

the pioneer

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QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

All Reddys in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are my relatives. Just because one is a Reddy doesn't mean he got work through me. Srujan Reddy is the son-in-law of BRS MLA Uppender Reddy and he got work during BRS rule. The BRS and KTR once said that the BJP is the most corrupt party and vowed to end it. Now, the same people are appealing to BJP leaders and aligning with them. KTR should challenge it legally instead of making baseless claims to deflect attention from his family's actions

- A Revanth Reddy, TG Chief Minister P4

'Poet Kalidas' works make us realise need to save environment'
5

WHEN 'CHOICES FELT RIGHT OR WRONG' FOR PATRALEKHA
10

Dil Raju to encourage NEW TALENT?
P12

DON'T MISS...

Chief Whips named in Assembly, Council

In an important political development, the Andhra Pradesh government has announced the appointment of Chief Whips and Whips for the State Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. GV Anjaneyulu, the TDP MLA from Vinukonda, has been appointed as the Chief Whip in the Legislative Assembly. Several other Whips have also been appointed from the TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP. The appointed Whips in the Assembly include Adinarayana Reddy (Jammalamadugu - BJP), Arava Sridh...

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YSRCP warns TDP leader Anam

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Spokesperson Putta Sivasankar Reddy has strongly condemned TDP leader Anam Venkataramana Reddy for his controversial remarks against YSRCP President and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. Speaking to the media at the party's central office, Sivasankar Reddy referred to Anam as a "comedian" and accused him of making baseless comments designed to divert public attention. He warned Anam to temper his language or face a strong backlash...

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Russia keen to boost trade ties with India

Russia, which is mulling diversifying its trade and tur production, is keen to strengthen trade cooperation with India, the government said on Tuesday. A Russian delegation led by Deputy Minister Maxim Titov had on Monday met Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare, discussing in details the possibility of enhancing the trade cooperation in the field of pulses. The consumer affairs department, in a statement, said Russia ...

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India eye batting revival against SA

Indian batting line-up needs to get its mojo back against a resurgent South Africa to regain the lost ground on rather unfamiliar SuperSport Park conditions when the two teams clash the third T20I here Wednesday. Since 2009, India have played only one T20I at this venue, which they lost by six wickets in 2018 and have only one survivor from that squad in this side -- Hardik Pandya. Along with that unfamiliarity factor, India will also grapple with ...

-SPORTS

Reliance inks MoU with AP govt for Rs 65,000 cr biofuel project

A historic moment, says IT Minister Nara Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, Information Technology (IT), and Electronics, Nara Lokesh, on Tuesday hailed the decision of Reliance Energy to invest a massive Rs 65,000 crore in the biofuel project in Andhra Pradesh, calling it a historic development. He noted that the company had committed to this investment just 30 days after his meeting with Reliance Chairman Mukesh Ambani and Reliance Energy head Anant Ambani in Mumbai. "This is truly a historic moment. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Tuesday, only 30 days after my discussions with Mukesh Ambani and Anant Ambani in Mumbai," Lokesh said. The MoU was signed in the presence of Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu at the State Secretariat, with representatives from Reliance and senior State Government officials in attendance.

Lokesh expressed confidence that this decision would significantly strengthen the State's policies



The MoU was signed 30 days after Lokesh's meeting with Mukesh and Anant Ambani in Mumbai

- The project aims to accelerate the 'Speed of Doing Business' policies in the State.
- Lokesh assures full support from the State government for the project.
- Foundation for the first biofuel plant will be laid on December 28 at Kanigiri in Prakasam district.
- The investment to boost confidence among people and industrialists in the State.
- Reliance to set up 500 biofuel plants as part of the project across the State over the next 3 years.
- The biofuel project will help AP achieve its goal of creating 20 lakh jobs in five years.

The first plant is expected to be completed in one year

under the Speed of Doing Business initiative. He pointed out that the only biofuel project implemented so swiftly in India was in

Barabanki, Uttar Pradesh, but he was confident that the Reliance project in Andhra Pradesh would surpass that record.

The IT Minister further announced that the foundation for the state's first biofuel project would be laid on December 28 at Kanigiri in Prakasam district. "In the next three years, 500 such plants will be set up across the State," he said. Prasad, the Andhra Pradesh representative of Reliance Energy, also mentioned that the first project, for which the foundation would be laid on December 28, is expected to be completed within a year.

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Raghurama appointed Dy Speaker of AP Assembly



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an interesting development, coalition leaders have decided to appoint Undi TDP MLA Raghurama Krishna Raju as the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

TDP sources said that NDA leaders have unanimously chosen Raghurama Krishnama Raju for the position of Deputy Speaker during a meeting held on Tuesday. Raju, who is entering the Assembly for the first time, will manage its proceedings in the absence of Speaker Ch Ayyannapratrudu.

Raghurama Krishnama Raju was initially elected to the Lok Sabha from Narasapuram constituency in the 2019 elections on a YSRCP ticket. However, differences with the then chief minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy led him to break away from the party. Raju, popularly known as RRR, filed several cases against Jagan Mohan Reddy, including the one in Supreme Court over allegations of torture during his time in CID custody.

'AP will be world-class maritime hub'

Global partnerships sought for development of port-based infra

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government is actively seeking international partnerships to accelerate the development of port-based infrastructure, aiming to generate large-scale employment and propel the state towards its ambitious target of becoming a \$2 trillion economy by 2047.

S. Suresh Kumar, Secretary of the State's Infrastructure and Investment Department, presented the vision to transform Andhra Pradesh into a world-class maritime hub by 2030 at the 29th Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) conference in Seoul, South Korea. The con-



ference, organized by the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM), provided a platform for the state to showcase its plans and attract both global and domestic investments into its maritime sector.

During his five-day official visit to South Korea, Suresh Kumar met with top executives from the Korean shipbuilding industry, including representatives from the Busan Port Authority, Hanjin Industries, and Hyundai Industries. Discussions are centred on forging partnerships to set up shipbuilding and ship repair facilities in Andhra Pradesh, with the goal of boosting the state's port infrastructure and maritime economy.

"Our vision is to foster sustainable economic growth through the development of world-class infrastructure, which will position Andhra Pradesh as a premier industrial hub," Suresh Kumar said.

Continued on Page 2

'Jagan encouraged social media posts on me'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president YS Sharmila on Tuesday alleged that YSRCP supremo YS Jagan Mohan Reddy encouraged indecent posts against her on social media.

Alleging that she is a victim of vitriolic attacks on social media, Sharmila claimed that those attacks would have stopped had Reddy called for ending them.

Addressing a press conference at Andhra Ratna Bhavan in Vijayawada, Sharmila said, "They (social media activists) spoke as they liked, about

APCC chief Sharmila says AP Budget is 'deceptive'



APCC president Y S Sharmila Reddy addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Tuesday. Pic by Ch Vijaya Bhaskar

Share views on issues with fellow members

NAIDU'S ADVICE TO MLAS, MLCS



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister and Leader of the House, N. Chandrababu Naidu, emphasised the importance of MLAs being well-informed during the budget session of the State Legislature. He urged MLAs and MLCS to actively share their views with their colleagues on the floor of the House during the session.

In an address to a workshop organised for first-time MLAs and chaired by Assembly Speaker Chintakayala Ayyannapratrudu, the Chief Minister urged lawmakers to carefully study all the bills being presented and the policies adopted by the State government. "The MLAs must be partners in pub-

lic governance," Chandrababu Naidu said, urging the legislators to contribute to discussions and bring about positive change.

"Since the people have placed immense faith in us and have great expectations, we must stand by them and discuss their issues in detail on the floor of the House. The House should be a platform for meaningful debates."

he said, urging lawmakers to focus on the problems faced by the public. Reflecting on his long political career, Chandrababu recalled his first election to the Assembly in 1978, his appointment as a minister in 1980, and his subsequent re-election for nine consecutive terms, including four terms as Chief Minister.

The Chief Minister noted that success in politics is closely tied to the performance of elected representatives and the strength of the party. He pointed out that in the recent elections, the TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP contested together, and several new faces entered the Assembly. "Among them, 61 are from TDP, 15 from Jana Sena, four each from BJP and YSRCP. At least 30 MLAs are in their second term," he said.

Chandrababu Naidu acknowledged the advances in technology, pointing out that while earlier the proceedings of the Assembly were covered only by All India Radio and Doordarshan, now the debates are broadcast live on news channels and social media platforms.

Continued on Page 2

Speaker cut up with poor quality food for MLAs



VIJAYAWADA: Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly Speaker, Chintakayala Ayyannapratrudu, expressed his anger at the poor quality of food served to legislators during the Assembly session on Monday. The Speaker's anger was directed at both the Assembly officials and the food contractor, after several Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) raised complaints about the substandard meals.

Continued on Page 2



Heavy rains likely in AP over next 4 days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The India Meteorological Department on Tuesday forecast heavy rains for four days in parts of Andhra Pradesh due to the influence of a low-pressure area over the Bay of Bengal.

According to the Met Department, heavy rainfall is expected in isolated areas of South Coastal Andhra Pradesh (SCAP) and Rayalaseema from November 11 to 15.

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely in parts of North Coastal Andhra Pradesh (NCAP), Yanam, SCAP, and Rayalaseema during the same period. "The low-pressure area over the southwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal off the north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh coasts persists. The associated cyclonic circulation now extends up to 4.5 km above mean sea level, tilting southwestward with height," the department said in a press release.

It also noted that the trough from the southwest Bay of Bengal to the west-central Bay of Bengal off NCAP has become less marked.

Meanwhile, Tadepalli and other areas in Ammaravati, the greenfield capital city, experienced light showers on Tuesday, accompanied by cloudy conditions.

Continued on Page 2

VIZAG SET TO LEAD THE WAY

GVMC to ban single-use plastics from Jan 2025

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bold move to combat the growing menace of plastic pollution, the Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has announced that it will implement a complete ban on single-use plastics starting January 1, 2025. This initiative is set to transform the city into a cleaner, greener space while promoting environmental sustainability.

The decision, which marks a significant step in Visakhapatnam's journey toward becoming a plastic-free city, was revealed by District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad during a workshop on sanitation improvement and plastic control. Addressing an enthusiastic crowd,



District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad speaking at a workshop in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday

Prasad stressed the importance of the ban, noting that Visakhapatnam's recent recognition as the fourth cleanest city in

India has further fueled the determination to reduce plastic waste. "The recognition from the Prime Minister has motivated us even

more to make our city a model of cleanliness. Our vision is clear - a completely plastic-free city.

Continued on Page 2

India successfully test-fires long-range cruise missile

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Tuesday successfully carried out the maiden flight-test of a Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile from an integrated test range off the coast of Odisha.

The defence ministry said all sub-systems of the missile system performed as per expectation and met the primary mission objectives.

It said the missile followed the desired path using way point navigation and demonstrated its capability to perform various manoeu-

uvres while flying at various altitudes and speeds.

The missile is also equipped with advanced avionics and software to ensure better and reliable performance.

"The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted the maiden flight-test of Long Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) from the integrated test range Chandipur off the coast of Odisha from a mobile articulated launcher," the ministry said.



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Skipping Assembly session amounts to disrespecting constituents!

When one considers the duties of lawmakers in a parliamentary democracy, they include taking up needful struggles, mounting pressure on the state for resolving problems being faced by people, and making relentless efforts for ensuring that grievances of various aggrieved sections are addressed. Only then can they be counted as 'public' representatives. This perhaps is something that those who have grown in politics due to their family background may not properly understand.



session of the Assembly ostensibly because he could not get the status of Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the AP Legislative Assembly due to lack of numbers. YSRCP failed to get even 10% of the total seats in the House, though it is the mandatory minimum required for being conferred such status. Jagan was elected to APLA from the Pulivendula constituency of Kadapa district, which has been the bastion for his family for over four and half decades. It may be mentioned here that Jagan's father and former chief minister Dr.YS Rajasekhara Reddy, paternal uncle YS Vivekanandar Reddy, mother YS Vijayalakshmi and he himself have represented Pulivendula so far. Aiming to retain power in 2024, Jagan had given utmost

As things stand, Jagan might be afraid of getting bulldozed in the House with the active participation of the National Democratic Alliance members. For, YSRCP members, including then CM Jagan, along with his cabinet colleagues and active party members might not have forgotten how they had heckled then LoP N. Chandrababu Naidu during Jagan's regime



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priority to welfare measures. He doled out monetary benefits to lakhs of beneficiaries of various welfare schemes with borrowed money totaling Rs.2.7 lakh crore, thus pushing the state into a debt trap. This state's debt burden rose to Rs. 10 lakh crore by the end of YSRCP's rule (2019-2024). If the consequent crushing defeat of his party has rendered him ineligible for Leader of Opposition status, he cannot disown his responsibility to electors, more so those who had voted for his party. The Leader of the Opposition is entitled to raise any issue, insist that any subject be taken up for discussion, and intervene during discussion on anything on the floor of the House on par with the Leader of the House i.e. the Chief Minister. As things stand,

he could be paid in his own coin, Jagan is perhaps avoiding the House. Since the question of his Leader of Opposition status is sub judice; it is not proper on the part of Jagan to skip the Assembly session, and that too the budget session, as a responsible member of the House. That apart, he is not just an MLA, but has experience of ruling the state for five years with a clear people's mandate. Jagan might be of the view that the TDP-led NDA government in the state may go against him and his party with a vindictive attitude to get back at YSRCP's tactics during the previous regime so much so that Chandrababu Naidu had once wept after being humiliated in the House and vowed

to return to it only as Chief Minister. He kept his word. Given this background, how long will Jagan and the key members of his party keep themselves out of House? Is it proper on their part, considering those who had elected YSRCP candidates? Don't the 11 MLAs of YSRCP, including their leader, have responsibility towards their constituents? In the past, YSRCP has opted to be out of the House. During its stint as an opposition party (2014-19), the party chose not to attend session in the last year of that period, despite being the principal opposition party with 45 members. For YSRCP, the march (Padayatra) that was to be taken up for a very long time might have triggered the thought of skipping the Assembly session. Now, the party must honour

the decision of people. People are the ultimate bosses in a democracy and political parties have to accept their quinquennial verdict. Skipping Assembly sessions may lead to adverse impression among the public over YSRCP's credentials as a political party that believes in fairplay. In the undivided AP, there have been instances of floor leaders working effectively in the House without the status of LoP. For instance, former Congress Legislature Party leader P Janardhan Reddy had given a tough fight to then TDP government headed by Chandrababu Naidu during his first stint (1995-99) with just 26 members in the House. Respecting people's verdict is paramount for political parties. There is no reason for YSRCP to be an exception.

APPSC Group II written exam rescheduled

The Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) has announced the rescheduling of the Mains Written Examination for Group II Services. Originally set for January 5, 2025, the exam will now take place on February 23, 2025, according to J. Pradeep Kumar, IRSME, Secretary of the Commission. In a statement issued on Tuesday, Kumar advised candidates to regularly check the APPSC official website <http://psc.ap.gov.in> for further updates and details.

Reliance inks MoU...

Lokesh assured full support from the State Government for the Reliance biofuel project and stated that this significant investment would boost the confidence of both the people and industrialists in Andhra Pradesh. The IT Minister expressed his gratitude to Mukesh Ambani and Anant Ambani for partnering with the state in fulfilling its promise of creating 20 lakh jobs for the youth over the next five years.

India successfully...

It said the missile performance was monitored by several range sensors like radar, electro optical tracking system and telemetry deployed at different locations to ensure complete coverage of the flight path. LRLACM has been developed by the Aeronautical Development Establishment, Bengaluru along with contribution from other DRDO laboratories and Indian industries. Bharat Dynamics Limited, Hyderabad and Bharat Electronics Limited, Bengaluru are the two development-cum-production-partners for LRLACM and they are engaged in the missile development and integration. The test was witnessed by senior scientists from various DRDO laboratories along with the representatives from the three Services, the users of the system.

Lookout notices issued against YSRCP social media activists

The Kadapa police have issued lookout notices against several social media activists affiliated with the Yuvajana Samika Rythu Congress Party (YSRCP), including Sajjala Bhargav Reddy and Arjun Reddy. The notices were issued in connection with a case filed on October 8 at Pulivendula, in which Bhargav Reddy, Arjun Reddy, and V. Ravinder Reddy have been named in an SC/ST atrocity case. The police issued the lookout notices amid concerns that the individuals might attempt to flee the country. Sajjala Bhargav Reddy, who already faces multiple criminal cases in Andhra Pradesh, and Arjun Reddy are now actively being searched for by special police teams. Reports suggest that YSRCP social media activist Varra

YSRCP to stand by its social media activists

Reiterating its stand that police should work within the legal framework, YSRCP has assured its social media activists of all legal aid. A team of YSRCP leaders that visited the local jail here on Tuesday told the media that they have come to speak to the social media activists who were in jail and give them moral support. Sudhrani and her husband were shifted just before we arrived, they said and found fault with the remarks of the police official who produced Varra Ravindra Reddy, who said that such offenses in Saudi Arabia and other places would be different. This is unbecoming of an officer of Indian Police service. Why Ravindra Reddy was arrested at night and why was he masked, they asked. The team, comprising former ministers Ambati Rambabu, Perni Nani, MLC Lella Appi Reddy, Guntur Mayor K Manohar Naidu

Utter neglect of 15th C Telugu inscription at Maruturu

A 15th Century Telugu inscription, dating back to 1453 CE, has been found abandoned in a drainage channel at Maruturu in Bapatla district, according to Dr. E. Sivanagi Reddy, Archaeologist and CEO of Pleach India Foundation. Dr. Reddy made this shocking discovery while conducting a campaign titled Heritage for Posterity to raise awareness among local youth about the importance of preserving historical artifacts. The inscription, issued by the Vijayanagara Emperor Mallikarjunadevaraya, records a donation of money for the upkeep of the Somanatha Deva (Shiva) temple in Maruturu village. The inscription, written in Telugu, was originally housed inside the temple. However, it was discarded during renovations a



few decades ago, as per a statement from senior priest Bhagavatam Venkata Narayanacharyulu. Dr. Reddy expressed deep concern over the condition of the inscription and urged the relevant authorities to take immediate action. "This inscription holds significant historical value as it provides a record of the village temple and its donations. It is imperative that the slab be removed from the drainage channel and relocated inside the temple. It should be placed on a pedestal with a plaque detailing its historical significance, which would not only preserve it for future generations but also benefit researchers and scholars," he said. The awareness campaign was supported by local youth, including Kandukuri Charan, Gutti Nagavamsi, Sarath, Nariseti Eswara Nagesh, and Ghattuppal Srinivas, who participated actively in the programme. Dr. Reddy highlighted the importance of involving the younger generation in heritage conservation efforts, as they play a crucial role in safeguarding the region's cultural legacy.

Arunodaya Kala Samiti hosts Maha Kalotsav dance festival

The cultural organisation Arunodaya Kala Samiti hosted a vibrant Maha Kalotsav Dance Festival at the Hanumantharayana Grandhalayam in Vijayawada on Tuesday. The event brought together classical dance enthusiasts and featured performances by renowned dancers from Vijayawada and Hyderabad. Chief guest, K Ramaa Gayatri, a distinguished Telugu faculty member, praised the continuing influence of mass dance forms in the Telugu states, especially due to the impact of cinema. She also acknowledged the enduring popularity of classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, particularly among children. Gayatri commended the role of supportive parents and appreciative audiences in nurturing these art forms and preserving the cultural legacy. She congratulated the performers for showcasing a range of classical dance pieces at the festival, reflecting the region's rich cultural heritage. The festival began with a traditional Ganesh Vandanam and included several notable dance performances such as Jathiswaram, Swagatha Nrutyam, Ayigiri Nandini, Jayamu Jayamu, Lalitha Kala Vahini, Ashtalakshmi Stotram, and concluded with the soulful Annamacharya Keerthana, "Brahmam Okate Parabrahmam Okate".



The performances captivated the audience, with classical dancers including Chitrada Chakrika, Perni Jasmitha, Chinthalacheruvu Venkata Niveditha Sree, Vemulapalli Tanviha, and Pebbili Teja Sree receiving enthusiastic applause for their graceful and expressive renditions. The event was attended by the secretary of Arunodaya Kala Samithi, Madhuri, and treasurer Parvathi, who played a pivotal role in organising the successful cultural evening.

Share views on ...

Government also conducts training programmes for MPs. The feedback shared by MLAs during the session will be invaluable in shaping the decisions of the State Government," he said. He encouraged MLAs to study how the Centre allocates funds in the budget, as this knowledge will be helpful in their work. "If you are committed to learning, nothing is impossible," he remarked. Chandrababu Naidu also reminded the legislators not to take things lightly, noting that despite the absence of a strong opposition in the Assembly, it is their responsibility to be answerable to the people. "The Assembly is a platform to explain to the public what the Government is doing for them," he said. "People are always watching what their MLA is doing, and how they represent their problems. If we use objectionable language or fail to perform, the people will not accept it, as we have seen in the past five years." The Chief Minister also welcomed suggestions from MLAs on Vision-2047 and reiterated that both the Assembly and the Legislative Council should serve as platforms for constructive debates, discussions, and finding solutions to the issues faced by the public.

'AP will be world-class...

"By 2030, we aim to establish Andhra Pradesh as a leading maritime state in India." In addition to port development, the state's maritime strategy includes expanding the shipbuilding, ship repair, and ship recycling industries. These initiatives are expected to create thousands of jobs and drive coastal development. Andhra Pradesh currently has one major port, Visakhapatnam, along with five non-major ports, including Kakinada, Machilipatnam, and Ramayapatnam, which together handled 198 million tonnes of cargo in 2023. By 2025-26, with an investment of over Rs 16,000 crore, the state's cargo handling capacity is set to increase by an additional 110 million tonnes as four more non-major ports become operational. Suresh Kumar emphasized that the government's focus extends beyond port infrastructure to include "proximal area development" near the ports, which will facilitate the establishment of industries. The state has identified a 5,000-acre land bank near its upcoming greenfield ports, which will be available for private sector partnerships. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to drive industrial growth along the coast, with special emphasis on shipyards, fishing harbors, and allied maritime activities. With innovative policies and efficient governance, Andhra Pradesh is working to position itself as a key player in the global maritime industry. The state's focus on building a sustainable and diversified economic base through maritime infrastructure development aligns with its broader vision of achieving a \$2 trillion economy by 2047.

GVMC to ban single-use...

This ban will help us achieve that, but it's not just about enforcement; it's about education and collective action," he said. The announcement comes as part of a larger effort by the GVMC to not only reduce plastic waste but also create a more sustainable environment for future generations. According to GVMC Commissioner Dr. P Sampath Kumar, the upcoming ban will specifically target single-use plastics below 120 microns, with strict penalties for violators. "We aim to create a zero-plastic, zero-garbage Visakhapatnam," Dr. Kumar said, adding that the city is

committed to aligning with the Chief Minister's vision of making it one of the cleanest cities in India. As part of the transition, GVMC is launching a 45-day public awareness campaign designed to educate citizens and businesses about the harmful impacts of plastic pollution. The campaign will be a community-driven effort, with Self-Help Group (SHG) women playing a crucial role in spreading awareness. These women will work at the grassroots level, engaging with consumers, producers, and vendors to promote the adoption of sustainable alternatives to plastic. They will be joined by resource persons who will address any questions or concerns from the public regarding the new regulations. The upcoming awareness drive is not just about informing the public but also about creating a collective sense of responsibility. According to Madhavi, a member of an SHG, "It's essential that everyone understands the long-term environmental impact of plastic. We're here to help people find alternatives and make a real difference in our city." To support the initiative, the GVMC has also set up dedicated enforcement teams and assigned zonal commissioners to ensure that the new plastic control measures are effectively implemented.

Speaker cut up with...

claiming that the menu was the same for all, the Speaker retorted sharply. "Is this how you treat the MLAs? Do you think this is a joke? Are you serving food based on your own whims?" He sternly reprimanded the contractor, insisting that proper procedures must be followed and the quality of the meals must be improved. Ayyannapatrudu issued a stern warning that such practices would not be tolerated and called for immediate action to ensure that meals served to the legislators meet an acceptable standard. When the contractor attempted to defend the meal,

'Jagan encouraged...

Reacting to the state budget of Rs 2.94 lakh crore presented on Monday, the Congress president said it was a deceptive one and alleged that people were cheated after getting their votes. Terming the budget as not a people's budget, she said, "People do not have clarity whether this is a budget or a manifesto. They repeated the statements made during the polls. Budget means allocations but this is a budget without an allocation." To implement 'Super Six' poll promises made by TDP-led NDA, Rs 1.2 lakh crore is needed every year. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu did not allocate even a quarter of that requirement, she said. The 'Super Six' schemes include Rs 1,500 monthly

pension to women in the age bracket of 19 to 59 years, 20 lakh jobs for youth or Rs 3,000 monthly unemployment aid and free bus travel for women. Other schemes include Rs 15,000 to every school-going child per annum and Rs 20,000 annual financial assistance to every farmer. Further, the Congress leader criticised Jagan Mohan Reddy for skipping the Assembly session saying, "Don't you (Jagan) have respect for people's verdict in the elections? Boycotting assembly is an illustration of arrogance. You have to answer." She has also noted that people did not vote for the YSRCP MLAs to sit at home and talk. Addressing a letter to YSRCP MLAs, Sharmila also urged them to enter the assembly as independent candidates.

TODAY ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Nov 12 04:05 PM to Nov 13 01:01 PM
Dwadashi: Nov 13 01:01 PM to Nov 13 01:01 PM
Trayodashi: Nov 13 01:01 PM to Nov 14 09:43 AM
Nakshatram:
Revati: Nov 13 05:40 AM to Nov 14 03:11 AM
Ashwini: Nov 14 03:11 AM to Nov 15 12:33 AM
Rahukalam: 12:00 PM to 1:24 PM
Yamagandam: 7:47 AM to 9:12 AM
Varjyam: 08:59 PM to 10:24 PM
Gulika: 10:36 AM to 12:00 PM
Amritakalam: 01:02 AM to 02:28 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil
VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thunderstorms
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 74%
Sunrise: 6:10 AM
Sunset: 5:33 PM
Updated: November 12, 2024 5:00 PM

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TTD Chairman calls on AP CM

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

TTD Chairman BR Naidu formally met the Honou rable CM Chanda babu Naidu on Monday. He handed over the flower bouquet to the AP CM at the later's office in Sachivalayam at Velaga pudi and conveyed his thanks. The TTD Board Chief also met the DyCM of AP Pavan Kalyan, Endow ments Minister Rama narayana Reddy, Minister for Human Resources Development of AP N Lokesh.

17-year-old student found hanging

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A 17-year-old boy, identified as I. Nikhileswara Rao, was found dead at his home in Yellapuvanipalem under the Gopalapatnam police station limits on Tuesday. The young student, a Class X student, reportedly took his own life.

According to authorities, the boy was found hanging at his residence. Police are currently investigating to understand the circumstances leading to the tragedy. "We are exploring all possible factors that may have contributed to this incident. At this stage, no specific reason has been determined," the Gopala patnam police stated.

Mental health advocates are urging individuals facing emotional distress to seek help. "It is essential for young people and those around them to know that support is available," a local counsellor said. Those in need of support or those who are experiencing distress are encouraged to contact the helpline at 100 for assistance.

All set for Children's Festival

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Amaravati Balotsavam is set to host the seventh edition of its Children's Festival at Siddhartha Academy in Mogalrajapuram, from November 15 to 17. This year's festival will be centred on the theme "Pragathiki Margam - Shastra Vignanam." So far, 10,000 children from 200 schools have registered to participate in this festival, according to Amaravati Balotsavam President SP Rama Raju and General Secretary R Kondala Rao.

While addressing a press conference at the Balotsavam Bhavan in Vijayawada on Tuesday, they said that educational and cultural competitions will be conducted in 60 events from 20 wings. For that, they have set up six cultural and 10 academic venues. The main venue is named after Nobel laureate Sir CV Raman and the remaining venues, after Aryabhata, Vikram Sarabhai, Dr Yellapragada Subba Rao, DR Yelavarthi Naidamma, Srinivas Ramanujan, Dr AS Rao, M o k s h a g u n d a m Viswoswaraiah, and Mary Query, they added.

Chief Whips in Assembly, Council appointed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In an important political development, the Andhra Pradesh government has announced the appointment of Chief Whips and Whips for the State Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council. GV Anjaneyulu, the TDP MLA from Vinukonda, has been appointed as the Chief Whip in the Legislative Assembly. Several other Whips have also been appointed from the TDP, Jana Sena, and BJP.

The appointed Whips in the Assembly include Adinarayana Reddy (Jammalamadugu - BJP), Arava Sridhar (Koduru - SC, Jana Sena), Bendalam Ashok (Ichhapuram - TDP), and Bonda Umamaheswara Rao (Vijayawada Central - TDP), among others.

In the Legislative Council, Panchumarthi Anuradha, a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC), has been appointed as the Chief Whip. The appointed Whips for the Council include Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao (TDP), Kancharla Srikanth (TDP), and P Hariprasad (Jana Sena).



GV Anjaneyulu, Chief Whip in Assembly



Panchumarthi Anuradha, Chief Whip in Council

WHIPS APPOINTED IN ASSEMBLY

- Bonda Umamaheswara Rao (Vijayawada Central - TDP)
- Datla Subbaraju (Buchibabu - Mummdivaram - TDP)
- Divya Yanamala (Tuni - TDP)
- VM Thomas (Gangadhara Nellore - SC - TDP)
- Jagadeeswari Toyaka (Kurupam - ST - TDP)
- Kalava Srinivasulu (Rayadurgam - TDP)
- Madhavi Reddappagari (Kadapa - TDP)
- PGVR Naidu (Ganababu - Vizag West - TDP)
- Tangirala Soumya (Nandigama - SC - TDP)
- Yarlagadda Venkat Rao (Gannavaram - TDP)

WHIPS APPOINTED IN COUNCIL

- Vepada Chiranjeevi Rao (TDP)
- Kancharla Srikanth (TDP)
- P Hariprasad (Jana Sena)

Kancharla Srikanth (TDP), and P Hariprasad (Jana Sena). These appointments are seen as crucial, as the Chief Whip and Whips play a vital role in maintaining party discipline and ensuring the smooth functioning of legislative proceedings.

CPM prevents installation of smart meters in Vijayawada

Adani Group, APCPDCL officials tried to install smart meters in houses without giving prior intimation to people

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Activists of the CPM, led by party State secretariat member Ch Babu Rao, prevented the installation of smart meters at households in Gandhinagar, Vijayawada, on Tuesday. Representatives of APCPDCL and Adani Group tried to instal smart meters in houses at Gandhinagar near Raj Yuvaraj Theater in the city. Upon learning about the installation of smart meters without giving any intimation to the people, the CPM leaders and workers rushed to the spot and protested.

They carried smart meters and raised slogans against the installation. The CPM leaders and workers supported the local people and demanded withdrawal of the installation of smart meters. After holding discussions with the representatives of the Adani Group and later the officials of the Electricity Department, the installation was temporarily stopped.



Speaking on the occasion, Ch Babu Rao said that the Adani Group is installing the smart meters without giving any intimation to the people. "The TDP-led NDA government has started installing the smart meters against its election promises," he alleged. As per the information, the Adani Group is planning to install around two crore smart meters at households, commercial organisations and agriculture motors, he said.

Further, he said when the TDP was in the Opposition the party opposed smart meters and filed cases in the Andhra Pradesh High Court. The TDP

had accused the YSRCP of colluding with Adani and Shirdi Sai Electricals. However, after coming to power, the TDP has taken a U-turn and changed its stance towards the smart meters. The previous YSRCP government followed the Central government's directions and the current NDA government, too, implemented the previous orders, he said.

Meanwhile, he demanded that the NDA government scrap the YSRCP government-made agreement with the Adani and Shirdi Sai Electricals. If the government fails in this regard, the CPM will continue agitations across the State.

30 kg of cannabis seized near Visakhapatnam station

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

A joint operation by the City Task Force, Fourth Town Police, and the Dog Squad resulted in the seizure of 30 kilograms of cannabis at the entrance of the Visakhapatnam railway station on Tuesday. The successful operation was spearheaded by narcotic-sniffer dog Cesar, whose sharp detection abilities led the team to the hidden contraband. "Cesar's keen sense of smell and training were crucial in uncovering this substantial amount of cannabis, a testament to our dog squad's value in combating narcotics," praised Police Commissioner Dr. Sankhabrata Bagchi.

The seized cannabis has been handed over to the Government Railway Police



(GRP) for further investigation. Commissioner Bagchi commended the City Task Force, Fourth Town Police,

and dog handler Ram Prasad for their coordinated efforts. As part of an intensified crackdown on narcotics, Bagchi has directed the city's dog squad teams to conduct regular inspections at high-risk zones, including the RTC complex, railway station, and beach road.

The Commissioner also announced a broader initiative to reinforce anti-drug measures in collaboration with the District Collector and GVMC commissioner. "We are in the process of expanding our canine unit with eight additional sniffer dogs trained at a specialised facility. These canines will soon join our city's anti-narcotics efforts, playing a crucial role in identifying and dismantling drug networks," Dr. Bagchi added.

Utter neglect of 15th century Telugu inscription @ Maruturu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A Telugu inscription dated 1453 CE is found dumped in a drainage channel at Maruturu in Bapatla district says Dr E Sivanagi Reddy, Archaeologist and CEO, Pleach India Foundation. While he was organising a campaign Heritage for Posterity and sensitising the local youth at Maruturu, he chanced upon to notice the inscription dated to 1453 CE issued by the Vijayanagara emperor Mallikarjunadevaraya in Telugu language to record a gift of some cash to god Somanathadeva (Siva) of Maruturu village for its regular maintenance.

On enquiry, it is learnt that the inscription originally located inside the Siva temple was thrown outside during its renovation



a few decades ago as told by a senior priest Bhagavatam Venkata Narayanagaryulu. Since the inscription bears historical record of the village temple, Dr Reddy appealed to the concerned authorities to remove the inscription slab from the drainage channel, shift it to inside the temple and erect on a pedestal with a small plaque

engraved with the details of the record for the benefit of the research scholars and to protect it for future generations.

The local youth Kandukuri Charan, Gutti Nagavamsi, Sarath, Narisetti Eswara Nagesh and Ghattuppal Srinivas participated in the campaign and sensitisation programme, says Dr Sivanagi Reddy.



MONTFORT GAMES

Little Flower School overall champions

Host Vijayawada's NSM School becomes runners-up

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Little Flower School located at Uppal in Hyderabad bagged the 35th National Montfort Games Overall Championship, which concluded at the NSM Public School in Vijayawada. The hosts, Vijayawada's NSM School, became runners-up in the overall championship. Vijayawada East MLA Gadde Rama Mohana Rao was the chief guest at the closing ceremony, and he presented trophies and individual prizes to the winners and runners-up.

Addressing the valedictory ceremony, MLA Rama Mohana Rao stressed the importance of sports in character building. He asked the parents to encourage their children to participate in any of the sports and games. It will be useful for students for their physical and mental health. Guest of Honour Vijayawada Bishop Joseph Raja Rao Thelagathoti spoke about the influence of sports in one's life and how discipline is nurtured through sports.

Earlier, a detailed report about the Montfort Games was given by the general secretary, Chacko.

Provincial Superiors of the Provinces of Hyderabad and Pune, Shine Alex and Jaico Gervasis, and Education Commission Convenors Shajan Antony and Santosh Kumar presented prizes to the winners and runners-up.

The Correspondent of NSM School Monty thanked all the participants and the officials for their active participation. Principal Rayappa Reddy and Vice-Principal Bala Reddy were also present on the occasion.

Brief results: Overall Championship - Little Flower School, Uppal, Hyderabad; Runners-up - N.St.Mathew's Public School, Vijayawada; Best School Games Boys - Montfort School, Gopalapuram; Best School Games Girls- Little Flower School, Uppal, Hyderabad; Best Athletic School Girls- Little Flower School, Uppal, Hyderabad; Best Athletic School Boys-St.Mark's Boys Town, Jahanuma; Best Athletic School Boys- N.St.Mathew's Public School, Vijayawada; Best Athletic Boy- G Kiaanah, N .St. Mathew's Public School, Vijayawada; Best Athletic Girl - K Sai Sree, Little Flower School, Uppal.

Arrangements complete for Panduranga Swamy Rathotsavam

Minister Ravindra and family visit temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the annual Brahmotsavam festivities at the Panduranga Swamy Temple in Machilipatnam, Minister for Mines, Geology, and Excise Kollu Ravindra announced that all necessary preparations were in place for the Rathotsavam on Wednesday. The Minister, accompanied by his family, visited the temple to receive Swamy's blessings and performed special pujas. Besides, he presented silk robes to Lord Panduranga Swamy as part of the rituals.



especially since the Rathotsavam tradition was revived in 2014 after a 40-year hiatus.

The Krishna district administration, in coordination with temple authorities, has made comprehensive facilities and arrangements for the influx of devotees. Minister Ravindra instructed Krishna District Collector DK Balaji, Joint Collector Geethanjali Sharma, and Superintendent of Police R Gangadhara Rao to ensure safety and manage the crowd effectively, particularly during Karthika Pournami, when a large number of devotees are expected.

Steel Plant employees struggle amid severe salary cuts

Partial payments and delayed wages leave workers in financial crisis

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Employees at the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd, the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant, are facing dire financial difficulties as management continues to delay and reduce salary payments, even amid the recent festival season. Staff members, who work in challenging and high-risk conditions, report receiving only partial salaries, forcing them into severe financial strain.

Since September, the situation has only deteriorated for plant employees. Half of the salaries were disbursed in September, and in October—despite the Dussehra and Diwali festivals—no relief came. As of November 11, workers have received only 35 per cent of their October



salaries, with the remaining 50 per cent of September's dues still unpaid. This leaves staff members struggling to cover basic living expenses, with no clear communication on when

outstanding salaries will be fully disbursed.

"Many of us depend on our full salaries to sustain our families, and these ongoing delays are creating unbearable hard-

ship," said one worker, who requested anonymity. "How are we supposed to survive when only a fraction of our salary reaches us, and that too, after significant delays?"

Approximately Rs. 86 crore is required monthly to cover the salaries of Visakhapatnam Steel Plant employees. The workforce operates in extreme conditions, with around 70 per cent of employees enduring temperatures up to 150 degrees Celsius. The partial payments have left workers feeling undervalued, with the staff unable to meet basic family needs.

For a typical steel plant worker, the reduced payments mean that instead of the usual Rs. 40,000 monthly salary, they're receiving around Rs. 13,500—hardly enough to make ends meet. Many are questioning the management's commitment to its employees, with some alleging a calculated strategy to create financial pressures that could force res-

ignations, thereby reducing staff numbers to ease privatisation.

J. Ayodhyaram, convener of the Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata Committee, voiced his concern: "While management claims there are funding issues, we know banks currently hold Rs. 950 crore in total funds. Yet, less than 10 per cent of this has been allocated to pay employees. We question why October salaries were only partially paid without addressing September's dues. Employees are demanding transparency in these financial decisions, and if this neglect continues, it could lead to severe consequences."

The financial strain has led employees to demand immediate resolution of payment delays and greater transparency from management.

Budget fell short of people's expectations: APCC vice chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) Vice-President Kolanukonda Shivaji expressed his dissatisfaction with the budget presented by Finance Minister Payyavula Keshav in the Assembly on Monday, describing it as falling below the expectations of the public.

The budget, with an outlay of over Rs 2.94 lakh crore, was merely a "jiggery of figures," Shivaji commented, adding that there was a significant mismatch between the promises made and the actual allocations. He highlighted that the budget did not reflect the priorities set out by the ruling parties during the election campaign.

Shivaji recalled the TDP's 'Super Six' promises, which he claimed were largely ignored in the budget. He pointed out that while the Finance Minister did mention an assurance to launch free bus travel for women, no specific timeline or funding had been allocated for it. Similarly, he noted that the TDP and Jana Sena had promised Rs 3,000 crore in unemployment dole for 20 lakh jobless youth, but no funds had been allocated for this either. Additionally, the promise to disburse Rs 1,500 per month to women above the age of 18



Shivaji recalled the TDP's 'Super Six' promises, which he claimed were largely ignored in the budget. He pointed out that while the Finance Minister did mention an assurance to launch free bus travel for women, no specific timeline or funding had been allocated for it.

was also conspicuously absent from the budget.

Shivaji further criticised the allocation of just Rs 16,705 crore for the irrigation sector, calling it inadequate. He also pointed out that the Finance Minister failed to clarify whether the Rs 15,000 crore promised by the Centre for

capital city development would be provided as a grant or loan. The absence of funds for the repair and reconstruction of roads was another major point of contention.

The Congress leader also took issue with the Finance Minister's failure to address the arrears in free reimburse-

ment schemes, which have been a longstanding concern for the state's students.

"Moreover, Payyavula Keshav has presented a budget with a Rs 32,000 crore gap between income and expenditure, without offering a clear explanation of how this deficit will be bridged," Shivaji said, adding that the heavy loans taken by the previous YSRCP government were continuing to haunt the state. The Congress leader lamented that the government would have to repay over Rs 50,000 crore in loans and interest, exposing the fragile financial position of the state.

On the agriculture budget, Shivaji pointed out that while the TDP had promised to provide Rs 20,000 crore as input subsidy to each eligible farmer, the government had only allocated Rs 4,500 crore for the scheme. "There are over 52 lakh farmers in the state, and if each is to receive Rs 20,000, the total disbursement would be over Rs 10,000 crore. So how can the government fulfil its promise with just Rs 4,500 crore?" he questioned.

Shivaji concluded by advising the government to take urgent steps to reduce the burden of loans and work towards creating a more sustainable and robust financial system for the state.

Results of research should benefit farmers: Collector

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K. Vetri Selvi emphasized that the outcomes of agricultural research should directly benefit farmers, and that farmers should be educated on advanced farming techniques. The Collector visited the Indian Institute of Oil Palm Research (ICAR) Centre at Pedavegi on Tuesday, where she interacted with the centre's director and scientists.



Speaking on the occasion, Collector Vetri Selvi stated that the findings from research laboratories would only be valuable if they are effectively communicated and applied at the field level. She stressed that the research outcomes would be most impactful when they reach the farmers and improve their practices on the ground.

The Collector further highlighted that Eluru district has emerged as a leader in oil palm cultivation in the state. She pointed out that increasing

awareness of modern farming methods among oil palm farmers is crucial for enhancing productivity.

Dr. Kancharla Suresh, Director of the Oil Palm ICAR Centre, shared that oil palm is cultivated in 2.29 lakh hectares across the state, with Eluru district alone accounting for 80,000 hectares. He explained that besides cooking oil, various products can be derived from the waste of the oil palm crop, and farmers should be

educated about these opportunities to maximize the crop's potential.

Later, the Collector visited the tissue culture laboratory and museum at the Oil Palm ICAR Centre. Scientists from the centre, including Dr. M.V. Prasad, Dr. K. Manorama, Dr. K. Ramachandrudu, G. Ravichandran, Horticulture DD Ram Mohan, and Micro Irrigation Project PD Ravi Kumar, accompanied the Collector during her visit.



Role of tax consultants in GST is crucial: Official

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The role of tax consultants in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) sector is of paramount importance, said B. Lakshminarayana, Joint Commissioner of Central GST, at the inauguration of a new tax consultancy service centre, Easy Tax, in Guntur on Tuesday. The event was presided over by Chukka Wilson Babu, retired Assistant Commissioner of GST.

Speaking at the launch, Lakshminarayana highlighted that GST taxpayers often make mistakes, either knowingly or unknowingly, and stressed the crucial role of tax consultants in helping businesses rectify these errors. He pointed out that tax laws are frequently updated, and only consultants, with their specialised expertise, can keep businesses informed about the latest changes, ensuring proper compliance. Despite GST being in effect for over seven and a half years, many doubts and confusions persist within the trade sector, he added. Lakshminarayana urged for the establishment of more such consultancy services to address taxpayer queries and offer essential guidance.

GST Deputy Commissioner V. Venkateswararao praised the efforts of retired officers in

establishing such service organisations, calling it a commendable initiative that will help bridge the gap between the government and taxpayers.

Assistant Commissioners from the GST Enforcement Division, M. Nagaraju and Ravi Kumar, underscored the importance of tax consultants in raising awareness about GST among taxpayers. They emphasised that consultants are indispensable in educating businesses about the complexities of the tax system, especially given the evolving nature of GST regulations.

Retired GST Assistant Commissioners Rajeshwar Rao and Vivekananda, CREDAI AP Chairman A. Siva Reddy, and Chukka Wilson Babu also lauded the initiative, stating that tax consultancy services are invaluable in assisting with all aspects of GST—from registration and returns to refunds, show-cause notices, audit responses, exports, imports, and even handling appeals, tribunals, and court cases.

The launch of Easy Tax marks a significant step towards improving taxpayer compliance and ensuring that businesses have the guidance they need to navigate the complexities of the GST system effectively.

YSRCP warns TDP leader Anam Venkataramana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) Spokesperson Putta Sivasankar Reddy has strongly condemned TDP leader Anam Venkataramana Reddy for his controversial remarks against YSRCP President and former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Speaking to the media at the party's central office, Sivasankar Reddy referred to Anam as a "comedian" and accused him of making baseless comments

designed to divert public attention. He warned Anam to temper his language or face a strong backlash from the YSRCP.

Sivasankar Reddy also questioned Anam's credibility by recalling incidents from his past, including the use of a medical certificate to secure bail during a previous controversy. The YSRCP leader further pointed out the hypocrisy in TDP's criticisms, citing an incident where Nara Chandrababu Naidu's brother

was described as "mentally unstable" by his own family.

Defending the absence of YSRCP MLAs from the Assembly, Sivasankar Reddy clarified that such decisions are internal party matters. He also criticized the TDP's double standards, recalling how both Chandrababu Naidu and N.T. Rama Rao had previously avoided Assembly sessions. Sivasankar Reddy concluded by urging Anam to refrain from making disrespectful remarks about YSRCP leaders.

R&B officials directed to ensure pothole-free roads by Jan 2025

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Roads and Buildings (R&B), BC Janardhan Reddy, has directed officials to expedite the ongoing road repair and reconstruction works with the goal of achieving pothole-free roads by January 2025. The Minister held a video conference with R&B officials on Tuesday to review the progress of the road repair works.

During the meeting, the Minister emphasized that the road repair works should be carried out on a war footing, in line with the existing plans. He specifically inquired about the daily progress updates received from field-level officials regarding the road repairs.

Minister Janardhan Reddy stated, "The state has 45,378 km of state and district highways, out of which 22,798 km



have been damaged. The government has sanctioned Rs 283 crore to repair potholes across 9,484 km of roads. In total, 1,658 road repair projects have been approved, and tenders have been invited for the same." He further clarified that tenders for 1,547 projects had already been received, while the tendering process for the remaining works was still underway. Contractors have agreed to complete repairs for 1,408 roads, and agreements

have already been signed for 925 road repair works.

The Minister revealed that road repairs had already commenced for 506 projects, with potholes being filled over a stretch of 563 km across various locations. He instructed officials to ensure that work begins immediately in any locations where repairs had not yet started.

Officials informed the Minister that some delays had occurred due to rainfall in certain parts of the state. However, they assured that as soon as the rains subsided, the repair work would resume. Minister Janardhan Reddy insisted on receiving daily updates on the progress of road repairs.

"The government is committed to ensuring pothole-free roads as soon as possible. Officials must treat this task as a priority and complete the works on a war footing."

Narayana opens flyover at Kanuru

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration, P Narayana, inaugurated the Siddhartha Flyover in Kanuru on Monday, marking a significant milestone in the region's infrastructure development. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Penamaluru MLA Bode Prasad, former Union Minister Sujana Chowdary, former Minister Kamineni Srinivas, and Siddhartha Academy Secretary Paladugu Lakshmana Rao.

Speaking at the event, Minister Narayana criticized the previous government's negligence, stating that the flyover had remained incomplete for over five and a half years. He expressed his satisfaction at the completion of the project and emphasized the importance of the flyover for easing traffic congestion in the area.

As per a request from MLA Bode Prasad, the minister announced that a 3.5-kilometer road connecting the flyover to the national highway would be constructed with funds from the Capital Region Development



Authority (CRDA). This road will further enhance connectivity and improve infrastructure in the region. Minister Narayana also addressed the state's financial challenges, stating that the treasury is currently empty due to the mismanagement of the previous government. He pointed out that funds collected through municipal taxes, amounting to Rs. 3,200 crores, had been diverted and misused under the previous administration.

Highlighting the efforts of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, Narayana said that CM is working tirelessly to stabilize the state's finances and put Andhra Pradesh back on track.

He also mentioned that the state's share of Rs. 5,300 crores allocated by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in 2019 had not been released.

Narayana further stated that if the central funds had been properly released, many of the state's pressing issues, such as drainage and drinking water problems in municipalities, would have been resolved.

He specifically mentioned the deteriorating condition of the drainage system in Tadigadapa municipality, assuring that efforts would be made to improve all drainage systems and guide the municipality toward development.

Health Commissioner inspects District Hosp in Parvatipuram

PNS ■ PARVATIPURAM

Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, V Karuna, visited the District Hospital in Parvatipuram and the Pregnant Women's Hostel in Saluru on Tuesday to review healthcare services. During her visit, she closely examined several departments, with a special focus on the gynecology ward.

"Support will be provided to improve healthcare services in Parvatipuram Manyam District," assured Commissioner Karuna. She highlighted the importance of institutional deliveries in government hospitals and warned against diverting cases to private hospitals. "Strict action will be taken against any Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) found directing patients to private facilities," she said.

To improve maternal health in rural and tribal areas, Karuna outlined plans to train two staff nurses in midwifery to assist in safe deliveries at primary health centers. She emphasized the need to prevent maternal deaths



in tribal communities and assured support for high-risk cases, especially during difficult weather conditions.

The Commissioner praised the Pregnant Women's Hostel for its role in managing high-risk pregnancies, especially in challenging weather. She also noted the ongoing cancer screening efforts in the district, saying, "Universal screening tests are being carried out to prevent the spread of cancer."

Encouraging the medical staff to focus on serving underserved populations, including the poor and tribal communities, Karuna said, "Serving with dedication gives the greatest satisfaction." She also suggested that hospitals should aim for Encore certification to improve their infrastructure and services.

13 red sanders woodcutters arrested, equipment seized

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Despite intensified vigilance and combing operations in the forest areas to curb the felling of red sander trees and the illegal transportation of the timber, the influx of red sanders woodcutters and smugglers has not reduced in the district.

The Red Sanders Anti-Smuggling Task Force (RSATF) arrested 13 red sander woodcutters and smugglers while they were attempting to enter the forest in the Irala forest area.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) G. Bireddy informed the media on Tuesday that, following the directions of District SP L. Subba Rayudu and under the supervision of Task Force SP P. Srinivas, the task force teams, led by Revenue Inspector (Operations) K. Suresh Kumar Reddy, K.

Lingadhar, and Y. Viswanth, along with SBO P. Sridesh, conducted a combing operation in the forest area.

During the operation, the teams spotted two auto rickshaws and a motorcycle in the forest, and the woodcutters and smugglers were observed behaving suspiciously. The task force swiftly apprehended the individuals, though some managed to escape into the dense forest.

In total, 13 woodcutters and smugglers were arrested, and the team seized two auto rickshaws, a motorcycle, hacksaws, axes, and other tree-cutting tools.

Among the arrested, 10 are from Thiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu. The accused were shifted to the Task Force police station in Tirupati, and cases have been registered against them, the DSP added.

Vanniyakula Kshatriya chief Rajan meets Minister Savita

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The newly-appointed Chairman of AP Vanniyakula Kshatriya Finance Corporation, CR Rajan, paid a courtesy visit to the Minister for BC, EWS, Handlooms, and Khadi, S Savita. The meeting took place at the minister's camp office in Tadepalli on Tuesday.

Rajan expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Minister Nara Lokesh, and Minister Savita for placing their trust in him by appointing him as the Chairman of the corporation. He assured the Minister that he would uphold the trust placed in him and would work to take government programmes and schemes to the people. Rajan also committed to making efforts for the welfare and



development of the Vanyakula Kshatriya community.

Minister Savita congratulated Rajan on his appointment and encouraged him to ensure that the schemes provided by the government through the corporation reach the deserving beneficiaries. She also advised him to work towards the effective implementation of government welfare initiatives. The meeting concluded with Minister Savita honouring Rajan with a shawl. Several TDP leaders and activists were also present during the meeting.

'Contracts not awarded on caste basis'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy fired back at KT Rama Rao (KTR) over allegations regarding the Amrut Scam, addressing KTR's claims about the involvement of Srujan Reddy, who is the son-in-law of BRS MLA Upender Reddy.

Speaking on the matter, Revanth clarified, "KTR is naming Srujan Reddy, pointing out his relationship to Upender Reddy. Yes, Upender Reddy is a BRS MLA, and under the BRS government, the same company bagged projects worth thousands of crores. If KTR has an issue, he's free to raise

complaints or pursue it legally. However, instead of addressing the wealth amassed by his own family, he's attempting to divert attention by making accusations against me."

Revanth emphasized his connections with the Reddy community across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, dismissing any implication that contracts were awarded based on caste.

"Any Reddy in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are either distant or close relatives of me. Just because he's a Reddy doesn't mean he got work through me or my relatives. If there are con-

cerns about the tenders, KTR should challenge it legally instead of making baseless claims to deflect public attention from his own family's actions," he added.



Ganja plants identified using drones in ASR dist

PNS ■ PADERU

The police in ASR district have successfully identified and destroyed ganja cultivation in the agency area of Degalarai village, G. Madugula mandal, with the help of drones.

According to police sources, drones were used to survey the area, during which they spotted ganja plants spread over five acres of land. A joint operation was carried out by the police and revenue officials, who conducted a raid and destroyed the illegal crop.

As the ganja plants had grown over two feet tall, they were easily identifiable among the other vegetation, thanks to the drone cameras. The police added that this aerial surveillance was key to detecting the illicit cultivation.

Upon learning about the ganja cultivation in Degalarai, ASR district Superintendent of Police (SP) Amit Bardhan visited the site to personally oversee the destruction of the plants. The SP also urged local farmers to diversify their crops, highlighting that the government is providing saplings of 25 different crop varieties to encourage alternative farming.

'Vana Bhojanam' on November 17

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Kartika Vanabhojanam in Tirumala will be held on Nov 17. Sri Malayappa Swamy will reach the Parveta Mandapam on a small Gaja Vahanam. The goddesses will accompany him in the procession on another palanquin to the Parveta Mandapam located in the deep green woods of the Seshachala ranges.

The priests will perform Snapana Tirumanjanam to the deities from 10 am to 12 noon. After that, the Kartika Vanabhojanam will be held and a community dining will be arranged for the staff and the pilgrims, which assumes importance on the occasion.

ACROSS THE STATES

India, Bangladesh discuss infra, land port issues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Bangladesh on Tuesday decided to enhance cooperation in building infrastructure and operational efficiency at the various land ports and check-posts located along the 4,096-km long shared international border.

The commitment was made during the 6th Subgroup meeting of the Land Port Authority of India (LPAI) with the Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) here. The LPAI functions under the Union home ministry.

The bilateral meeting aims to strengthen ties and discuss issues related to cross-border infrastructure, connectivity and facilitation of trade between the two nations.

The Indian delegation was led by LPAI Member (Planning and Development) Sanjeev Gupta with officials drawn from the border management division of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Border Security Force (BSF), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), and Customs, among others.

The Bangladeshi side was led by BLPA Joint Secretary and Member (Development)



Tahmina Yeasmin along with officials from the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and ministries of industries and shipping, among others.

"Building on the discussions held at the last subgroup meeting in Dhaka in November 2023, the meeting reviewed the progress made on the previous initiatives and identified new areas for cooperation to enhance infrastructure and operational efficiency at the land ports," an

official statement said.

The major agenda items discussed included developing port facilities at Gede (Darshna in West Bengal) and Bholaganj (Meghalaya), expediting clearance of Bangladesh's export cargo at Petrapole (West Bengal) and Agartala, prioritising the development of land ports and integrated check-posts (ICPs), and considering a common cargo gate at Bhomra (Ghojadanga in West Bengal), the statement said.

MAHARASHTRA POLLS Uphold fair play, CEC tells central observers

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday asked the Election Commission's central observers deployed for the Maharashtra assembly polls to uphold fair play, respond promptly to candidates' concerns and maintain professional conduct.

At a review meeting held with the central observers for the Maharashtra polls, Kumar directed them to be accessible to all candidates and parties without any favouritism.

"Any complaints in this regard will be viewed seriously," a functionary aware of the deliberations quoted the CEC as saying.

Addressing the observers from the national capital via video conference, he also asked them to maintain strict vigilance over the law-and-order situation and flow of any inducements like drugs, liquor, freebies and cash that can be used to vitiate the election space.

Kumar asserted that checking and screening by enforcement agencies should be done as per the established protocol and in a completely impartial manner, maintaining a level playing field.



Observers should see that central forces and state police forces maintain neutrality and their deployment is not favouring any political party or a candidate, he said.

CEC Kumar was of the view that observers can particularly ensure that the whole election process, specifically the campaign discourse, does not in any manner affect the dignity of women.

During the polling hours, observers should visit as many polling stations as possible and take an assessment of the situation inside the polling stations regularly and ensure polling is free and fair, he underlined.

Observers should conduct themselves in consonance with the highest standards of professional, personal and ethical conduct and must abide by the commission's guidelines strictly, Kumar said.



Govt sanctions first all-women battalion for CISF

A first-ever all-women CISF battalion comprising more than 1,000 personnel has been sanctioned by the Union government keeping in mind the burgeoning duties of the force in VIP security, airports and other vital installations. Officials told PTI that the unit will be raised from within the sanctioned manpower of the force of about two lakh personnel. The Union home ministry issued a sanction order on Monday approving an exclusive women unit called 'reserve battalion' in the force with a total strength of 1,025 personnel led by a senior commandant-rank officer, they said. Women personnel constitute over seven per cent of the force whose present strength is about 1.80 lakh. A force spokesperson said preparations for the early recruitment, training and selection of location for stationing the new reserve battalion has been initiated.



Actor Shahid rents out apartment for Rs 20 lakh

Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor and his wife have given on rent a luxury apartment in Mumbai for over Rs 20 lakh per month, according to Square Yards. The apartment, originally purchased in May 2024 for Rs 58.6 crore, was jointly acquired by Shahid and Mira Kapoor. In a statement on Tuesday, real estate consultant Square Yards said Kapoor recently rented out the luxurious apartment in 'Three Sixty West' project at Worli. The property spans 5,395 square feet of carpet area and 6,175.42 sq ft of built-up area, with three dedicated car parking spaces. The project 'Three Sixty West', developed by Oberoi Realty, is a high-end residential project spread over 1.58 acres, offering 4 and 5 BHK ready-to-move-in apartments. The lease agreement, registered in November 2024, is for a tenure of 60 months with an initial security deposit of Rs 1.23 crore.



Delhi: SI held for taking bribe of Rs 10,000

The vigilance department has apprehended a Delhi Police sub-inspector for taking a bribe of Rs 10,000 to issue notice to accused persons in a fraud case, an official said on Tuesday. The accused SI, Shripal, was posted at Laxmi Nagar police station. The vigilance unit received a complaint from a Laxmi Nagar resident who runs a business of agricultural products alleging that he was defrauded in July by some persons based in Karnataka and Bengal, an officer said. "He lodged a complaint in the matter at Laxmi Nagar police station and the matter was transferred to SI Shripal. When no action was taken on his complaint, the complainant approached Shripal and requested him to initiate action. But Shripal demanded Rs 20,000 for issuing notice to the accused persons," the officer said. On November 11, Shripal asked the complainant to pay the first instalment of Rs 10,000.

India aiming to become global drone hub: Rajnath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is aiming to become a global hub to manufacture drones as new technologies are bringing fundamental changes to the concept of warfare, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday.

In an address at an event, Singh also said that the Modi government is creating an approach of 'adaptive defence' to deal with emerging security challenges.

Elaborating on it, he said adaptive defence is not merely responding to what has happened but anticipating what could happen, and preparing for it proactively.

"In essence, it involves cultivating a mindset and capability to adapt, innovate and thrive, even in the face

of unpredictable and evolving circumstances," he said.

"Situational awareness, flexibility at strategic and tactical levels, resilience, agility, and integration with the futuristic technologies are the keys to understand and create adaptive defence," he added.

The defence minister said adaptive defence must be the "mantra" of India's strategic formulations and operational responses.

Singh described adaptive defence as not merely a strategic choice but a necessity.

"As the threats to our nation have evolved, so too must our defence systems and strategies. We should be prepared for all future contingencies. It is more than just protecting our borders; it is about



securing our future," he said. In the address at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Singh said India is aiming to become a drone

hub of the world.

"Several initiatives have been taken in this regard. This would not only help the Indian economy but also significantly contribute to our Make in India and the Aatmanirbhar Bharat programme," he said.

"Drones and swarm technologies are bringing fundamental changes in the ways and means of warfare. The development has changed the post-World War II understanding of warfare completely," he observed.

"The traditional notions and concepts of warfare in all three dimensions -- land, air and water -- have been rapidly changing. These dimensions are being seen as overlapping due to drone and swarm technology interventions," Singh said.

He noted that traditional notions of war are being reshaped by emerging technologies and evolving strategic partnerships, with new perspectives, doctrines and concepts of operations emerging within the armed forces.

The defence minister threw light on the diverse range of security challenges faced by India -- from the traditional border-related threats to unconventional issues such as terrorism, cyber-attacks, and hybrid warfare.

He asserted that the government recognised the need for an adaptive defence strategy in a changing geopolitical and technological scenario, and has taken several initiatives to build a robust and self-reliant ecosystem.

'Poet Kalidas' works make us realise need to save environment'

PNS ■ UJJAIN

Stressing on raising awareness about tackling the problem of climate change, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday noted that legendary poet Kalidas' literary works in ancient India dwelt on the need to save the environment.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the 66th All-India Kalidas Festival in Ujjain, Dhankhar said, "Today's burning problem is related to the environment. From the compositions of Mahakavi Kalidas, we realize that protection of the environment is important for our existence."

The Vice-President called for participation from all stakeholders in addressing the serious problem of climate change, a phenomenon that refers to long-term shifts in the Earth's temperatures and weather patterns. "We must remember that we have no other place to live except the Earth," Dhankhar told the gathering.



Kalidas is called the "Kulguru (a person occupying exalted position) of the poet community" and his immortal works in Sanskrit like "Abhigyan Shakuntalam", "Meghadutam", "Kumar Sambhavam" and "Ritu Sanhar" and "Malavika Agnimritam" have a wonderful confluence of human emotions, he maintained.

Notably, more than 190 countries, including India, have gathered at Azerbaijan's capital Baku for the 29th round of annual climate talks, the Conference of Parties, COP29. The session of the COP to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is being held from November 11 to 22.

For every rupee spent on ISRO, society got back Rs 2.50: ISRO

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A recent study by ISRO on whether the money invested in the space agency has benefited the society, found that for every rupee that the organisation spent, the return is Rs 2.50, said ISRO chairman S Somanath on Tuesday.

Somanath was answering a question during the interaction with the students of Karnataka Residential Educational Institutions Society (KREIS), organised by the Social Welfare Department and Science and Technology Department of the Government of Karnataka.

According to him, ISRO's goal was to serve the country rather than to compete for supremacy among the spacefaring nations. To make this happen, ISRO needed freedom to do what it wanted; That freedom could be achieved by creating an ecosystem for business opportunities in



space technology, he said. "Going to the moon is a costly affair. And we cannot depend only on the government for funding. We must create business opportunities. If you have to sustain it, you have to create a use for it. Otherwise, after we do something, the government will tell you to close down," said Somanath.

He also emphasised that ISRO

does much more than space exploration.

Answering another question, he cited an example of ISRO's project directly benefitting people. "The advisory that we issue to fishermen, for instance, is a good example. With the help of our advisory, they know where to go for the best catch. We use Oceansat to gauge the sea and issue the advisory after studying

various parameters. By using this service, the fishermen not just get a good yield of fish, but they also save diesel required for the boats substantially," said Somanath.

Responding to students who asked about the things that influenced his life, Somanath said that his teachers played a very important role in guiding him. He spoke about his physics teacher Rajappa and maths teacher Paul who were instrumental in him getting not only good grades but also getting a solid grasp of the subject.

He also said he would always be grateful to his Class X teacher late Bhagirathamma, who first told him about IIT and was confident that he would be an engineer one day.

"The only way someone can become great is when the teacher is great," added Somanath. He also told the students to use the failures as stepping stones.

IISc develops method to break antibiotic-resistant biofilms

PNS ■ BENGALURU

A team of scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has developed a method to break down biofilm barriers, which protect bacteria from antibiotics and contribute to drug resistance.

The breakthrough involves using an enzyme from the cow's digestive tract, according to a press statement, issued by IISc on Tuesday.

Klebsiella pneumoniae, an opportunistic bacterium, infects hospital patients and causes conditions like pneumonia, urinary tract infections, and meningitis, said Dipshikha Chakravorty, professor at the department of Microbiology and Cell Biology (MCB) and a corresponding author of the study.

In individuals with diabetes, it infects wounds that heal slowly, sometimes leading to complications requiring limb amputation, she added.



***Klebsiella pneumoniae*, an opportunistic bacterium, infects hospital patients and causes conditions like pneumonia, urinary tract infections, and meningitis, said Dipshikha Chakravorty, professor at the department of Microbiology and Cell Biology (MCB) and a corresponding author of the study**

The bacterium secretes a tough biofilm matrix composed of sugars, fats, proteins, and DNA. Polysaccharides, formed by strings of sugar molecules in this matrix, play a crucial role in strengthening the biofilm, Chakravorty explained.

To address this, the IISc team sought a biocompatible strategy to disrupt the biofilm by targeting polysaccharides. "We realised that polysaccha-

ride-degrading enzymes could serve the purpose, and a cow's gut was the ideal place to look for them," said Debasis Das, assistant professor in the department of Inorganic and Physical Chemistry (IPC) and another corresponding author of the study.

The team identified glycoside hydrolases (GH) enzymes from the rumen, the largest compartment in a cow's stomach, and synthesized a specific enzyme,

GH-B2, in the lab. Testing GH-B2 on four strains of *Klebsiella pneumoniae* isolated from hospital patients revealed it effectively broke down biofilms in all strains.

The enzyme was tested in lab mice with wounds infected by *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. A combination of GH-B2 and meropenem successfully cleared the biofilms.

"The chances of bacteria gaining resistance are minimal

because our enzyme targets the biofilm matrix, not the bacteria directly," said Reshma Ramakrishnan, PhD student in Das's lab and the study's first author. She noted the "potential for combinatorial therapy using the enzyme and antibiotics to treat biofilm-associated infections." The researchers plan to incorporate the enzyme into wearable wound dressings. "For local infections, especially in diabetic individuals, this is very promising," said Chakravorty. Das also suggested the enzyme could be used as a coating on medical devices to prevent biofilm formation.

"It is vital to develop innovative strategies to disrupt bacterial lifestyles," stated Chakravorty, adding, "We must continuously identify potent enzymes to combat infectious diseases, which remain a significant threat."

The findings were published in Nature's 'NPJ Biofilms and Microbiomes'.

'Don't impose new conditions'

TN urges Centre on solar rooftop scheme

PNS ■ CHENNAI

The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday urged the Centre not to impose new conditions under the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana, as they would impact the scheme's feasibility.

Additionally, should a Memorandum of Understanding be executed, then the targets might be finalised in concurrence with the Tamil Nadu government "so that they are practical and achievable," state Electricity Minister V Senthil Balaji said.

The scheme, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February this year, aims to provide free electricity to households across India by subsidising the cost of installing solar panels on rooftops.

In a memorandum submitted to the Union Power, and



Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal during the recent state power ministers conference in the national capital, Balaji in June 2024, the Ministry of Power introduced an additional requirement to sign an MoU under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana which requires the state to achieve targets set by the monitoring committee, despite these

targets not being clearly defined.

A release here said Balaji sought the REC and PFC (nodal agencies for Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme) to consider reducing the interest rate to 8 percent given the commitment shown by Tamil Nadu in improving the financial and operational performance of the state power utilities.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Deliver tangible results

With 2024 set to be the hottest year on record, the stakes for COP29 are higher than ever

The 29th annual UN climate summit, COP29, has officially begun in Baku, Azerbaijan. This year's conference brings together diplomats, climate experts, activists, and political leaders from nearly 200 countries to address critical issues in the fight against climate change. However, the event is already facing challenges, both from the host country's fossil-fuel-centered economy and the re-election of Donald Trump as US President, which could impact future climate commitments from one of the world's largest emitters. COP29 is being held in Azerbaijan's capital, Baku, a decision that has sparked criticism from environmentalists worldwide, with activists like Greta Thunberg referring to the summit as a "greenwash conference." This year's COP has been dubbed the "Finance CoP" due to its focus on securing adequate funding for climate action. Low-and middle-income countries are advocating for significant financial support to help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy. The UN estimates that developing countries, excluding China, need more than \$2 trillion annually by 2030 to make meaningful progress.



The current debate centers on who will finance these initiatives. In 2009, wealthier nations pledged \$100 billion annually in climate financing for developing countries, a goal they only reached two years behind schedule. Now, many of these recipient countries are calling for a new target of at least \$1 trillion per year to effectively address climate challenges. Countries such as China and the UAE, which are still classified as "developing" but are major emitters and fossil-fuel producers, face pressure to contribute more substantially to the climate finance fund. Another core issue at COP29 is the review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the plans each country submits outlining their goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With the next round of NDC updates due in early 2025, this summit is a crucial opportunity to solidify targets that align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. The hope is that countries will commit to more ambitious emission reductions and be transparent about their paths toward net-zero emissions. COP28, held in Dubai in 2023, marked the first time a COP agreement openly called on countries to transition away from fossil fuels. However, progress has been inconsistent. The International Energy Agency's (IEA) tracking tool, established in April 2024, shows mixed results, with many countries struggling to meet their renewable energy targets. COP29 in Azerbaijan faces substantial challenges, from balancing climate goals with fossil fuel interests to addressing the financial needs of developing nations. If COP29 is to be a success, it must result in tangible commitments to climate finance, renewable energy, and unity among nations. This will be essential to ensuring that COP29 is remembered as a turning point in the global response to climate change—not as a missed opportunity.

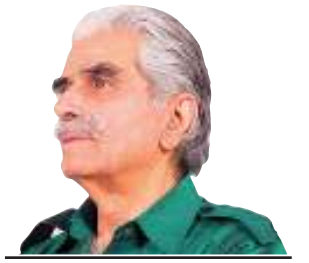
ly to the climate finance fund. Another core issue at COP29 is the review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the plans each country submits outlining their goals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. With the next round of NDC updates due in early 2025, this summit is a crucial opportunity to solidify targets that align with the Paris Agreement's goal of limiting global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius by 2100. The hope is that countries will commit to more ambitious emission reductions and be transparent about their paths toward net-zero emissions. COP28, held in Dubai in 2023, marked the first time a COP agreement openly called on countries to transition away from fossil fuels. However, progress has been inconsistent. The International Energy Agency's (IEA) tracking tool, established in April 2024, shows mixed results, with many countries struggling to meet their renewable energy targets. COP29 in Azerbaijan faces substantial challenges, from balancing climate goals with fossil fuel interests to addressing the financial needs of developing nations. If COP29 is to be a success, it must result in tangible commitments to climate finance, renewable energy, and unity among nations. This will be essential to ensuring that COP29 is remembered as a turning point in the global response to climate change—not as a missed opportunity.

PICTALK



Students pass by a wall painting depicting a scene from 'Krishna Leela', in Prayagraj

Domestic tensions add to Oli's predicament



ASHOK K MEHTA

Amid a mounting internal criticism, Nepal's Prime Minister KP Oli faces daunting challenges, from managing a coalition to dealing with China

My Diwali and Tihar vacation in Nepal is continuing. Here is a flash report from Pokhara. After a turbulent 18-month rule, in which former Prime Minister Prachanda had to seek a vote of confidence five times, the two leading parties Nepali Congress and Unified Marxist Leninist unholy alliance ended CPN(Maoist) kingmaker Prachanda's rule of just 32 seats in a 205-member house. PM KP Oli-led coalition is short of a two thirds majority. They share 4 to 3 in NC's favour in ruling the seven provinces. The promise of Ram-Rajya is unlikely to materialise. Two things stand out: an uneasy stability in government; and Oli's apparent unpopularity. Oli's only claim in his first 100 days is a positive stock market. And breaking the tradition of a Nepalese PM's first overseas visit to India by going first to China from 2 to 6 December, which high profile foreign minister Arzu Rana is organising, India not inviting Oli to become PM is a deliberate omission which was served to late PM Sushil Koirala also a decade ago. Oli's standing as a leader has diminished because he is a junior partner to NC which is seen favoured by India, and due to his apparent loss of control and power over UML. A front-page report in Kathmandu Post (5 November) illustrates this. But alleged corruption cases against him and his supporters including the super department store chain Bhat Bhateni owner Min Bahadur Gurung have dimmed his reputation. On occasions, he was greeted with the chant "Oli chor, desh chhod". Still, Oli retorted: "wait and watch my party perform during 2027 elections". He is hoping to resuscitate his image from his visit to China. His stock with India is low. While Rana was given a red carpet welcome in India - meeting PM Modi, NSA Ajit Doval and Secretary to Prime Minister PK Misra - Oli's meeting with Modi on the sidelines of UNGA was low-key. The China visit will have the Oli hallmark. He will meet President Xi Jinping, his counterpart Li



Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. He will try to convert the USD 250mn loan from the Exim Bank of China for the China-constructed Pokhara International Airport - a white elephant like Hambantota in Sri Lanka - to grant though China has insisted it is part of the BRI loan. Oli is expected to sign the BRI implementation plan which China has been pressing but so far, Nepal has resisted as Kathmandu wants BRI to come under a grant scheme and not a high-interest loan. The BRI deal has been pending since 2020. Oli during his 2018 China visit had outlined 35 projects which were trimmed to nine projects under BRI. If Oli can persuade China of his 'grant scheme for BRI' or place some of the nine projects under it, he will have made a big breakthrough. Strangely few protest about Chinese intrusions in the north. The Jeevan Bahadur Shahi report which had recently mapped Chinese encroachments, missing border pillars and illegal construction, has been quashed. Nepali leaders willingly oblige Beijing over the One China policy that has ensured the 'Great Wall of China' on the border to prevent Tibetan infiltration and migration to Dharamsala. Only one or two Tibetans slipped through this year. China wants Nepal to sign and ratify 'the Border

OLI'S ONLY CLAIM IN HIS FIRST 100 DAYS IS A POSITIVE STOCK MARKET. AND BREAKING THE TRADITION OF A NEPALESE PM'S FIRST OVERSEAS VISIT TO INDIA BY GOING FIRST TO CHINA FROM 2 TO 6 DECEMBER, WHICH HIGH PROFILE FOREIGN MINISTER ARZU RANA IS ORGANISING

Management System' which Kathmandu has not done so far. But Beijing hopes Oli will. China-Nepal relations were upgraded to Strategic Partnership during Xi's historic 2019 visit. The Xi visit was unique because none of the agreements signed had been implemented. A power trade agreement may be facilitated now after the completion of the 220 KVA transmission line from Rasuwagharhi to Kirung to sell power from Chinese hydro projects. It is in the energy sector that Nepal will eventually prosper. Bangladesh, Nepal and India signed a tripartite agreement for the 40MW sale of Nepal electricity to Bangladesh in the rainy season. India holds the key to the development of Nepal's power sector. Nepal is complaining about the Bureau of Indian Standards withholding certification of exports, especially with Chinese components which will hit Kathmandu, not Beijing. The opposition is in disarray with former Home Minister, once a rising star, Rabi Lamichhane, back in jail for the Pokhara Cooperative fraud. His party and his image have taken a beating though independents like Kathmandu Mayor, Balen Shah and Dharan Mayor, Harka Sampang, are progressing relentlessly to clean politics. While King Gyanendra's pop-

ularity may appear to be rising, a return to constitutional monarchy is unlikely despite his recent visit to Bhutan which triggered unusual speculation. It is India that is making quiet gains, the embassy keeping a low profile, letting PMO Delhi run the show. Lingering negativity about Indian interference has all but vanished. On Agniveer, the feeling among Indian Gorkha ex-servicemen is that Nepal should lift the embargo on it. "Something (even four years service) is better than nothing". Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's remarks in July on Agniveer (relating to Nepal) were clear. "India's foreign policy is determined by its national interest. Not by any other country". The message reportedly conveyed to Arzu Rana in Delhi was: "no change in terms of engagement on Agniveer" even as a review is ongoing. COAS Gen Dwivedi is arriving here on November 21 for a ceremonial appointment as Honorary Chief of Nepal Army which has lost its lustre because not a single Nepali has been recruited in the Indian Army for five years. (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; the views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

CHADRACHUD'S IMPACTFUL TENURE

Madam — Apropos your editorial, "A rich legacy," published on November 11. Justice DY Chandrachud's tenure as the CJI of India, which concluded on last Sunday, was marked by transformative rulings and substantial reforms, carving out a unique legacy in the Indian judicial history. The list of judgements penned by him is long and covers almost all aspects of law. They blend scholarship and jurisprudence and are likely to inform both future decisions and how the law is studied. Striking down the Electoral Bonds Scheme and upholding the abrogation of Article 370 are among his influential verdicts that stand pillars of his legacy. His decisions resonate not only within the corridors of the Supreme Court but also in the lives of countless Indians whose rights and freedoms he defended. Through humour, resilience, and an unwavering dedication to constitutional ideals, Chandrachud exemplified judicial leadership. As India's judicial landscape evolves, his tenure will be remembered as a testament to the power of law to uphold equality, integrity, and the spirit of democracy. Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

PRIORITISE MENTAL WELLBEING

Madam—Apropos to "Creating a workplace culture that truly supports mental health," published on November 11. It is good that they chose to focus on mental health in the workplace on Mental Health Day on October 10. Because the way few professionals in both the private and government sectors have taken their lives due to undue work pressure in the last few months is alarming, to say the least. Now a days, whoever is entering the corporate world is expected to be mentally strong to cope with the rising pressure and huge mismatch in work-life balance, but how would we justify the death of a young girl who has done well academically to clear CA and get into one of the top 4 consulting firms in the country and was forced to take her life in Pune? We in India have a very abysmal psychiatrist-patient

A boost to women entrepreneurs



The Finance Minister launched five Nari Shakti branches of Union Bank of India for women entrepreneurs in a step to boost women's power. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman virtually inaugurated five Nari Shakti branches of Union Bank of India

from Bengaluru. She urged the bank to develop technology-driven, cluster-based schemes specifically tailored to support women, aiming to empower female entrepreneurs and strengthen financial inclusion for women across the country. Furthermore, she encouraged women entrepreneurs to make use of these schemes and contribute to job creation. The Nari Shakti operates with a focus on extending credit to women entrepreneurs. In addition to financing women-owned manufacturing and service units, the bank will also focus on advisory services, workshops on start-ups, skill development programs, mentorship, networking, and collaborations. Union Bank of India has opened Nari Shakti branches in Bengaluru, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Jaipur. It is a right step in the right direction. Akhilesh Krishnan | Mumbai

ratio. We have 0.75 psychiatrists per 100,000 mental patients against the prescribed 3 psychiatrists. Though things are changing a bit and people are approaching mental health professionals after many celebrities have opened up about this, we still need to cover a long distance in terms of enhancing mental health infrastructure and speak openly about this. GoI would need to go all out to open thousands of mental health education institutes and hospitals to bridge this huge gap and encourage young students to take up this profession. We will have to teach our children about the importance of mental and emotional health and need to bring a drastic change in our society when it comes to talking about mental health issues. There should not be any stigma attached to it. Bal Govind | Noida

SMOKING BAN

Madam — The decision of the Karnataka government to ban smoking and tobacco consumption in government offices

and on its premises, though laudable, boils down to its efficacious implementation. Moreover, the state government circular has said precious little about the punishment for flouting rules. Having said that, the move is indeed praiseworthy because it will send a strong message to all stakeholders about the perils of smoking and chewed tobacco. Furthermore, passive smokers can have a sigh of relief as they stand to suffer as well from smoke. It is also time the Centre revisits COTPA and contemplates better execution of the Act. By "The Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 2003," also referred to as COTPA, smoking and consumption of other tobacco products in public places is prohibited nationwide. This Act also encompasses other requirements like displaying signage and enforcement. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Organic farming: Cultivating a climate-conscious future



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

Organic farming is emerging as a sustainable agricultural solution, offering an eco-friendly alternative to conventional farming practice

With a growing focus on environmental issues, organic farming has emerged as a powerful ally in the fight against climate change. As global temperatures climb and natural ecosystems deteriorate, there is a shared conviction among scientists, environmental activists and farmers about the pressing need to create sustainable methods for food production. Organic agriculture holds significance not just for cultivating food without synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, but also for fostering farming systems that harmonise with nature. Could organic farming be the answer to the climate crisis? The fundamentals of organic farming lies in its significant potential to greatly diminish greenhouse gas emissions. The production of these, in conjunction with chemical pesticides, demands significant amounts of fossil fuels, whereas organic farms prioritise natural fertilisers and composts that enhance soil health over time. Environmental scientists, states, "Soil in organic farms often contains more carbon



because of the organic matter used." Healthier soil retains more moisture and serves as a carbon sink, effectively capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere. Organic farming promotes a rich variety of life forms. The importance of biodiversity cannot be overstated when it comes to creating resilient ecosystems. Traditional monoculture farming strips the soil of essential nutrients, reduces the diversity of habitats, and leaves crops vulnerable to numerous pests and diseases. Organic farming often embraces a variety of crops, fosters the growth of wild plants in and around the farm, and supports pollinators like bees and butterflies. Organic farms can have as much as 30 per cent greater species richness than conventional farms, allowing for a greater diversity of birds, insects, and other wildlife to flourish alongside agricultural activities. This is similar, in part, regarding the conservation of water. Organic farms utilise techniques such as mulching and crop rotation to effectively conserve water. These methods enhance the soil's composition and increase its ability to retain moisture. This is why the organic farm is more adept at managing droughts, as numerous regions impacted by climate change are grappling with this issue. Through organic farming, we're cultivating more than just crops; we're fostering a sustainable water cycle. While there are several advan-

tages to consider, some contend that relying solely on organic farming may not suffice to nourish the global population, as it tends to produce lower yields compared to traditional practices. Incorporating organic practices, such as crop rotation and minimising reliance on chemicals, into extensive agricultural operations significantly impacts the fight against climate change. Organic farming may not be a perfect solution, yet its environmental advantages are clear: reducing carbon emissions, conserving water, and boosting biodiversity are integral components of a comprehensive strategy in sustainable agriculture. As consumers, we can contribute by opting for organic products whenever we have the chance. Together, we can achieve significant strides towards a more sustainable world. The path to achieving climate resilience is intricate; nonetheless, by embracing organic farming, we can certainly sow the seeds for a greener future. (The writer is a motivator and a freelance writer; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN BLESSINGS OVER BILLIONS

If we want to be happy, then we should earn blessings which is our real wealth



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We all love money ...don't we? It's a fact that money makes the world go round because it can make the impossible possible and the unimaginable real. Hence, it won't be an exaggeration to say that money can do almost everything. (At least those who have it feel so for sure) There is a famous Hindi film song that says "The whole thing is that ki bhaiya Sabse Bada Rupaia". We all have experienced how money can make people change their moods and colours in a jiffy. Haven't we? It can close the eyes, seal the mouth and deafen the ears wherever needed. We have seen in many scenes of movies how witnesses of crime turn a blind eye and a deaf ear and maintain a stony silence even though they know the truth.

Similarly in the world of business, money is the prime force behind the movers and shakers of mega deals, mergers and break-ups. Whether it's sports, entertainment or any other business, money can make cut-throat competitors get into cooperative mode in mutual interest. Money can match the mismatched, miss targets and change roles. At present it is observed that money has a considerable clout even in matters of faith. Like, it can gain you easy access to the holy citadels of godmen who may anoint you as their ardent follower. With money, you can also have a quick darshan of your favourite lord at the temple without having to wait in long queues. The list is unending. In short, money can buy anything and everything under the sun that can be bought. Though money creates this illusion that we are living in paradise money cannot



do any of the following for us. Like, money can buy us a beautiful house but not a happy home; it can buy us delicious food and expensive health-care but not good health; it can provide us with high security but it cannot guarantee even minimum safety; it can buy us countless things for entertainment but not cheer and joy; it can buy us a comfortable bed but not sound sleep; it can buy name and fame but not real respect; it can buy the best contacts and relations but not true and honest love; it can buy crowns and thrones but not real power; it can buy good education but not intelligence and wisdom & lastly it can bail us out from the worst crimes but it cannot help us escape divine justice & buy us liberation from our sins and sufferings.

So, no matter if money does make the world go round, at the end of all the going round, we reach nowhere and get nothing substantial and real and end up being more impoverished than ever. Since ages, our scriptures and sages have spoken about the vices and virtues. Of all the vices like lust, anger, attachment, greed and ego, the most dangerous and subtle is "Greed". It is said that greed is such a kind of hunger that's never satisfied. Our desire for food ends when our hunger is appeased, our anger also subsides when its purpose is achieved, but! Greed is not satisfied even if we get the kingdom of the whole world.

Hence, it is this tendency, which is created by wealth, in a person who possesses it, that leads to corruption at all levels. So, does it mean one should not recognise the importance of money? Not really! Instead, we must understand that money or wealth is merely a tool that has to be used wisely and without greed, attachment or selfishness to create happiness for all. Hence, as long as we use it as a master's, it will bring us benefit and happiness. As soon as we become slaves to it, it will bring loss and misery. An enlightened person would always use money for the maximum good of a maximum number of people, whereas for a spiritually empowered soul, money becomes a tool to create good karma and a good destiny for the self and others. So, the story's moral is that money has never made man permanently happy, nor will it. Hence if we want to be happy, then we should earn blessings which is our real wealth and which would go along with birth after birth. Think about it!

(The writer is a spiritual educator and popular columnist; views are personal)

IFFI 2024: A global stage for cinema, culture and talent



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

This year's edition reaffirms IFFI's role as a powerful force in global cinema, connecting storytellers, industry leaders and audiences in a shared appreciation of the cinema



The 55th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is set to bring a fresh wave of cinematic celebration to the scenic coast of Goa from November 20th to 28th, 2024. This year's festival promises to be more than just a film showcase; it's a convergence of global cultures, a launchpad for emerging voices, and a profound tribute to India's cinematic legacy. IFFI 2024 is a bold step forward, not only in its evolution but as a distinctive international film festival that celebrates both India's vibrant culture and the art of cinema on a global stage. This year, IFFI spotlights Australia as its "Country of Focus," emphasising the festival's commitment to bridging cultures and fostering international understanding. This section invites Indian audiences to dive into the heart of Australian cinema, exploring a curated selection of films that range from gritty dramas to adventurous comedies and reflective documentaries.

Through this focused lens, audiences will experience the unique and evolving cinematic language of Australia, making IFFI a powerful platform for cross-cultural appreciation and dialogue. In doing so, IFFI 2024 goes beyond traditional film screening to create an immersive experience that positions the festival as a bridge between the stories, people, and cultures of the world. IFFI 2024's newest addition, the "Best Debut Director of Indian Feature Film" award, shines a spotlight on the next generation of Indian filmmakers. This award isn't just a recognition; it's a pivotal moment in a young director's career, marking a path for fresh perspectives in Indian cinema.

By dedicating this category to first-time directors, IFFI signals its commitment to nurturing innovative voices and helping them gain visibility in an increasingly competitive industry. While many international film festivals focus on established talents, IFFI's recognition of debut filmmakers reflects its dedication to fostering growth and embracing the future of Indian cinema. This year's festival also pays homage to four towering icons of Indian cinema: Raj Kapoor,



WITH OVER 200 FILMS FEATURED IN ITS VIEWING ROOM, FILM BAZAAR IS WHERE STORIES FIND INVESTORS, FILMS CONNECT WITH DISTRIBUTORS, AND COLLABORATIONS ARE BORN

Tapan Sinha, Akkineni Nageswara Rao (ANR), and Mohammed Rafi. These legends shaped India's cinematic legacy and captured the hearts of audiences across generations. By featuring restored classics and specially curated presentations, IFFI brings their artistry to life for a new generation and provides international attendees with a meaningful glimpse into India's rich cinematic history. This tribute serves as a reminder of the depth of Indian cinema, its transformative impact on culture, and the enduring relevance of these trailblazers. IFFI's Film Bazaar, now in its 18th year, stands out as a dynamic marketplace that brings together filmmakers, financiers, distributors, and international industry leaders.

With over 200 films featured in its Viewing Room, Film Bazaar is where stories find investors, films connect with distributors and collaborations are born. This dedicated platform sets IFFI apart from other festivals focused solely on screenings by creating opportunities for projects to grow and flourish beyond the festival circuit. For both Indian and international filmmakers, Film Bazaar represents a gateway to global audiences and a rare chance to network and secure support for future projects. The Indian Panorama section of IFFI has become a hallmark of the festival, offering audiences a diverse selection of contemporary Indian cinema. With 25 feature films and 20 non-feature films selected for their cinematic excellence, thematic resonance and aesthetic creativity, Indian Panorama showcases the vibrancy and diversity of Indian storytelling.

For international attendees, it provides an authentic insight into India's socio-cultural landscape, spotlighting everything from regional narratives to avant-garde experiments. This section rein-

forces IFFI's mission to present Indian cinema in all its depth and diversity, making it an invaluable part of the global film conversation. One of IFFI 2024's standout initiatives is "Creative Minds of Tomorrow" (CMOT), a program by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) dedicated to nurturing young filmmakers. CMOT provides a platform for emerging voices to showcase short films, documentaries and animations, facilitating connections with seasoned industry professionals. Through CMOT, IFFI is not only showcasing young talent but also empowering the next generation of Indian filmmakers with the resources and connections to succeed.

This initiative solidifies IFFI's role as a festival that goes beyond celebration to become a nurturing ground for creativity and growth. In line with the essence of Bharat Parv, which captured the world's attention at Cannes 2024, IFFI brings forth a celebration of India's diverse cultural heritage. Bharat Parv, a campaign highlighting India's rich traditions and unity in diversity, finds its cinematic expression at IFFI, where films, events, and programming reflect India's multifaceted identity. This celebration of Indian culture provides international visitors with an immersive experience and a deeper understanding of India's story, offering a window into its heritage through the powerful lens of cinema.

IFFI 2024 arrives at a transformative moment for Indian cinema, serving as a platform to elevate Indian filmmakers onto the world stage. The festival's emphasis on emerging talent, global collaboration, and cultural exchange aligns with India's aspirations to be a global leader in the arts. IFFI's unique combination of industry

initiatives, recognition of fresh voices and celebration of cinematic heritage enables it to play a pivotal role in the growth of Indian cinema and its reception on the global stage. This year's edition promises to leave an indelible impact on the industry, redefining IFFI as a festival that doesn't just reflect India's cinematic culture but actively shapes its future. For international filmmakers, IFFI 2024 offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect with India's vibrant cinematic landscape.

By providing exposure to a diverse Indian audience, access to Film Bazaar's resources and engagement with sections like the Australian showcase, IFFI offers international filmmakers insights into India's tastes, trends, and opportunities. IFFI's homage to iconic Indian artists also provides a rich cultural context that enables international guests to appreciate the legacy and contributions of Indian cinema. Through these interactions, IFFI creates a unique, collaborative environment that enriches both Indian and global cinema.

The 55th IFFI is a festival that seamlessly merges tradition with forward-thinking innovation, paying tribute to the giants of Indian cinema while embracing the voices of tomorrow. From the spirit of Bharat Parv to the debut of a new award for emerging talent, IFFI 2024 embodies the evolving nature of cinema and celebrates the power of storytelling as a tool for connection. As the festival draws international filmmakers, industry leaders, and audiences together, it positions India as a key player in global cinema and reaffirms IFFI as a festival of lasting impact and vision.

(The writer is former additional DG, DFF and festival director, IFFI; Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan; Views expressed are personal)

Staying grounded: Lessons from the 1984 elections and anti-Sikh riots

Both politicians and journalists risk misjudgment when they distance themselves from the realities on the ground

The 1984 election results were a shock to many. Rajiv Gandhi won a record-breaking 414 seats, toppling major political figures. Veteran leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chandra Shekhar faced unexpected defeats—Vajpayee in Gwalior and Chandra Shekhar in Ballia. But this story is less about the triumphs or losses and more about a crucial lesson this journalist learned from an open-hearted conversation with Chandra Shekhar. In an interview, this journalist asked the seasoned leader if he had anticipated the wave that swept away even stalwarts like himself. Chandra Shekhar replied candidly: "To be honest, I had become



MANOJ RAVHUVANSHI

disconnected from the grass roots. I didn't realise there was such a wave." This realisation left a lasting impact on the journalist, shaping their perspective going forward.

The same kind of shock had reverberated through the nation during the 1977 elections, but in the opposite direction. Indira Gandhi was

ousted from power, losing her own seat in Rae Bareilly, while her son Sanjay Gandhi lost in Amethi.

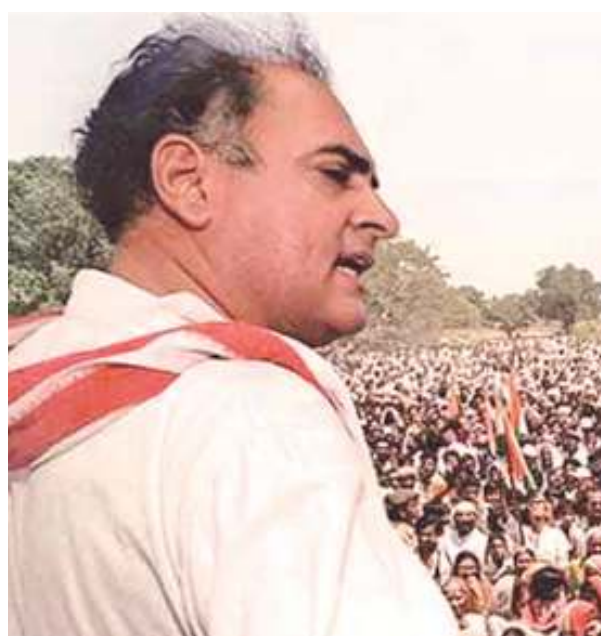
The Congress party was routed, failing to win a single seat in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. Despite her stature and the counsel of her closest advisors, Indira Gandhi had also become detached from grassroots sentiment. This disconnect was something this journalist later witnessed in the field of journalism itself. During the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, this journalist returned from the field after witnessing the violence firsthand.

His editor, Ayub Syed, was discussing the events with a senior journalist, OP Sabherwal, who was analysing the riots from afar.

Sabherwal likened the situation to 1947, predicting that the riots would continue indefinitely.

The journalist respectfully intervened, sharing what he had observed in RK Puram: a Gurdwara under attack, granthis being rescued by the army, looters scattering when a single soldier raised his hand, and a crowd dispersing with just a shout. He explained to his seniors that the violence was being stoked by the Congress government, with rioters emboldened by police assurances of impunity.

The journalist conveyed that the riots were far from uncontrollable and could be stopped whenever the government chose. And he was proven right; the violence



ceased once the government decided it had gone too far. The lasting lesson? Whether a politician or a journalist, detachment from reality clouds judgment. Without a connection to the ground, even the most obvious forces at play can go unseen. The 1984 election and subsequent events taught a vital lesson about staying connected to the grassroots. Rajiv Gandhi's landslide victory, which swept aside prominent leaders like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chandra Shekhar, highlighted how even seasoned politicians could lose touch with public sentiment.

In a candid interview, Chandra Shekhar admitted his own disconnect from the grassroots, mirroring

the misjudgment that cost Indira Gandhi the 1977 election. This theme resonated again during the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, where a journalist's firsthand observations clashed with distant analyses in the newsroom. The violence, stirred by political agendas, was ultimately controllable when authorities chose to act.

The takeaway? For both politicians and journalists, a disconnect from on-the-ground realities can obscure clear judgment, leaving critical forces unrecognised. Staying rooted is essential to understanding and addressing the true dynamics at play in any situation.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold, silver extend losses amid sluggish demand

Gold, silver prices continued to extend losses for the second straight day in the national capital on Tuesday owing to a sluggish demand from jewellers and weak global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity plunged Rs 1,750 to Rs 77,800 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 79,550 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver also plummeted Rs 2,700 to Rs 91,300 per kg against the previous close of Rs 94,000 per kg. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 1,750 to Rs 77,400 per 10 grams. On Monday, the yellow metal had settled at Rs 79,150 per 10 grams. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery plunged Rs 612, or 0.81 per cent, to trade at Rs 74,739 per 10 grams. "Gold continued to face significant pressure as the strength in the dollar index kept prices under USD 2,600 on COMEX. In MCX, gold fell, slipping below Rs 75,000 for the first time since October 10.

Inflation soars to 14-month high of 6.2% Breaches RBI's tolerance level

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation breached the Reserve Bank's upper tolerance level, soaring to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent in October mainly on account of rising food prices.

Inflation based on the consumer price index (CPI) was 5.49 per cent in September and 4.87 per cent in the year-ago month.

Retail inflation trended below the RBI's upper tolerance band of 6 per cent since September last year. It was at 6.83 per cent in August 2023.

The RBI, which mainly factors in the CPI while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy, has been tasked by the government to ensure retail inflation remains at 4 per cent with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

According to the data released by the National

Statistics Office (NSO) on Tuesday, inflation in the food basket increased to 10.87 per cent in October, compared to 9.24 per cent in September and 6.61 per cent in October 2023.

"Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the month of October 2024 is 6.21 per cent. Corresponding inflation rates for rural and urban are 6.68 per cent and 5.62 per cent, respectively," NSO said.

The NSO data showed that during October 2024 significant decline in inflation was observed in the 'pulses and products', eggs, 'sugar and confectionery' and spices sub-group.

"High food inflation in October 2024 is mainly due to increase in inflation of vegetables, fruits and oils and fats," the NSO said.



Russia keen to strengthen pulses trade ties with India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Russia, which is mulling diversifying to urad and tur production, is keen to strengthen pulses trade cooperation with India, the government said on Tuesday.

A Russian delegation led by Deputy Minister Maxim Titov had on Monday met Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare, discussing in details the possibility of enhancing the trade cooperation in the field of pulses.

The consumer affairs department, in a statement, said Russia has emerged as a major source of India's import of masur (lentils) and yellow peas from the recent past.

Apart from these two pulses, Russia is also contemplating to diversify its pulses production to urad (black matpe) and tur (pigeon pea), it said.

India is dependent on pulses imports to meet the domestic shortages of 3-4 million tonne. On pulses availability in the country, the government said there is a significant ease in supply of key pulses like tur,



Apart from these two pulses, Russia is also contemplating to diversify its pulses production to urad (black matpe) and tur (pigeon pea), it said

and change since July 2024 due to better kharif prospect and continuous imports.

"The overall availability of pulses has been comfortable with robust inflow of imports of tur, urad, chana and yellow peas, this year," it said.

The tur crop is reported to be good and early harvest of tur crop in pockets of Karnataka has started.

Tur and urad imports for the

2024 calendar year, was at 10 lakh tonne and 6.40 lakh tonne, respectively, by the first week of November, have already exceeded the whole year import figures during last year. The government said the arrival of chana imports from Australia in bulk cargoes are expected from November.

The recent diversification of source countries for pulses played an important role in ensuring continuous inflows at

increasingly competitive rates, it added.

Meanwhile, the preliminary reports of rabi sowing for chana, masur, urad, and moong indicates that initial delay in some states due to prolonged rainfall are now recovering the lag in area coverage. "Overall sentiment and sowing intention are reported to be upbeat because of good price realisation," the statement added.

India imposes anti-dumping duty on chemical imports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has imposed an anti-dumping duty of up to USD 557 per tonne on a chemical used mainly in the adhesive industry from China, Korea, and Thailand for five years to guard domestic players against cheap imports from these nations. The duty was imposed as the chemical - Epichlorohydrin - was exported to India from these countries at below-normal prices. "The anti-dumping duty imposed under this notification shall be levied for a period of five years (unless revoked, superseded or amended earlier)..." the Department of revenue said in a notification.

The levy is imposed following recommendations for the same by the commerce ministry's investigation arm Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR). Anti-dumping probes are conducted by countries to determine whether domestic industries have been hurt because of a surge in cheap imports.

SATCOM LICENCE Musk's Starlink yet to comply with security norms: Scindia

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday said Elon Musk-owned Starlink is yet to comply with security norms, and a licence for satellite communications services will be issued only after they meet all the requirements for services in India.

The satellite communication services major is in the process of completing all the requirements and will get a licence once they complete the process, the minister added.

"We are more than happy to give them (licence) if they (Starlink) comply with all the conditions. You have to look at it from a security perspective, making sure that all security concerns are addressed. When they do that we will be more than happy to give it. Obviously, they are in the process of doing it," Scindia told reporters.

He was replying to a question on the status of the licence for Starlink. At present, the govern-



ment has issued a licence to Bharti Group-backed OneWeb and the Jio-SES joint venture Jio Satellite Communications. The two companies are yet to start their operations as they are waiting for spectrum allocation, for which pricing and rules are under process.

According to sources, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai) is likely to finalise its recommendation on proposed rules related to spectrum allocation for satellite communications by December 15.

"The government will evaluate Trai's recommendations and thereafter decide on allocating spectrum to satellite communication companies, which will pave the way for satellite-based broadband services in the country. When asked about the status of the Rs 24,700 crore bank guarantee waiver sought by Vodafone Idea, the minister said any decision of the government will not be company-specific, albeit it will have an impact on the entire sector.

Govt to offload more onions in markets to stabilise retail prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday said it is keeping a close watch on onion prices and has decided to offload more quantities from buffer stock in retail markets to stabilise rates amid temporary supply constraints.

According to government data, the retail price of onion is Rs 67 per kg in the national capital while the all-India average retail price of the kitchen staple is Rs 58 per kg. "The government has decided to upscale the onion disposal in order to address temporary constraint in onion supply observed in certain markets in the past 2-3 days owing to festival season and closure of mandis," an official statement said.

Co-operative NAFED has indented two more rakes for Delhi-NCR and one for Guwahati this week. Similarly, dispatch through road transport would also be upscaled to ensure the availability of onions in the market.

"The availability of onions would be further accentuated by more supplies from NCCF,



both through rail and road transport," it added.

Moreover, the government has also decided to offload onions kept in cold storage at Sonapat to meet the requirements of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Himachal, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi etc.

"The government is alive to the market developments and keeping a close watch to take ameliorative action to stabilise the onion prices," the statement said.

The government procured 4.7 lakh tonnes of rabi onion for price stabilisation buffer this year. It started offloading on September 5 through retail sales at Rs 35 per kg and also

through bulk sales in major mandis across the country.

Till date, over 1.50 lakh tonnes of onion in the buffer has been dispatched from Nashik and other source centres to consuming centres through trucks by road transport.

As per the assessment of the Department of Agriculture, the actual kharif sown area this year was 3.82 lakh hectare which is 34 per cent higher than 2.85 lakh hectare sown last year.

The sowing progress of late kharif onion is also reported to be normal with coverage of 1.28 lakh hectare till the first week of November.

Factory output turns positive, rises 3.1 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's industrial production expanded by 3.1 per cent in September after recording a contraction in the preceding month, as all three major segments -- mining, manufacturing and power generation -- showed improvement.

However, the growth in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) during the month was lower than 6.4 per cent registered in September 2023.

The factory output had turned negative in August at (-) 0.1 per cent, mainly on account of floods affecting mining operations in the different parts of the country.

According to the data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), mining sector output grew by 0.2 per cent, manufacturing production by 3.9 per cent and electricity output by 0.5 per cent in the month of



September 2024.

In August, the mining sector output contracted by 4.3 per cent and power generation by 3.7 per cent. The growth in manufacturing too was muted at 1.1 per cent.

"The IIP growth rate for the month of September 2024 is 3.1 per cent which was (-) 0.1 per cent in the month of August 2024," NSO said in a statement.

During April-September 2024-25, the IIP growth was 4 per cent lower than 6.2 per

cent in September 2023.

According to the data, infrastructure/construction goods reported a growth of 3.3 per cent in September 2024, down from a 10.1 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods rose by 1.8 per cent as against a growth of 8 per cent a year earlier.

The expansion in the intermediate goods segment was 4.2 per cent. Commenting on the data, Aditi Nayar, chief economist, ICRA said that the IIP expanded by 3.1 per cent on a year-on-year basis in September 2024 after declining by 0.1 per cent in August 2024, amid a favourable base.

The uptick was broad-based with all the use-based segments witnessing an improvement in their year-on-year growth in September 2024 vis-à-vis August 2024, she said.

Consumer durable goods production expanded by 6.5 per cent during the reporting month, up from one per cent

Infra, transport sectors expect growth in earnings, headcount

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is likely to see the implementation of one of the largest infrastructure programmes in the 21st century amongst large economies and creating fiscal sources of capital would be key to this initiative, according to a KPMG report.

The report titled 'KPMG 2024 Infrastructure and Transport CEO Outlook' further said a survey of 120 sector leaders from across the world found that CEOs in the infrastructure and transportation sector anticipate business growth over the next three years, in terms of earnings and headcount.

It revealed that globally 57 per cent of sector CEOs say stakeholder expectations pertaining to ESG are changing faster than they can adapt their strategy.

More than half of CEOs believe that a global failure on climate-change adaptation will have a real short-to-medium term impact on their growth, it added.

With confidence and trust in

governments declining around the world, the report said 62 per cent of respondents believe the public is looking to businesses to fill the void on societal challenges. Seventy-one per cent also state that they are willing to divest a profitable part of the business if it was damaging their organization's reputation, it said.

Manish Aggarwal, partner, co-head - deal advisory, and head - Infrastructure, Disinvestments, and Special Situations Group, KPMG in India said that the race to embrace emerging technologies, such as Gen AI, has risen up the agenda for CEOs across the infra and transport sector.

The 10th edition of the KPMG CEO Outlook, conducted with 1,325 CEOs between July 25- 29 2024, provides unique insight into the mindset, strategies and planning tactics of CEOs.

All respondents have annual revenues of over USD 500 million and a third of the total companies surveyed have more than USD 10 billion in annual revenue.



NEW CLIMATE FINANCE GOAL

G77, China rejects framework for draft text

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

G77 and China, the largest bloc representing around 130 countries at the UN climate talks, has rejected the framework for a draft negotiating text on a new climate finance goal -- the central issue at this year's climate summit in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The substantive framework for a draft negotiating text, prepared by the co-chairs of the Ad Hoc Work Programme on the New Collective Quantified

Goal (NCQG) and published in October, is the first item for countries to deliberate on.

However, on Tuesday, G77 and China rejected the framework, arguing it does not accurately reflect the suggestions that developing countries have made for the new climate finance goal.

Other groups of developing countries, including the Like-Minded Developing Countries (LMDCs), Alliance of Small Island Developing States (AOSIS), Least Developed



Countries (LDCs), and the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC), backed G77 and China in this rejection. According to the Loss and

Damage Collaboration, an international coalition of climate researchers and activists, G77 and China have requested that the co-chairs prepare a new draft text before the next negotiating session.

G77 and China demanded that the new climate finance package meet their needs and priorities, with a minimum quantum of USD 1.3 trillion.

The group said that this amount should support mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage initiatives, and

should be exclusively allocated to developing countries.

Developing countries also insist that the new climate finance goal, or NCQG, should prioritize public, grant-based, and concessional finance, as these types of funding are less burdensome for nations already facing financial challenges. Public finance provides a stable support source, while grants and concessional loans (with very low or zero interest) are easier for developing countries to manage.



ALI FAZAL CONTINUES MAKING HUGE WAVES IN HOLLYWOOD!

Actor Ali Fazal continues to make significant strides in Hollywood, recently announced to star alongside the iconic Phoebe Waller-Bridge in the upcoming film *Rule Breakers*. The project, produced by Angel Studios, marks yet another milestone in Fazal's burgeoning international career. *Rule Breakers*, directed by two-time Oscar winner Bill Guttentag, explores themes of resilience and defiance in Afghanistan. Known for his previous work in *Victoria & Abdul* and the acclaimed series *Furious 7*, Fazal's collaboration with Waller-Bridge is highly anticipated by fans and industry insiders alike. The film is set for release in March 2025. "I am thrilled to be a part of *Rule Breakers* and to share the screen with such a talented actress as Phoebe Waller-Bridge," said Fazal. "This project resonates with me deeply and I believe it's crucial to tell stories that highlight the strength and resilience of individuals in challenging circumstances. I look forward to bringing this narrative to life and reaching audiences globally." Speaking about working with Phoebe, Ali said, "I am so thrilled to be able to support a film that we think every parent should take their daughter to watch in the theatres. And the story being so inspiring, it was no surprise that Phoebe Waller also stepped in. Of course she is a powerhouse of talent, so her addition am sure has lifted the film to greater heights. We play key roles at different stages in Roya Mehboob's life and journey along with the Afghani robotics team for girls." This collaboration with Waller-Bridge not only solidifies his presence in Hollywood but also underscores the growing recognition of South Asian talent in global cinema.

Waack Girls bringing in their drama on Nov 22



Prime Video has announced the premiere date of its original drama series, *Waack Girls*. Created and directed by Padma Shri awardee Sooni Taraporevala and co-written by Sooni, Iyanah Bativala and Ronny Sen. The series is produced by Caleb Franklin, Vikesh Bhutani and Sooni Taraporevala under the banners of Matter Entertainment, Chalkboard Entertainment and Jigri Dost Productions. Packed with comedy, drama, music and dance, the series features an exceptionally talented cast of newcomers, including Mekhola Bose, Anasua Chowdhury, Rytasha Rathore, Chrisann Pereira, Priyam Saha, Ruby Sah and Achiyinta Bose, along with veterans Barun Chanda, Lillete Dubey and the late Nitesh Pandey in pivotal roles. Set in the vibrant heart of Kolkata, this series follows six young women who are unapologetically themselves as they create a dance group in a city and a country that knows little about their chosen dance style, waacking. These girls come together to form a dance group called 'Waack Girls' and step into the spotlight. Leading the group are Ishani (played by Mekhola Bose), an expert waacker and the group's choreographer, and Lopa (played by Rytasha Rathore), their enthusiastic and scrappy manager. The series captures their adventures both on and off the dance floor as they confront personal battles, family expectations and societal norms. "I fell in love with waacking before I even knew what it was called when I first saw Mekhola Bose dance. Inspired by her, this is a story that is unconventional and fun, and I am beyond excited to present *Waack Girls* to the world," expressed Sooni Taraporevala. "But it's not your typical dance show either. All six girls are unique, each with their own issues and problems that will resonate with audiences, who will relate to one or another. What the girls have in common is a defiance, a fearlessness, as they live life on their own terms, owning their hard-won space. I am deeply grateful to Prime Video, the incredible team behind this show, and my amazing girls, who have worked tirelessly to bring my vision to life. I can't wait for audiences to dance along with us."



Avneet Kaur's 'pinch me' moment on the sets of Mission: Impossible

Avneet Kaur has always mesmerised everyone with her fashion choices and charm. A prominent figure in the entertainment industry, she enjoys a massive fanbase globally. She has delivered strong performances that have consistently earned her widespread recognition. At such a young age, she is already achieving significant milestones in her career. Now, marking yet another achievement, the Bond girl represented India with a visit to the sets of *Mission: Impossible*. Avneet Kaur seems unstoppable, achieving one significant milestone after another. This time, she was seen with the Tom Cruise on *Mission: Impossible* sets in London. With this, she becomes the only Indian to have made her presence felt on the sets of this international film. Avneet is also set to make her mark on the international stage with the upcoming film *Love in Vietnam*, the first-ever India-Vietnam collaboration. As she continues to break new ground, Avneet's influence is set to grow, further establishing her as a true youth icon in the entertainment world.



SIFAT SEHGAL'S ROAD TO RECOVERY & OVERCOMING ANOREXIA

In a candid and courageous revelation, model and reality TV star Sifat Sehgal has opened up about her harrowing journey with anorexia and her recovery, offering an unfiltered glimpse into a battle that remained hidden for years. Known for her appearances on Netflix's *IRL: In Real Love* and now as a contestant on *Reality Ranis of the Jungle*, Sifat is using her platform to break the silence around eating disorders and inspire others struggling with similar challenges. Reflecting on her experience, Sifat shared, "I battled with eating disorders and anorexia for a long time. For years, I didn't know what hunger felt like—I thought it was normal not to feel hungry. I weighed just 35 kilograms and it was a constant struggle that took a toll on my body and mind." As she prepared for her role in *Reality Ranis of the Jungle*, Sifat's focus on fitness was not just about physical strength but also about healing mentally. "To get ready for the show, I had to push myself beyond my comfort zone. I'm not someone who loves the gym, but I started working out every day. Mentally, I've grown so much over the years. Overcoming body dysmorphia and my unhealthy relationship with food has made me stronger, and that resilience helped me power through the toughest moments on the show." Sifat's journey toward recovery was far from easy and required professional help. "It took me two years of therapy to heal my relationship with food and weight," she explained. "I used to feel like not even a 'normal' person. But seeking therapy was the best decision I ever made. It saved my life and I'm grateful I had the support to come out stronger." Through her story, Sifat hopes to shed light on the pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards in the modeling industry and beyond. She emphasises the importance of mental health and the need for open conversations around eating disorders, particularly in environments where appearance often dictates worth. "People need to know that they are not alone in their struggles," Sifat says. "It's okay to seek help and it's important to redefine what health and beauty truly mean. I'm proud of how far I've come and if sharing my journey can help even one person, then it's worth it." As she continues to navigate her career and life in the public eye, Sifat is committed to advocating for body positivity and mental well-being. Her candidness is a reminder that true strength lies not just in physical fitness but in the courage to confront one's own vulnerabilities and emerge more resilient.

Ira Dubey opens up on her personal connection to the freedom struggle

As India's struggle for independence comes alive on screen, *Freedom at Midnight*, the highly anticipated series, promises to delve deep into the tumultuous events that shaped the nation's history. Each actor associated with the series feels close to it differently and uniquely. Ira Dubey, who essays the role of Fatima Jinnah, Jinnah's sister, shares her insights on the significance of this period drama. She said, "Since childhood, I've grown up hearing deeply personal, lesser-known stories of India's independence movement that are woven into the fabric of our family history. Both sides of my family were directly involved in the freedom struggle—my maternal grandfather, who worked for the Railways, would recount the harrowing sight of trains arriving in India filled with bodies. His brother, a contemporary of Pandit Nehru, was dedicated to the movement and wore khadi exclusively as a sign of his commitment. On my paternal side, my grandfather went to prison twice, and Gandhiji himself once stayed at my great-grandmother's home, while her brother also faced imprisonment for the cause. These memories are etched deeply within me, and they give me a profound sense of responsibility to bring this part of our past to life." *Freedom at Midnight* is based on the eponymous book by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, featuring a talented ensemble cast, including Sidhant Gupta, Chirag Vohra, Rajendra Chawla, Arif Zakaria, Malishka Mendonsa, Rajesh Kumar, KC Shankar, Luke McGibney, Cordelia Bugeja, Alistair Finlay, Andrew Cullum and Richard Teverson in pivotal roles. Produced by Emmay Entertainment (Monisha Advani & Madhu Bhojwani) in association with StudioNext, this series boasts a stellar team behind the scenes, with Nikkhil Advani at the helm as showrunner and director. *Freedom at Midnight* will be streaming on November 15 on Sony LIV!

FUN

ARCHIE



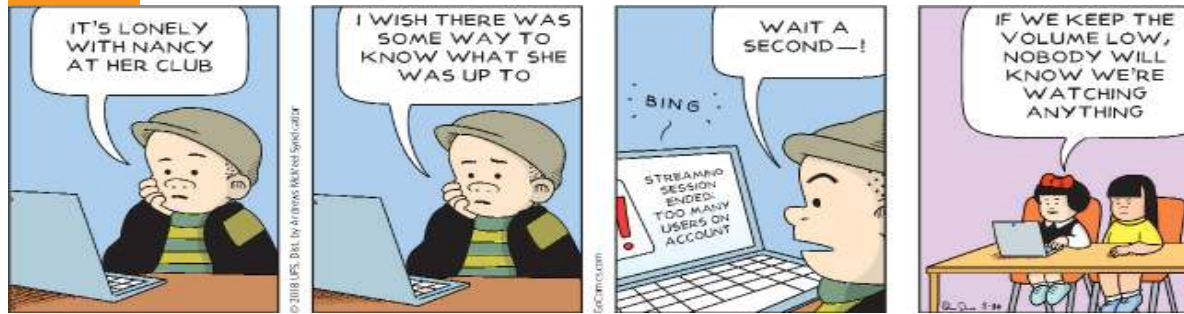
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



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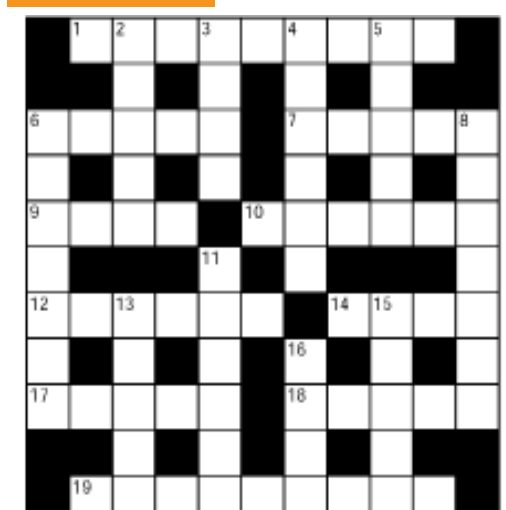
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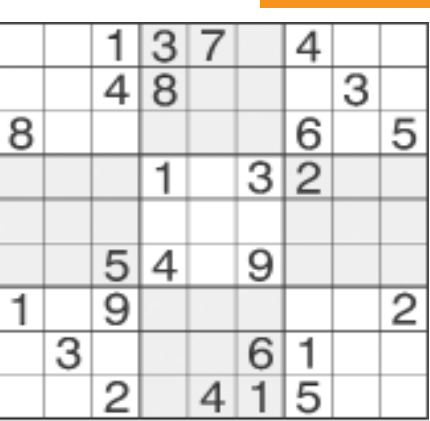
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- People who carve statues
- Use your brain
- Straps held by a jockey
- Not difficult
- Say again
- Put this sachet in a teapot
- This insect flies at night
- The number of sides on an octagon
- A round thing with spokes
- Know by sight
- Strips of fried potato
- Find pleasant
- Changed direction
- Lift up
- Watch plays here
- A soft type of bag for carrying books
- A design pricked into skin
- Have a quarrel
- Follows orders
- A graceful water bird



Vijayawada

When 'choices felt right or wrong' for Patralekhaa

AARTI SREENATH
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In her decade-long journey, Patralekhaa Paul Rao has evolved from a fresh-faced newcomer to a mature actress, shaped by her choices, challenges and resilience. Reflecting on her career, she admits she never saw herself in any other field, despite her father's hope that she would pursue a career as a chartered accountant.

"I started auditioning for ads and just kept going from there," she recalls. That seemingly small step eventually led to her breakout role in *CityLights*—a film that set her on a trajectory as one of India's most promising talents. "Looking back, I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else."

Known for her distinctive, thoughtful approach to roles, Patralekhaa's process has transformed since her early days. She explains, "There's a stark difference between the 24-year-old girl who started out and the woman I am now." Life has changed her perspective on acting, deepening her connection with the characters she portrays. "Acting is so personal because you pull so much from your own experiences, from the highs and lows of life itself." Her latest role in *IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack* presented both a creative and personal challenge—one she was thrilled to take on.

Securing this role, however, required patience and determination. When she learned that Anubhav Sinha was working on the script, she immediately reached out. "I pestered him for six months," she says, recalling her persistence. Although Sinha was initially uncertain, she was relentless in her pursuit. "He finally relented and wrote something for me. Working with directors like him or Hansal Mehta is non-negotiable for me—they're masters of their craft."

Her commitment to *IC 814* meant embracing the intense atmosphere on set, particularly in the claustrophobic setting of an airplane parked amid the mountainous terrain of Jordan. "It felt overwhelming at times, especially with 100 extras, crew members and cameras everywhere," she explains. The realism of the set amplified her immersion in the role. "Once inside, it felt so claustrophobic. Anyone who's been on a plane knows the space is tight and we had so many people crammed in. It definitely got to me."

Despite the emotional toll, she had little time to unwind. Immediately after wrapping up the shoot, she flew to London for her next project. "I didn't realise how drained I was until I got there," she admits. "It took a while to bounce back, but starting on something new helped me shake off the intensity of the last shoot. Still, it was surreal—imagine coming straight from a plane hijack to boarding another plane!"

As for regrets, Patralekhaa is clear she has none. "Every choice felt right or wrong in its moment, but I'm genuinely happy when films I passed on work for the people who made them," she says. And in every role, she finds a piece of herself. "It's a tricky question, but I'd say all my characters are like me in some way. They're not copies, but there's a little of me in all of them and when I finish a project, each character leaves something behind with me too."

This project also reunited her with actor Vijay Varma,



IN AN EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION WITH THE PIONEER, PATRALEKHA PAUL RAO OPENS UP ABOUT HER JOURNEY, REFLECTING ON THE MILESTONES, CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS THAT HAVE SHAPED HER INTO THE ARTIST SHE IS TODAY. WITH UNBRIDLED HONESTY AND CHARACTERISTIC CANDOR, SHE ALSO SHARES INSIGHTS INTO HER CREATIVE PROCESS, HER MOST RECENT ROLE IN *IC 814: THE KANDAHAR HIJACK* AND THE LESSONS SHE'S LEARNED ALONG THE WAY

an old friend and respected peer. "I've known Vijay for a long time. The first time we met was during auditions and I knew even then he was destined for success." Although they don't see each other often, they share a supportive bond. "I cheer for him from afar. Whenever I see a performance of his that moves me, I make it a point to tell him."

Alongside her career achievements, Patralekhaa has found unwavering support in her partner, actor Rajkumar Rao. "He's my biggest cheerleader," she asserts. "When the reviews for *IC 814* started coming in, he was happier than I was. If I need to practice a scene, he's the one taking my audition." However, they rarely rehearse scenes together, as Patralekhaa believes in spontaneity. "We discuss our scenes but don't rehearse them. For me, preparing too much can make a scene feel rehearsed rather than real. I want the magic to happen on set."

As Patralekhaa reflects on her journey, she recognises that each experience, role and relationship has added a new layer to her as an artist. And with this latest project, she's embraced a new level of intensity, one that's bound to make an impact on audiences and deepen her evolving legacy in the industry.

IT TOOK A WHILE TO BOUNCE BACK, BUT STARTING ON SOMETHING NEW HELPED ME SHAKE OFF THE INTENSITY OF THE LAST SHOOT



Uncovering sweet deception of stevia

Stevia-based sweeteners are growing in popularity, especially for those seeking healthier alternatives to sugar. Despite their rise, many misconceptions persist about stevia and its products. Let's debunk five common myths about stevia and set the record straight.

Myth 1: Artificial in nature

Stevia is completely natural, extracted from the leaves of the stevia plant, contrary to the misconception that stevia is an artificial sweetener. This makes it different from synthetic sweeteners like aspartame or sucralose. Stevia products, including those from Sweet10, provide a plant-based sweetening option for those who prefer natural ingredients in their diets.

Myth 2: Has significant side effects

Some people still question the safety of stevia, but this myth has been debunked by extensive research. Stevia is a natural sweetener derived from the Stevia rebaudiana plant and has been approved by health authorities such as the FDA, EFSA and WHO. It's been used safely for centuries in several cultures, making it a trusted alternative to sugar for those who want a healthier option without any risks.

Myth 3: Catered only to diabetics

While stevia is widely known for its benefits in managing blood sugar levels, it's not exclusively for people with diabetes. Stevia is a great choice for anyone looking to reduce their sugar intake, whether for weight

management, overall health, or dietary preferences. It's vegan, keto-friendly, and zero-calorie, which means it can fit into a wide range of dietary plans beyond diabetic management.

Myth 4: Bitter aftertaste

One of the most persistent myths is that stevia leaves a bitter or licorice-like aftertaste. While early versions of stevia sweeteners did have this issue, advancements in processing have significantly improved the taste. Most high-quality stevia products today, like those offered by Sweet10, are formulated to deliver a sweetness that closely mimics sugar, without the bitter-taste. This makes it an enjoyable option for beverages, desserts, and daily cooking.

Myth 5: Can't be incorporated in cooking or baking

Another myth is that stevia can't replace sugar in recipes, especially for baking. However, stevia can be easily incorporated into cooking and baking, offering the same sweetness without the calories. Whether you're whipping up traditional sweets for festivals or everyday desserts, stevia can be used in place of sugar, ensuring your treats are both delicious and healthier.

Stevia-based products are a versatile, safe and natural alternative to sugar, suited for a wide range of dietary needs. From managing blood sugar levels to creating guilt-free desserts, stevia offers a solution to many of the issues associated with traditional sweeteners. It's time to move past the myths and embrace the benefits that stevia provides for a healthier lifestyle.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH FITNESS

Jacqueline Babitha Xavier is a force to be reckoned with. This dynamic fitness enthusiast has been shattering glass ceilings and pushing boundaries with her remarkable journey, inspiring countless individuals to embrace their true potential. In this exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, she shares her fascinating story, revealing the secrets behind her success and the driving forces that propel her forward

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With a heart full of passion and a spirit that refuses to be tamed, Jacqueline Babitha Xavier is a shining example of what it means to live life on your own terms. This remarkable woman from Hyderabad has not only conquered the world of running but has also triumphed over depression and self-doubt, emerging stronger and more radiant with each passing day. As a fitness instructor, marathon runner and powerlifter, she embodies strength, grace and determination. In this uplifting interview, she shares her extraordinary journey of self-discovery, growth and transformation, inspiring us all to embrace our true potential and live life to the fullest.

"I come from a corporate background, but I felt like life was fizzling out. I needed to do something beyond what I was doing," says Hyderabad's Marathon woman, recounting her journey. She took a plunge, quit working at 38 and got into fitness. Post which, she did certification in aerobics, Zumba and personal training. It didn't just stop there. She moved on to marathon coaching and injury management.

Jacqueline's running career took off when she won her first podium at a 21-kilometer run. "If I hadn't won that podium, I wouldn't have been a runner. I would have continued being a fitness trainer," she admits. Her aerobic base, built through years of aerobics training, helped her transition to running naturally. "I didn't have to put in

an effort. I would just do some aerobics and strength training, and then directly go run and win medals."

However, her journey wasn't without its challenges. She faced depression and struggled to understand her body, particularly during perimenopause. "I didn't know what was happening to my body. I had hot flashes, acne and weight gain. But I did a course on understanding menopause, and that's when I realised it was a harmony imbalance."

Through her journey, Babitha has learned the importance of lifting weights, particularly for women. "Lifting is something that a woman has to do to keep herself fit, her bone health, muscle mass, and to keep her sanity in place." She now focuses on powerlifting and has won gold at the national level in her weight category.

Also the founder of Sweat n Burn, her story is an exemplification of the power of understanding one's body and taking control of one's health. "When you understand your body, when you know what is right, when you do a lot of research, when you read journals, you not only help yourself, you help your fellow runners, you help the fellow women, everyone around you."

She recounts her personal story, sharing her struggles during the early stages of menopause. "I was going through depression, feeling very low, had no interest in anything and struggled to sleep," she says. But then something changed. She started running and everything transformed. Running became her salvation, giving her a sense of achievement and purpose. People began to notice her and she started to see herself in a new light. She was no longer just a mother, wife, or daughter; she was an individual achieving something.

Through running, she discovered her identity and broke free from the roles that defined her. She started prioritising her own needs and focusing on self-care. Running became her therapy, her sanctuary, and her passion. Jacqueline's advice to those struggling with depression is to find an activity they enjoy. "If you can't run, try lifting. If you can't lift, try something else. Just move your body and you'll see the difference," she encourages.

Today, she is a source of inspiration for many, including her two daughters. "People often mistake us for sisters when we walk together (she chuckles). Fitness has not only

transformed my body but also my mind. I'm no longer depressed, and I feel alive. You don't have to be a runner or a lifter to be fit. Just find what works for you and embrace it," her family has been a significant source of support for her. "My husband and daughters are all into fitness. We encourage and motivate each other to lead a healthy lifestyle."

In fact, her husband was inspired to start working out after being mistaken for having three daughters. Hahaha! "He started cycling and working out, and now we all do it together as a family," she shares.

Her daughters are also into fitness, with one pursuing a master's degree in sports science and sports psychology. "We make time for ourselves, no matter how busy we are," Jacqueline emphasises. "We believe that taking care of our physical health is essential for our overall well-being."

Initially, she did face challenges while running alone, particularly safety concerns. "I used to carry a water bottle in one hand and a stone in the other," she recalls. "Now, I carry pepper spray and a small Swiss knife in my waist pouch."

Despite these challenges, Xavier has continued to pursue her passion for fitness. "The only challenge I face now is running alone. But I've learned to overcome it by finding support from my family and friends."

She has also faced incidents of harassment while running alone. "Once, a guy flashed me while I was running on a dirt track," she recounts. "I didn't want my daughter to see it, so I quickly turned around and ran back with her."

However, Jacqueline didn't let this incident deter her from pursuing her passion for fitness. Instead, she found support from her family and the fitness community.

Through her experiences, she has learned the importance of finding support and overcoming fear. She emphasises, "Fitness has given me the confidence to face any challenge that comes my way. We need to



teach men to respect women and treat them as equals. It starts at home, and we need to bring up our sons to be progressive and respectful towards women."

She also highlights the need for women to take control of their own safety and well-being. "We need to learn self-defence techniques and be aware of our surroundings," she advises. "We can't rely on others to protect us." That's not all! She challenges societal norms that restrict women's freedom and autonomy. "We need to break free from the shackles of societal expectations and embrace our individuality," she says. "We need to uplift and encourage each other. We need to create a sisterhood of support and solidarity." Through her fitness journey, she has learned to embrace her body and challenge societal beauty standards. "I wear what makes me comfortable and confident," she says. "I don't dress for others; I dress for myself."

For her, fitness is a full package. "You can't just focus on one aspect, like running. You need to incorporate strength training, lifting, and cross-training to repel toxins and build overall fitness."

She further emphasises the importance of varied workouts, including running, strength training and cross-training activities like cycling or swimming. "I like to challenge myself and can't do just one type of workout. I need to mix it up to stay motivated and avoid plateaus."

In terms of nutrition, Jacqueline stresses the importance of a balanced diet that includes carbohydrates, protein, salads and fiber.

"You can't just focus on one food group," she advises. "You need to have a mix of everything to fuel your body."

Her approach to fitness and nutrition is holistic and balanced, emphasising the importance of varied workouts and a balanced diet to achieve overall wellness. "Fitness is a journey, not a destination," she says. "It's about finding what works for you and making it a sustainable part of your lifestyle."



3rd T20I: India eye batting revival against SA at Centurion

PTI ■ CENTURION

Indian batting line-up needs to get its mojo back against a resurgent South Africa to regain the lost ground on rather unfamiliar SuperSport Park conditions when the two teams clash the third T20I here Wednesday. Since 2009, India have played only one T20I at this venue, which they lost by six wickets in 2018 and have only one survivor from that squad in this side -- Hardik Pandya. Along with that unfamiliarity factor, India will also grapple with the ordinary form of their batters, particularly when the pitch here is touted to be similar to the one at Gqeberha -- quick and bouncy. In the second T20I, India batters struggled against South African pacers upfront, getting restricted to 124 for six, and Centurion has similar characteristics. The problem starts from the top -- more precisely with Abhishek Sharma, whose extended lean run with the bat has now snowballed

into a serious concern. He is in desperate need of a good outing here before the management thinks of juggling the combination. Even now, they can think of giving the job of partnering Sanju Samson at the top to Tilak Varma and bring in Ramandeep Singh in the middle to add more muscle to the unit. However, the senior batters like skipper Suryakumar Yadav, Pandya and Rinku Singh too cannot absolve themselves of the blame entirely for India's struggles. Both Suryakumar and Rinku have shown only fleeting images of their prowess here while Pandya made 39 in the second match but he consumed 45 balls for it. In fact, the power-hitter took 28 balls to find his first boundary and, again, could not find the ropes between balls 39 and 45. So, these three batters will have to chip in more to support in the inform Samson or to carry India to a strong total even when the Kerala man has a vapid day.



Similarly, pacers Arshdeep Singh and Avesh Khan had two contrasting games. Arshdeep returned with figures of 1 for 25 at Durban, but in the second game he had stats of 1 for 41. The left-arm pacer's third and fourth overs which went for 28 runs -- including four fours in an over against Tristan Stubbs -- made a deep impact on the low-scoring match. So, they will be eager to change the script here, unless the management looks at other options such as Yash Dayal or Vysakh Vijaykumar. However, the efforts of Varun Chakravarthy, who bagged a maiden fiver in the previous match, and Ravi Bishnoi over the last two matches have been outstanding and the spinners will be looking for an encore in the third match to hand back the advantage to India. The expected bounce and pace on the pitch here will be an encouraging factor as well for the Indian duo. From a batting perspective, South Africa too face a similar issue as

senior pros skipper Aiden Markram, David Miller and Heinrich Klaasen are yet to fire in this series. They required runs from less- pedigreed batters Tristan Stubbs and Gerald Coetzee to get over the line in the second contest, and the Proteas will certainly cherish a heftier contribution from their veterans, especially against Indian spinners. Teams (from): India: Suryakumar Yadav (c), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (WK), Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Hardik Pandya, Axar Patel, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Vijaykumar Vysakh, Avesh Khan, Yash Dayal. South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Ottneil Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Donovan Ferreira, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Patrick Kruger, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Mhlangeni Mpongwana, Nqaba Peter, Ryan Rickelton, Andile Simelane. Lutho Sipamla, Tristan Stubbs.

Perth pitch to have really good pace and bounce: Curator cautions India

PTI ■ PERTH

India will be accorded a tough welcome to Australia as the Optus Stadium pitch for the opening Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has been prepared to offer 'good bounce and pace' true to the tradition of the fiery tracks in Perth. India will enter the Perth Test, beginning from November 22, without playing any practice match as the visitors had cancelled an intra-squad side game that was scheduled to be played behind closed doors from November 15 to 17. Now, India will focus on centre-wicket training at the nearby WACA stadium, where Australia will also polish their skills. "This is Australia, this is Perth... I'm setting ourselves up for really good pace, really good bounce and really good carry," Western Australia Cricket head curator Isaac McDonald told 'ESPNews'. McDonald is trying to prepare a pitch that has similar traits of the one



that he readied for the first Test against Pakistan in December last year. In that match, Pakistan were bundled out for 89 in the second innings as the Aussies celebrated a massive 360-run victory. The pitch too had developed cracks as that match wore on and batters like Marnus Labuschagne copped blows on their hands. Overall, the three Aussie pacers -- Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc -- grabbed 12 of the 20 Pakistan wickets. More recently, Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf

tore through Australian line-up, bowling the hosts out for 140 in the third ODI here. McDonald said he is looking to leave some grass on the pitch to make it a bit spicier. "It's (10 mm) a good starting point. Ten millimetres was pretty comfortable with the conditions that we had (last year) and that held the conditions together nicely for the first few days. Live grass on the pitch is speed. "Both bowling units (Australia and Pakistan) were pretty rapid last year and hoping for much the same this year (for India match)," he added.

Australian opener McSweeney braces for 'unique' Bumrah challenge

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Australia opener Nathan McSweeney, who is set to debut against India in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said he has been preparing for the "unique" challenge of facing star pacer Jasprit Bumrah. McSweeney was drafted into the Australia squad after a slew of impressive performances in the Sheffield Shield tournament and in the recent 'A' series against India. The 25-year-old South Australian will partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the series opener in Perth and during the upcoming five-Test series. "There's probably not (much) I can do to replicate how Bumrah bowls). Obviously, he's got a unique action. He's one of the best bowlers in the world." So, it's going to be hard to mimic that. I'm just looking forward to all of that and I can't wait," McSweeney told SEN. McSweeney, who captained



the Australia A side in the 2-0 series win against India A, said he has been watching the bowling clips of Indian quicks including Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj to be mentally ready for the task. "I'll definitely dive a lot deeper into it when I get to Perth. I've looked at a few clips of what they're bowling

attack stacks up like. I'm just trying to visualise how I'm going to go about it. Facing a new bowler can be a slight challenge to just pick up their action," he said. "I've got a whole week before I head off to Perth, so I can get mentally ready and I guess it starts now in preparation to hopefully start

really well," he added. However, a quiet confidence runs through the young batter ahead of the important series. "In the last month or so I really feel like I'm batting the best I ever have. I think I'm the best I've ever been prepared to take this opportunity, so hopefully I

can do that. "No doubt there's plenty of learning and experiences that I haven't experienced yet and I'm looking forward to learning all about the challenges of Test cricket and challenging my game against the very best," he said. McSweeney will step into the shoes of David Warner, who retired from international cricket after the home Test series against Pakistan in January this year, and the Adelaide man realises the enormity of the job. The right-hander has a plan for it. "Being an opening batter, it's making sure I'm leaving the ball well and making the bowlers are bowling to me. Then being ready and positive to score when they miss is as simple as I want to make it. "If I'm reacting well and doing those things well, hopefully, it equates to me spending time in the middle and chipping away at the scoreboard," he said.

Blind T20 WC: Indian team eyes clearance from MHA, MEA; Sports Ministry clears travel to Pakistan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI/KARACHI

The Sports Ministry has given NOC, with no cost to the government, to a 17-member Indian cricket team to travel to Pakistan to participate in the T20 World Cup for the Blind, and the side now awaits clearance from Home and External Affairs ministries. The fourth edition of the Blind World Cup, in which India are the reigning champions, is scheduled to be played at Lahore and Multan from November 22 to December 3. Upon receiving the clearance from the ministries concerned, the squad is scheduled to travel to Pakistan via the Wagah Border on November 21. The development came in the backdrop of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) informing its Pakistan counterpart that the Men in Blue will not travel to the neighbouring nation for next year's Champions Trophy. The BCCI sent a mail to the International Cricket Council to that



effect, leaving the future of the marquee event in limbo. Meanwhile, Shailender Yadav, General Secretary of the Cricket Association for Blind in India (CABI) said the 17-member Indian squad for the T20 WC was picked after 26 players underwent a 12-day selection trials in Gurugram. "The team has been training in

Gurugram. The players now await an NOC from the Ministry of External Affairs and remain hopeful for a positive response," said Yadav. Apart from India and Pakistan, the T20 World Cup features teams from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, South Africa, Nepal and Sri Lanka. India won the three previous events, defeating

Pakistan twice and Bangladesh once. Tournament as scheduled: PBCC. The Pakistan Blind Cricket Council (PBCC) said the tournament will go ahead on schedule irrespective of India's participation. "Pakistan will be hosting the event on schedule and it makes no difference whether the Indian team comes or not," PBCC chairman Syed Sultan Shah said. Shah said arrangements for hosting the World Cup had been completed by the PBCC. "All the other teams in the event have also sent confirmation that they have no issues playing in Pakistan," he said. Indian team for T20 Blind WC: Ajay Kumar Reddy, Debaraj Behera, Nareshbhai Tumda, Nilesh Yadav, Sanjay Kumar Shah, Praveen Kumar Sharma, Venkateswara Rao, Pankaj Bhue, Lokesh, Rambir Singh, Irfan Diwan, Durga Rao Tompaki, Sunil Ramesh, Sukhram Majhi, Ravi Amiti, Dineshbhai Rathva, Dhingar Gopu.

Mohammad Nabi to retire from ODIs after 2025 Champions Trophy

PTI ■ SHARJAH

Afghanistan all-rounder Mohammad Nabi has announced that he will retire from One-Day Internationals after next year's Champions Trophy in Pakistan. After Afghanistan's 2-1 series win over Bangladesh here on Monday, the 39-year-old said he had been pondering about quitting the format since last year's ODI World Cup. "In my mind, from the last World Cup, I was retired. But then, we qualified for the Champions Trophy, and I felt if I could play that, it would be great," he told the official broadcaster after being adjudged the Player-of-the-Series.



Nabi has featured in 167 ODIs since 2009, scoring 3,600 runs in 147 innings at an average of 27.48 and a strike rate of 86.99, including two centuries and 17 fifties, with a top score of 136. With the ball in hand, he has bagged 172 wickets in 161 innings at an average of 32.47 and an economy of 4.27, including four four-

wicket hauls and a fiver (5/17). Afghanistan qualified for the Champions Trophy, thanks to their sixth-place finish during last year's World Cup. It would also be Afghanistan's first-ever appearance in the eight-team competition scheduled to be held in Pakistan in February next year.

Players believing in our style of play is the key, says Manolo Márquez

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Indian football team head coach Manolo Márquez on Tuesday said it is critical for his players to follow a synchronised approach while representing the country, in order to start getting results in the international arena. The Indian senior men's national team began its training camp ahead of the friendly match against Malaysia on November 18 in Hyderabad. With the Indian Super League going into a break with the start of the November FIFA international window, the Blue Tigers checked into the city on Monday and will have a total of six days of training sessions before the match. "We were supposed to play two games last month but due to external reasons, Lebanon couldn't come. For people, more games is better. But it's difficult to train the day before and after the match. We need to train tactically



as well. "I feel it's necessary to prepare for not just the game against Malaysia but the official matches which will come in March," Márquez said. Márquez had a rough start to his coaching stint with the national team as India were held 0-0 by Mauritius in September and beaten 0-3 by Syria in the Intercontinental Cup, also in Hyderabad. His boys put up an improved showing, especially in the second half, against Vietnam in a 1-1 draw last month in Nam Định. The Spaniard has continued the trend of calling up new players in each FIFA window so far. This time, Hmingthamawia Ralte, Vbin Mohanan, Irfan Yadwad and Thoiba Singh Moirangthem earned their first national team call-ups. The latter was a last-minute arrival after Anirudh Thapa suffered an injury during the match between Mohun Bagan Super Giant and Odisha

FC on Sunday. Since taking charge in July, Márquez's priority has been to utilise the friendly matches and training sessions to find the best group of players for the 2027 AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers, scheduled to start in March 2025. "It's true that we want to check some new players. But obviously it's impossible to change the whole group and call 40 players in March. It's true that we are finding the group. It means that we have maybe 14, 15, 16 players who will be there, but we don't know exactly. And there are a lot of players who can get there," the coach said. "Obviously, it's still four months, and the situation can change with a lot of things unfortunately with injuries and the players' domestic form. But, I repeat again, as a coach you need to find the group which can play the style that we want. "I am fully focussed on the Malaysia match at the moment.

In a way, it's a dangerous game because the players are in the middle of the fight for the ISL and this is just one friendly game in November, and the next camp will be in four months. "But I am very confident in this group and I feel we will have a good performance next Monday," said Márquez. Still awaiting his first win with India, Márquez remains patient. For now, the key is to find the groove with the right bunch and get results where they matter the most. "Obviously everyone wants to win every game. But the feeling we got after the draw with Vietnam was completely different from what we got after drawing with Mauritius or losing to Syria. "In some moments, we played superb. The one key thing is that the players have to believe in our style of play. I want to win every game and even every training session. The Malaysia game is the last friendly window before the official games."

Dil Raju to encourage new talent!

Producer Dil Raju, in order to encourage new talents, has started a new production banner. He speaks to the media, sharing more details about it. "I started this new banner to encourage new talent and content," said the producer. He added that he is setting up a new team to look after everything. "Anyone can approach my team with your content through our team or website. I will listen to the scripts brought by this team once a week," said Dil Raju. The producer said that he is going to launch the website soon. "All the stars and directors close to me are coming for the launch of this website," said Dil Raju. On this occasion, the producer said that two NRI producers are working on two projects collaborating with his new banner. "I want this to be a platform for newcomers to showcase their talent," said Raju. He also said that he is going to involve some of the critics in this scrutiny of scripts. "Many of

the films are reviewed by critics and I wanted them to be part of this script work before it actually goes into production. It helps to come out with good content." The producer said that many filmmakers approached him to release the teaser, first look, trailer, or something for their film promotions. "It's often unclear how many films are coming or going. When these people approach me, I can instantly tell why certain films are being made. I'm aware of the kind of money that is being wasted. This is why I founded DilRaju Dreams—to minimise such losses and create a platform with a purpose," he said.

Dil Raju said that they want to produce four to five films a year under a new banner. "There are no recommendations here. Everyone must submit their work through the website," said Dil Raju.



VARUN CAN REMEMBER THIS FILM FOR 20 YEARS: KARUNA KUMAR

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The Varun Tej starrer *Matka* is all set to hit the screens tomorrow (November 14). Director Karuna Kumar, known for *Palasa*, is the director of the film. Ahead of the release, he talks about the film and the inspiration behind it. "My family and I had attended a family marriage, where we casually discussed many things. Later, my father-in-law told us about this game called *Matka*. I do know about the lottery, but was not really aware of *Matka*," began the director, Karuna Kumar, who back then got very curious about the game. "The discussion prolonged about Vizag and the club culture in older days and how the cabaret dance happened in Vizag at that time. In Vizag, these things happened in One Town, so I got interested in these stories and decided to do some kind of research about the game and also the old culture of Vizag," said Karuna Kumar. That's how he got inspired for the story. He initially wanted to write the story first. "I didn't want to make a film, as I wanted to write a short story with the title *Vadipoyina Poolu*. Later, I thought that this story was good for cinema. So, I have taken the original incidents and then added a complete fictional story to it with my own imagination," said Karuna Kumar.

The director said that there is vast literature in Telugu. After Bengal, he says, it is the Telugu literature, which has a very vast and highest number of stories. He added that people often complain about Telugu cinema compared to Malayalam and Tamil. "There is a misconception that Telugu cinema means a protagonist wears a colourful shirt and dances with four to five girls. But we have enormous literature in our Telugu and there are thousands of stories to tell. Before in any other language, we are the first ones to come out with a social problem film like *Malapilla* by Gudavalli Ramabrahmam," said Karuna Kumar. The director said that because of not using Telugu literature and stories properly, there is a big loss to the Telugu people. "Rajinikanth is a superstar in Tamil and even in Telugu. Same with some other Tamil actors and we also encourage other language films too. But when it comes to Tamil Nadu, our actors' films are not shown on many screens. Chiranjeevi's film is not screened in Tamil Nadu, unlike a Rajinikanth film screened in Telugu," said the director about Telugu.

Talking about this, *Matka*, he said he made it in his own style. "This is a typical commercial entertainer where I narrated the story of Vasudev or Vasu," said the director. "In reality, if you

Director Karuna Kumar talks about his upcoming film *Matka* and how Varun Tej came into this project, the Telugu culture and Vizag city

look at many powerful people from Visakhapatnam, most of them are outside people. They came to Vizag and then became popular. Likewise in my film, Vasudev came from Burma to Vizag and started his journey here," said Karuna Kumar. The director said that the present generation may know about this game, but he showed it in the film, which can be understood. "When there was no mobile, they sent the same number to the entire country in one day. That is the interesting point to me and you can watch the film for this," he said. The director said that he didn't show Ratan Khatri's story in it. "His



life is a big story and Nagaraj Manjule is making a web series on him, which is good and can be told in many hours. The only reference is Ratan Khatri came from Pakistan and Vasu came from Burma; this is the only reference I have taken," said Karuna. Talking about Varun Tej as the lead actor, he said he narrated three stories to the Vyra production house. "In those three, they picked this one and it is suited for Varun Tej. That's how the story went to him and we started the film," he said. "Varun gave a fantastic performance and I am confident that he is going to mention *Matka* film in the coming 20 years," said about Varun Tej. He added that he is a very down-to-earth person and a director's actor.

He has taken nearly 3,600 images for reference. "To get the period look and also the Vizag city in the 50s to 80s, I have taken many images as references. The look is very important and we erected sets for it," said the director.

The director said he made films within the budget. "If you look at my previous films, I made films within the budget and never went overboard after the shooting starts," he said. He added that his next film is supposed to be for Dheeraj Mogilineni! "The story is ready and we also scouted for shooting locations and finalised the lead actor too. But the lead actor is busy with another project and he wants to give a few days to my film, which I didn't like. I wanted to start my next film by January or February," said Karuna Kumar.

Kishan Reddy hails Rakesh Varre's power-packed role in *Jithender Reddy*



Union Minister G Kishan Reddy watched the film *Jithender Reddy* at a multiplex in Hyderabad. He commended actor Rakesh Varre, who portrayed the title role, and director Virinchi Varma for creating a meaningful film. "Jithender Reddy and I worked together in the *BJP Yuva Morcha*," Kishan Reddy said, recalling memories with his late friend. "He was an active leader of RSS and ABVP. He organised the meeting of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Warangal, arranging 50 buses from the Jagtial area to make the event a success."

The Union Minister went on to highlight Jithender Reddy's dedication to helping the poor

and uniting people. "Naxalites killed Jithender Reddy, firing 72 bullets into his body. His efforts showed that violence cannot achieve what peaceful means can," said Reddy. "This movie emphasises that it is a mistake to believe that guns and violence can achieve meaningful goals; it's a mindset that must change."

Praising the film, Kishan Reddy noted, "Rakesh Varre truly embodied the role of Jithender Reddy with remarkable acting. I also appreciate director Virinchi Varma for his excellent work in making this film." *Jithender Reddy*, based on true events in Jagtial, Telangana, was released on November 8.

Why did Akkineni family choose Annapurna Studios for Chay's wedding?

Akkineni Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala's wedding will take place on December 4 at Annapurna Studios. Initially, the Akkineni family planned a destination wedding, but they ultimately chose their family-owned studio as the venue! Wedding invitations have already been distributed to family and friends, with Nagarjuna and Supriya overseeing all arrangements at Annapurna Studios. The idea to hold the wedding there came from Nagarjuna, who felt that Annapurna Studios was the ideal setting, especially in this landmark year, celebrating Akkineni Nageswara Rao's 100th birthday. The family believes that holding the wedding at Annapurna Studios, under the blessing of ANR's statue unveiled there last year, adds emotional significance. According to a source, Naga Chaitanya feels beginning his marital journey in this iconic setting, with his grandfather's blessings, is deeply meaningful.



'Amid wedding preparations, Sobhita continues filming'

In the midst of this personal milestone, Sobhita remains committed to her professional endeavours. A source close to the actress reveals, "Sobhita Dhulipala is currently immersed in filming for her next project, gracefully balancing her work with wedding preparations alongside Naga Chaitanya." Despite the excitement surrounding her wedding, her dedication to her work remains unwavering.



Rana Daggubati, Sundeep Kishan backs up Ashok Galla

Ashok Galla is all set to release his second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, directed by Arjun Jandhyala, hitting screens on November 22. The film is produced by Somineni Balakrishna. On Tuesday, the makers held a function to release the film's trailer, attended by special guests Rana Daggubati and Sundeep Kishan, who showed their support for Ashok Galla.

An interesting aspect of the film is that Prashanth Varma, the director of *Hanuman*, provided the story. Ashok Galla undergoes a

notable transformation for his role, with his commanding screen presence standing out. Manasa Varanasi stars as the female lead. After watching the trailer, Rana Daggubati praised Prashanth Varma, saying, "He is the master storyteller of the present generation. He is an amazing writer and director and I am happy that he is telling mythology stories to today's generation. I thought this social movie, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, was also inspired by Krishna and Kamsa." Rana added that he attend-

ed the function to support Ashok. He also spoke about the female lead, Manasa, noting, "I am happy to see a Telugu girl as the female lead in our film."

Actor Sundeep Kishan also expressed support for Ashok and wished him success. "I liked director Arjun's first film and I saw the trailer for this one. You can see that everyone worked very hard for this film. I hope it will be a great success for everyone," said Sundeep Kishan. Ashok's father, former MP Jayadev Galla, also attended the event.

Color Photo director Sandeep Raj engaged to actress Chandini Rao

Director Sandeep Raj, known for his National Award-winning film *Color Photo*, announced his engagement to actress Chandini Rao on Monday. The couple, who have been in the spotlight for their relationship, shared their engagement news with fans. "Presenting you my official Ring Master," wrote Sandeep on social media, along with photos of the engagement.

Chandini Rao has appeared in several Telugu films and web series, including *Panasthali* and *Pelli Gola*. Rumours of their relationship had circulated after Chandini posted pictures with Sandeep, but the engagement has now confirmed their commitment. The couple plans to announce a wedding date soon. Sandeep is currently directing a new film, *Mowgli*, featuring Roshan Kanakala, son of popular anchor Suma Kanakala.

NBK109 TO UNLEASH BEAST, HINTS NEW POSTER

God of Masses Nandamuri Balakrishna has been on a blockbuster success streak in recent years with his stunning action entertainers. Now, he has joined hands with blockbuster director Bobby Kolli, who is known for his massy presentation and scintillating action entertainers.

Ever since the announcement of the film, working title *NBK109*, the movie has been generating huge buzz across different platforms. The anticipation regarding the powerful title glimpse has been sky high among the fans and movie lovers. Already, the two big action glimpses released featuring NBK have gone viral and everyone praised the director for presenting Balakrishna in a never-before-seen stylish and massy avatar. The makers have announced the

eagerly awaited title teaser release date with a mass rugged poster of NBK.

We see him holding a blood-spilled axe and many weapons ready for action, hinting at a thick-bearded look. The excitement regarding the title teaser has grown multi-fold with the poster. On the auspicious occasion of Karthika Poonima, the *NBK109* title teaser is set to release on November 15th. *Animal* fame Bobby Deol is playing a prominent role in the film. Suryadevara Naga Vamsi, Sai Soujanya of Sithara Entertainments and Fortune Four Cinemas are producing the film on a massive scale, while Srikanth Studios is presenting it. The movie shoot is currently in the last leg and it is set to release for Sankranti 2025 worldwide.

