's always a combination of factors, isn't it, with the mindset?"



"There's some technical aspects to that also within the mindset play. So as I

said, we're really confident that he can turn that around."

The decision to ask debutant Nathan McSweeney to open the innings backfired as he

scored just 10 and 0 in his two innings. McSweeney had enjoyed success in first-class cricket, as had Beau Webster, but neither of them has the experience of being an opener. "I think there's been enough players banging down the door. I feel as though we've got some depth there if called upon," he said. "I think sometimes people look at the pure numbers of what's happening in Shield cricket, but it's sometimes hard to get a connection with the surfaces they're playing on. So we feel as though we've got ample players available if called upon." Despite the heavy defeat, McDonald said morale of the team was strong. "I think we've got to own it, and we've got to own that as coaches as well. So there will be a semblance of review around what we have done

and what we can learn from it," McDonald said. "But I think morale is pretty good. I think this team is really good at the highs and lows, it's quite a level team, so we'll be somewhere in the middle of that." The coach also stated that while a review of the performance would take place, the team's preparation had been sound, and they were focused on the challenges ahead. "We felt as though our planning going in (to Perth) was where we needed it to be. Execution in amongst that is always a question, but we were comfortable with the plans. "Clearly, the method with the batters and the way they've been challenged is always going to be a learning moving forward. So we've got some challenges, no doubt about that."