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EAM: Situation in West Asia matter of deep concern



DJ LYAN'S 'TAPORI-C' BLEND OF HIP-HOP WITH KERALA'S FOLK



Making waves across T'wood with Love YOUR FATHER

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
The Congress government is operating a '15% commission governance' and failing to fulfill its promises to the people of Telangana. Every contract and project under the Congress-led government involved commissions, leading to the exploitation and looting of Telangana's resources. Not a single promise of the six guarantees given by the Congress has been fulfilled.

-Bandi Sanjay, MoS

P4

DON'T MISS...

Govt to sign pact with 'Aadyam'

The Andhra Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, has launched plans to provide marketing support and ensure year-round employment for handloom weavers. The State government has decided to enter into an agreement with 'Aadyam Hand-Woven', a company owned by the Aditya Birla Group, to promote the State's handloom products. State Handloom and Textiles Minister S Savitha announced that the partnership will help in marketing famous handloom products...

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Corrupt deeds will not be tolerated: Collector

West Godavari district Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has made it clear that corrupt deeds will not be tolerated and warned of taking stringent action against those who involve corrupt practices. Collector Nagarani made a surprise inspection to the Tahsil office at Palakoderu mandal on Wednesday. She made the surprise inspection to the Tahsil office in the wake of allegations and complaints received against the employees. She interacted with all the employees. The Collector thoroughly examined...

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Mahayuti a govt of thieves, says Kharge

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday termed the BJP-led Mahayuti as a government of thieves and called for its defeat at the hustings on November 20. Campaigning in Latur, Kharge accused the BJP and its ideological mentor, the RSS, of having no role in the freedom struggle and the country's unity. In a scathing attack, Kharge criticised the ruling party over the slogans—"Batenge to Katenge" and "Ek Hai to Safe Hai", describing them as divisive. He targeted PM Narendra...

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Gambhir is prickly character: Ponting

Responding to Gautam Gambhir's jibe at him, former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Wednesday said the India head coach was a "prickly character" and insisted that his comments on Virat Kohli should not be construed as a dig on the star batter, who himself would be worried about his prolonged lean patch. Ponting, in an interview to ICC, had said that Kohli's poor form would be a concern and any other international player would have struggle to keep his spot in the Test side with just two...

-SPORTS

New irrigation projects needed, says CM Naidu

Govt's water policy, Godavari-Krishna-Penna river linkage discussed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu has stressed the need for the construction of new irrigation projects in the State to ensure that irrigation water reaches every acre of agricultural land. The CM suggested that water currently being wasted into the sea could be utilised through river linkage projects to meet the irrigation needs of farmers.

Speaking during a review meeting, the CM highlighted that the previous Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government had successfully completed the Godavari-Krishna river linkage project through the Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme, which had benefited lakhs of acres in the State. He said that he is now focused on continuing this effort by advancing the river linking process, with a particular emphasis on linking the Godavari, Krishna and Penna rivers.

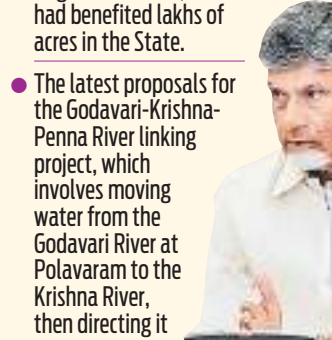
Naidu revealed that the state government had previously prepared proposals to transfer Godavari water to Rayalaseema, a project which he

- The previous Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government had successfully completed the Godavari-Krishna river linkage project through the Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme, which had benefited lakhs of acres in the State.
- The latest proposals for the Godavari-Krishna-Penna River linking project, which involves moving water from the Godavari River at Polavaram to the Krishna River, then directing it

to various reservoirs, including Bollapalli and Banakacherla.

- A second proposal discussed involves diverting water from Polavaram to the Krishna River, and then further to the Bollapalli reservoir, with additional plans to connect to the Somasila project.

- In addition to the river linking projects, the CM was briefed on the status of the Polavaram project's rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R)



plans to take forward. In line with this, irrigation officials presented the latest proposals for the Godavari-Krishna-Penna River linking project, which involves moving water from the Godavari River at Polavaram to the Krishna River, then directing it to various reservoirs, including

Bollapalli and Banakacherla. A second proposal discussed involves diverting water from Polavaram to the Krishna River, and then further to the Bollapalli reservoir, with additional plans to connect to the Somasila project. Officials also deliberated on whether to expand

the existing Polavaram right canal to increase its capacity to carry more water or to dig a parallel canal. Preliminary assessments were made regarding the cost and expected outcomes of each proposal, with the CM suggesting that increasing the capacity of the Polavaram canal should be prioritised to ensure quicker results.

Despite the financial challenges involved, the CM reiterated that the project is essential for the future of the State's agriculture and the well-being of its farmers. He stressed that these irrigation initiatives would be crucial in addressing water scarcity issues and improving agricultural productivity.

In addition to the river linking projects, the CM was briefed on the status of the Polavaram project's rehabilitation and resettlement (R&R) works. Officials informed the CM that construction of 18,925 houses for rehabilitation is still pending. The contractors involved in the rehabilitation project had halted work in 2022, citing non-payment of bills amounting to Rs 155 crore.

Continued on Page 2



No more bulldozer justice: SC

Lays down pan-India guidelines on demolitions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The rule of law is an umbrella concept to protect citizens against the power of the State and it is necessary for democracy and good governance, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday.

Laying down pan-India guidelines on demolition of properties, the apex court said the rule of law ensures that actions of the government and its authorities are governed by established legal principles, rather than arbitrary discretion.

"Ensuring the preservation of the principle of rule of law and the protection of the civil rights and liberties of citizens is essential for protecting constitutional democracy," a bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan said in its 95-page verdict.

Continued on Page 2

'SC parked bulldozer in garage forever'

With the Supreme Court applying brakes on bulldozer action, opposition leaders on Wednesday hailed the judgement and took a swipe at the BJP, saying the apex court has "parked the bulldozer in the garage forever". Equating 'bulldozer justice' with a lawless state of affairs where might is right, the apex court laid down pan-India guidelines and said no property should be demolished without a prior show cause notice and the affected must be given 15 days to respond.

Continued on Page 2

Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Project back on track: Min

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The long-awaited Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Project is poised for a fresh start, with the Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) submitted to the Central Government. Municipal Administration and Urban Development Minister Ponguru Narayana confirmed this development during the Assembly's Question Time on Wednesday. "The detailed project report (DPR) for the Visakhapatnam Metro, covering four corridors at an estimated cost of Rs. 14,300 crore, has been finalised," Narayana stated. He acknowledged the project's past delays but expressed optimism about its future.

In accordance with the 13th Schedule, Item 12 of the Partition Act, feasibility reports for metro projects in Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam were mandated. The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) was tasked with preparing the DPR back in 2014, which proposed a medium metro network spanning 42.5 km across three corridors and was submitted to the Andhra Pradesh Government in 2015. However, despite interest from several companies that submitted bids for the project in 2019, progress stalled. "As of now, the responsibility for the

Visakhapatnam Metro DPR has been handed over to the Visakhapatnam Metro Transport Corporation (VMTTC). They have outlined an ambitious plan for a total metro network of 76.9 km," Narayana elaborated.

"We are actively seeking central government funding for the project, similar to the Kolkata Metro model," he said. He also highlighted the need to address traffic congestion at Car Shed, Endada, Hanumanthuwaka, Maddilapalem, Wipro Junction, and others, proposing two-level metro stations at strategic locations.

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had previously made significant moves to secure funding, penning letters to the Prime Minister proposing a metro network of 46.23 km for the initial phase. This first phase includes three key corridors: from the Steel Plant to Kommadi Junction (34.4 km), Gurdwara to Old Post Office (5.07 km), and Thatchitlapalem to China Walther (6.75 km), collectively estimated at Rs. 11,498 crore. In addition, plans for a second phase include a 30.67 km route with 12 stations stretching from Kommadi Junction to Bhogapuram Airport. With the CMP now submitted, the Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Project is expected to gain momentum.



Raghurama Krishna Raju files nomination for Dy Speaker

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Nominations for the position of Deputy Speaker of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly were filed on Wednesday, with the name of legislative member K Raghurama Krishna Raju being proposed.

Continued on Page 2

1.5L teacher posts will be filled: Lokesh

Out of pending 4,534 posts from 1998 DSC, 3,939 positions filled

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Education, IT and Electronics, Nara Lokesh vowed to fill 1.5 lakh teacher posts in the State. Nara Lokesh has assured that the Telugu Desam government will fill all pending teacher vacancies in the State and said that the government is committed to providing employment opportunities to the youth.

Regarding the pending 4,534 posts from the 1998 DSC, 3,939 positions have already been filled, leaving 595 posts still to be filled. However, some members have pointed out that there are more vacancies, and the Minister assured them that the issue would be reviewed and resolved fairly. In response to a question asked by



BJP MLA Vishnu Kumar Raju regarding the posts for 1998 DSC qualified candidates on the second day of AP Legislative Assembly sessions on Wednesday, Minister Lokesh clarified

that candidates appointed under the NTS (Non-Teaching Staff) category will not be entitled to retirement benefits, as per the applicable rules.

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Crop insurance scheme for mango crops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MANGO FARMERS SUFFER SIGNIFICANT LOSSES EACH YEAR: MINISTER

The Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Marketing, Dairy Development, and Fisheries, K. Atchannaidu, announced that his government will implement a crop insurance scheme for mango crops starting in the fiscal

year 2024-25. He noted that this scheme was not initiated during the previous YSRCP government. He expressed concern that due to the lack of crop insurance, mango farmers suffer significant losses each year. Acting on a request from State Housing and Information & Public Relations

Minister Kolu Parthasarathy, the State government decided to implement the scheme immediately.

During the Question Hour in the Legislative Council, YSRCP members Kavuru Srinivas, Y Sivarami Reddy, and Dr P Ravindra Babu asked a question about the free crop insurance premium payments for farmers in 2022-23. In response, Minister Atchannaidu stated that the previous State government failed to pay pre-

miums to insurance companies. He further noted that the former YSRCP government left an unpaid amount of Rs. 644.56 crore for the Free Insurance Scheme (PMFBY) for the Rabi season of 2022-23. He pointed out that during the five years of the previous government, crop insurance was not available for Rabi crops, which led to significant losses for many farmers who had not taken loans.

Continued on Page 2

55-90% voter turnout in Assembly bypolls

PNS ■ JAIPUR/WAYANAD

A turnout ranging from 55 to 90 per cent was recorded in the bypolls to 31 assembly seats in 10 states while in the Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency, the polling percentage was around 65 on Wednesday with voting in West Bengal marred by sporadic incidents of violence in which a TMC worker was killed.

Voting was conducted in seven seats in Rajasthan, six in West Bengal, five in Assam, four seats in Bihar, three in Karnataka, two seats in Madhya Pradesh, and one seat each in Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Kerala and Meghalaya besides Wayanad. Votes will be counted on November 23.

The final turnout figures were yet to come in from several constituencies.

Most of these seats fell vacant after

LS constituency Wayanad records 65% polling



Most of these seats fell vacant after the sitting MLAs contested the Lok Sabha elections and won while in some constituencies, the bypolls are being held due to death of the representatives

the sitting MLAs contested the Lok Sabha elections and won while in some constituencies, the bypolls are being held due to death of the representatives.

The Wayanad seat was vacated by Rahul Gandhi, who also won from the Rae Bareilly parliamentary constituency which he kept.

In Meghalaya, a high turnout of 90.84 per cent was recorded in the lone Ganbegre seat in West Garo Hills district, chief electoral officer BDR Tiwari said.

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma's wife Mehtab Chandee Sangma (NPP), Jingjang M Marak (Congress), Sadhiarani M Sangma (Trinamool Congress), Bernard N Marak (BJP) and two independent

candidates - Sengkrabir Marak and Jerry A Sangma are contesting from the seat.

Former TMC ward president Ashok Shaw was killed in the shootout-cum-crude bomb attack in Bhatpara in North 24 Parganas in West Bengal, where the voter turnout was last reported to be 69.29 per cent.

The killing of Shaw took place adjacent to the Nahati assembly constituency where bypoll was held.

Three attackers allegedly shot him and lobbed crude bombs around 9 am in full public view while he was having tea at a roadside shop.

Polling was also held in Taldangra, Haroa, Medinipur, Sitai and Madarihat seats.

In Madarihat, BJP candidate Rahul Lohar's car was reportedly vandalised.

Jagan to lead social media protest, calls bluff of Govt on budget

To take up the issue of promises made under Super Six and the meagre or lack of budget allocations

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Calling the bluff of TDP-led coalition government vis a vis the poll promises and lack of budget allocations, YSRCP supreme and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said that he will lead the team by taking to social media to highlight the cheating and slammed the State for gagging the voices that are questioning.

Speaking to media at the party office here on Wednesday, he said coalition partners raised a hue and cry that Jagan government has been taking heavy loans and gave varying figures ranging from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 24 lakh, but in their own bud-

get document they revealed that the actual figure is Rs 6.46 lakh crore. "Is this not cheating," he asked.

He said that they will take up the issue of promises made under Super Six and the meagre or lack of budget allocations and question why a cheating case should not be registered.

They promised to give Rs 3,000 unemployment dole, which would run into Rs 7,200 crore, but it did not find a mention in the budget. The Rs 13,000 crore required for the Talliki Vandanam at Rs 15,000 per child could not be traced in the budget. While Rs 11,000 crore is required for farmers, only Rs 1,000 crore could be seen.

The Rs 18,000 under Adabiddaku Vandanam which would total to 37,313 crore has no mention in the budget.

9.93L freehold lands registered during YSRCP regime: Minister

3 lakh assigned lands were registered unlawfully

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the Question Hour in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, Minister for Revenue, Stamps, and Registrations, Anagani Satya Prasad, announced that the TDP-led NDA government will take strict action against YSRCP leaders and officials implicated in unlawful land registrations of freehold lands under the previous government.

He said a preliminary inquiry revealed that around 9.93 lakh assigned lands were regularised, of which over three lakh acres were deemed unlawfully registered. Satya Prasad affirmed that the State government will retain the previous Act on assigned lands but will implement modifications.

TDP MLCs Bhumireddy Rama Gopal Reddy, B Tirumala Naidu, and Kancharla Srikanth questioned the Minister regarding the extent of land regularisation under the assigned lands



scheme from 2019 to 2024 and the findings of the recent re-verification.

Minister Satya Prasad responded that the ongoing re-verification had identified approximately 9.93 lakh registered lands, including three lakh acres registered unlawfully. He further alleged that prior to enacting the law, certain YSRCP leaders had acquired assigned and non-assigned

lands from low-income individuals and subsequently regularised them.

Opposition Leader Botsa Satyanarayana enquired whether the government intended to continue the Act. He expressed support for action against unlawful registrations but sought clarity on policy continuity. Minister Satya Prasad confirmed that the Act introduced by the pre-

vious government would continue with some modifications.

In response to another question, Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food, and Civil Supplies, Nadendla Manohar, reported intensified raids on PDS rice and other godowns. He mentioned that fortified rice kernels were found at Kakinada port, leading to the booking of 13 cases under Section 6A of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, and the seizure of 51,427.110 metric tonnes of rice stocks.

Manohar also highlighted cases of stock discrepancies with nine MDU operators involved in illegally diverting PDS rice. However, he clarified that there was no information regarding large quantities of PDS rice being exported under former public representatives. Additional responses were provided by Ministers BC Janardhan Reddy, Kollu Ravindra, and others on various issues raised during the session.

Chandrababu Govt introduces 3 Bills

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu has introduced three important Bills aimed at strengthening local governance and addressing the needs of government employees.

The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Bill - 2024 and the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Bill - 2024 were presented by Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development Ponguru Narayana, while the Andhra Pradesh Government Employees Bill - 2024 was introduced by Minister for Finance Payyavula Keshav.

Minister Narayana said that the Act may be called the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws (Amendment) Act, 2024 and it shall come into force on such date, as the government may, by notification in the Andhra Pradesh Gazette, appoint. The Minister explained in order to control the increasing population trend during the 1960s, the government of India and States have introduced Family Planning Schemes to promote small families normal. He recalled that the AP Government had introduced new provisions related to persons having more than two children to be disqualified for elections or for continuing as members

Aims at strengthening local governance and addressing the needs of government employees

through Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws (Second Amendment) Act, 1994.

Ponguru Narayana stated that the total fertility rate (TFR) in Andhra Pradesh has declined from 2.6 in 2001 to around 1.5 in recent years, which is below the replacement level of 2.1. He claimed that the declining fertility rates, population stabilisation, and changing socio-economic conditions make the provisions under Section 21(B) in the Municipal Corporations Act, 1955, and Section 13-B in the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965 outdated and counterproductive. The Minister said that the government decided to amend the Municipal Laws i.e. Municipal Corporations Act, 1955 and Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965 to omit the provisions related to the persons having more than two children to be disqualified for election or for continuing as member.

Minister Narayana stated that the second Bill is further to amend the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 and this Act may be called the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj

(Amendment) Act, 2024. He further stated that the "Two Children norm" in sub-section (3) of section 19, which disqualifies individuals with more than two children from contesting local body elections was introduced into the Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act while framing the Act in 1994 (Act No. 13 of 1994). The Minister said, "After 30 years of implementation of the Two Children norm (in the elections held to the three tiers of Panchayat Raj Institutions namely Gram Panchayats, Praja Parishad and Zilla Praja Parishads), the government reviewed the population policy and amending the Act enabling people with more than two children to contest elections.

Minister for Finance, Planning, Legislative Affairs and Commercial Taxes, Payyavula Keshav said that the Bill is to amend the Andhra Pradesh Public Employment (Regulation of Age of Superannuation) Act, 1984 and this Act may be called the Andhra Pradesh Public Employment (Regulation of Age of Superannuation) (Amendment) Act, 2024. He

stated that the Judicial Officers have also submitted representations requesting the High Court to extend the benefit of enhanced age of superannuation to the Judicial Officers working in the State of Andhra Pradesh. The FM said that with the consent of the AP High Court, it has been decided to amend Section 3 (1A) of the Andhra Pradesh Public Employment (Regulation of Age of Superannuation) Act, 1984 to enhance the age of superannuation of the Judicial Officers from the age of 60 years to 61 years effect from 01.11.2024.

FM Keshav stated, "The total number of judicial officers currently serving in Andhra Pradesh is 552. The number of officers who will retire in the current and next financial years (from November 2024 to March 2026) is 4 and 9, respectively. These 13 judicial officers will be getting the immediate benefit of enhancing the age of superannuation from 60 to 61 years. The additional financial implication due to this proposal is Rs.5.70 crore, till March 2026, Payyavula Keshav said.

HM warns against obscene social media posts, flays YSRCP leaders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home and Disaster Management Minister Vangalapati Anitha issued a stern warning on Wednesday against posting obscene content on social media, particularly targeting women. Speaking to the media at the Assembly, she stated that the government will not tolerate such behaviour and will continue to arrest those responsible for posting defamatory material. Anitha also criticised YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders for seeking the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) whenever arrests are made in such cases.

Anitha questioned the logic behind filing NHRC complaints when individuals who posted derogatory remarks about YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's family were arrested. She pointed out that the arrest of those who insulted Jagan's mother and sister on social media was justified.

Crop insurance...

Continued from Page 1

Atchannaidu reassured that his government is committed to implementing the insurance scheme for the Rabi season as well. He mentioned that the State government will allocate Rs. 1,344.64 crore for the crop insurance scheme, with Rs. 928.80 crore designated for Kharif 2023 and Rs. 415.84 crore for Rabi 2023-24. Despite delays in premium payments, the insurance companies agreed to implement the scheme at the request of the State government.

Looking ahead, the Minister stated that from next year, the State government will implement the crop insurance scheme in partnership with both the State and Central governments, alongside contributions from farmers.

ASP Vijaya Paul questioned

Move pertains to arrest of Raghurama Krishnam Raju

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) R Vijaya Paul, who was one of the accused in the controversial case involving the arrest of Raghurama Krishnam Raju in May 2021, has been questioned by the Ongole police.

This marks the second time that Vijaya Paul has

been interrogated in connection with the case, following a directive from the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The court had directed that further inquiries be made into the role of police officials involved in the case. Although Paul had already been questioned previously, the High Court's instructions required a more thorough probe into his involvement.

Following his interrogation, Vijaya Paul's legal team submitted a bail petition to the Supreme Court, seeking

relief from the charges. The bail plea is currently under consideration by the apex court, and it remains to be seen whether the court will grant him temporary relief while the investigation continues.

R Ramakrishnam Raju, a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and a key political figure, was arrested in May 2021 under charges of sedition and other serious offenses. His arrest attracted significant media attention and raised questions about the role of law enforcement officials in

political cases. The incident took place amidst growing tensions in the State's political landscape, particularly in relation to the ruling party's actions against Opposition leaders.

Vijaya Paul, who was then serving as the ASP, was accused of being involved in the irregularities related to Raju's arrest. Specifically, the allegations against Paul include the improper handling of the arrest process, misuse of police authority, and possible violation of legal procedures during the detention of the accused.

YRCPC stages walkout from Legislative Council

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the 46th session of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, chaired by Koyye Moshen Raju on Wednesday, YSRCP, the main Opposition, staged a walkout in protest during the Question Hour. The protest stemmed from remarks by Health Minister Y Satya Kumar Yadav, which the Opposition found dismissive and offensive.

The discussion began when YSRCP members Dr PVV Suryanarayana Raju, Varudu Kalyani, and Dr M Arun Kumar questioned the Minister about recent diarrhoea-related deaths in villages and hostels across the State. Leader of the Opposition (LOP) Botsa Satyanarayana contested the Minister's statement, alleging government negligence in managing drinking water and sanitation over the past four months. He

Health Minister states in the council that there were no diarrhoea deaths in State; Opposition Leader demands apology

noted discrepancies in the death toll figures given by different officials, including Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, with counts ranging from eight to 10 cases. Botsa pointed out that the diarrhoea deaths occurred soon after the formation of the NDA government, attributing them to oversight in public health services.

MLC Varudu Kalyani highlighted that Vizianagaram district, which had previously seen no diarrhoea deaths for years, reported 12 deaths after water contamination issues arose in pipelines. She and other members demanded ex-gratia payments for the families of the deceased and voiced concerns about the government's apparent

lack of response.

Minister Yadav asserted that there were no such deaths, emphasising that the State government had taken all necessary precautions and coordinated with other departments to control diarrhoea outbreaks. He also claimed that, historically, there was no ex-gratia payments were provided to affected families and challenged the Opposition to present specific cases if they believed otherwise.

In response to the Opposition's concerns, Minister Yadav commented, "It is charming to see the members' distress over diarrhoea deaths in Gorla Mandal, Vizianagaram," accompanied by a smile that many interpreted as dismissive.

Begin preparations for 101st Gunadala Mary festival: Bishop

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Catholic Diocese Bishop T Joseph Rajarao has directed the festival committees to begin preparations for the 101st Gunadala Mary Matha Festival, which will be held from February 9 to 11, 2025. A review meeting was held at the Gunadala Shrine's conference hall on Wednesday to finalise plans for the upcoming three-day event.

The Bishop lauded the success of 100th anniversary celebrations held in February 2024 and stressed the importance of organising the 101st festival with similar grandeur. He noted that the festival would involve spiritual preparations and make devotees ready for the event, with arrangements taking into account the expected large crowd.

Monsignor Fr Muvvala Prasad highlighted that from



January 31 to February 8, nine days of Novena prayers will be held at Gunadala Hill, with wide participation from Christian families in the Vijayawada region.

Fr Yellatti William Jayaraju, Rector Gunadala Shrine, mentioned that the Gunadala Shrine is one of the largest Catholic pilgrimage sites in India, and devotees would offer prayers to the divine lady during the festival.

Committee members, including Fr Thota Sunil, Fr V Jojibabu, Fr P Thomas, Fr M Chinnappa, Fr D Vijaya Kumar, and others, were present at the meeting.

The 2025 festival is expected to attract lakhs of pilgrims from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and neighbouring States, and the organising committees have been urged to make necessary arrangements to accommodate the crowds.

New irrigation...

Continued from Page 1

The CM advised that a decision be made in accordance with the rules, after discussions regarding the issue.

Chandrababu stressed that land acquisition and rehabilitation works should be expedited alongside the construction of the Polavaram project. He sanctioned an immediate requirement of Rs 2,600 crore for these efforts and assured that he would soon issue orders for their release.

The review meeting also addressed the construction of the Polavaram diaphragm wall and the ECRF dam, with officials updating the CM on the decisions taken during a recent workshop. The Chief Minister mentioned that once a clear schedule for the remaining works at Polavaram is finalised, he would visit the project site and announce the timeline for the completion of the project.

Finally, the CM noted that the State government is in the final stages of preparing a new water policy, which is expected to be unveiled soon.

CAG voices concern over State's financial position

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has raised concerns over the financial health of Andhra Pradesh during the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) regime, highlighting a heavy reliance on loans and grants to meet the State's fiscal needs.

According to the CAG's findings for the fiscal year 2023-24, nearly 52 paisa of every rupee collected by the State government came from tax revenues, with a significant portion 30 paisa derived from loans. Additionally, 14 paisa came from grants-in-aid,

while three paisa was generated through non-tax sources, including loan recoveries.

In terms of expenditure, the report reveals that the previous government allocated 15 paisa per rupee towards salaries, 13 paisa for Direct Benefit Transfers (DBTs), and 12 paisa for servicing interest payments. A mere nine paisa per rupee was spent on local bodies and infrastructure development, while capital expenditure also stood at just nine paisa. The State's own tax revenue for 2023-24 is estimated to be Rs 922 crore, but the report underscores a worrying financial shortfall.

AP Police summon Ram Gopal Varma for questioning

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh police, on Wednesday, summoned film director Ram Gopal Varma for questioning in connection with posting morphed photographs of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on social media.

A Prakasam district police team visited Varma's Jubilee Hills residence in Hyderabad today and served the notice personally to the director around 10 am to appear before the investigation officer at Maddipadu police station on November 19. "We served the notices to (Varma) to appear before the investigation officer," Prakasam District Superintendent of Police AR Damodar said.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi:	Nov 13 01:01 PM to Nov 14 09:43 AM
Chaturdashi:	Nov 14 09:43 AM to Nov 15 06:19 AM
	Nov 16 02:58 AM
Nakshatram:	
Purva Ashadha:	Nov 06 11:00 AM to Nov 07 11:47 AM
Uttara Ashadha:	Nov 07 11:47 AM to Nov 08 12:03 PM
Rahukalam:	1:24 PM to 2:48 PM
Yamagandam:	6:24 AM to 7:48 AM
Varjyam:	09:05 AM to 10:31 AM
Gulika:	9:12 AM to 10:36 AM
Amritakalam:	06:08 PM to 07:33 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:38 AM to 12:22 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Scattered Showers
Temp: 32°C
Humidity: 74%
Sunrise: 6:11 AM
Sunset: 5:33 PM
Updated: November 13, 2024 5:00 PM

Raghurama Krishna Raju files...

Continued from Page 1

The nomination, filed on behalf of the NDA coalition, was supported by leaders from three parties within the alliance. The nomination papers were handed over to Assembly Secretary General Prasanna Kumar Suryadevara by ministers leading the NDA coalition parties.

In accordance with the decision of the NDA coalition, Raghurama Krishna Raju's name was proposed for the Deputy Speaker position, with three separate nominations filed from each of the three constituent parties of the NDA. The nominations were signed by leaders from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Jana Sena Party, and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). On behalf of the TDP, the Minister for Human Resources Development, Nara Lokesh, signed the nomination. For the Jana Sena Party, Deputy Chief Minister Konidela Pawan Kalyan signed, while for the BJP, Vishnu Kumar Raju, the legislator from Pennemetsa, signed the papers. The nominations were filed by 4.30 PM as the deadline for nomination ends by 5 PM. With the deadline passing and no other nominations being filed, it is now expected that Raghurama Krishna Raju will be declared elected unopposed to the Deputy Speaker position by 12 noon on Thursday.

Nara Lokesh, Minister for Human Resources Development; Payyavula Keshav, Minister for Finance; K Atchannaidu, Minister for Agriculture; N Manohar, Minister for Consumer Affairs; Satyakumar Yadav, Minister for Health, and TDP State president Palla Srinivasa Rao, among others, were present on the occasion.

1.5L teacher posts...

Continued from Page 1

The retirement age for these candidates is 60 years. He added that the matter raised by members would be discussed with the Chief Minister and a decision would be made.

Minister Lokesh further stated that the TDP government had always treated education as a responsibility. During previous TDP regimes, 11 DSC exams were conducted, and 1.5 lakh teacher posts were filled, with nine of those exams held under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. After the formation of the coalition government, Chandrababu's first signature was placed on the Mega DSC file. At the request of candidates, the Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) was conducted first, and soon, the DSC notification will be issued.

He criticised the previous YSRCP government for failing to fill even a single teacher post in the last five years. He pointed out that the people gave 93 per cent of the seats to the coalition government, and all unemployed people are now looking towards the TDP with hope. The Chief Minister appointed him as the Chairman of the Employment Sub-Committee, and he assured that as per their promise, the government would plan and work towards providing 20 lakh jobs in the next five years. Minister Lokesh mentioned that they have directed officials to study the legal cases related to DSC thoroughly and ensure that there are no legal complications in the future. He promised that the best possible DSC notification would be issued soon, and all vacant teacher posts will be filled by next year.

No more bulldozer Justice: SC

Continued from Page 1

It said the law must be just and fair and should protect the human rights and dignity of all members of the society.

"At the same time, the essential purpose of the rule of law is to prevent the abuse of power. The rule of law is an umbrella concept to protect citizens against the power of the State. It is integral to and necessary for democracy and good governance," the bench said.

The court said it is well settled that the rule of law has been described as a safeguard against the arbitrary use of State power.

"Whenever the citizens, in the form of mobs, have broken the law to vandalise or to declare threats, the court has cast an obligation on the State to prevent such threats or

assaults," it said.

The bench said this obligation underscores the State's responsibility to maintain law and order and protect citizens from unlawful actions that undermine the rule of law itself.

"It is not necessary to state that the failure to uphold these obligations can erode public confidence in the justice system, leading to an environment where the rule of law is compromised by lawlessness," it said. The court said the concept of the rule of law is not abstract but is reflected in the substantive content of various legal domains.

It added that the processes enshrined in constitutional law, criminal law and procedure are facets of the rule of law and, thus, serve to regulate the exercise of executive power.

'SC parked...

Continued from Page 1

The executive cannot assume judicial powers to punish citizens by demolishing their properties without following due process, the top court said while terming such excesses "high-handed and arbitrary" and ruling that they need to be dealt with the "heavy hand of the law".

Opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh hoped that with this verdict, the "bulldozer terror" and "jungle raj" in the state would end.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said the Supreme Court has "parked the bulldozer in the garage forever", remarks that were seen as a dig at the Yogi Adityanath government.

Seaplane services could transform Visakhapatnam's tourism sector, but delays persist

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam, a coastal city with immense tourism potential, has been grappling with a persistent issue: the lack of progress in its tourism sector. While new initiatives are often announced, their implementation remains elusive. One such promising project is the introduction of seaplane services. The recent successful launch of seaplane operations in Andhra Pradesh, connecting Vijayawada to Srisailem, has reignited

hopes for Visakhapatnam. However, the city's journey towards seaplane services has been a long and winding one.

"The idea of seaplanes in Visakhapatnam was first floated eight years ago," revealed a source. "In 2016, during the CII Investor Conference, the proposal was discussed under the Telugu Desam government." Sky Choppers, a Chennai-based company, expressed interest in offering both helicopter and seaplane services between Bheemili and

Vijayawada.

To boost local tourism, the Visakhapatnam Urban Development Authority (VUDA) introduced a heli-tourism service between VUDA Park and Rushikonda. Unfortunately, defense objections led to its discontinuation. Meanwhile, a local entrepreneur proposed a floating jetty at Mangamaripeta to facilitate seaplane operations, but this plan, too, faced delays.

Two years ago, the Visakhapatnam Port Trust (VPT) prepared a Detailed



Project Report (DPR) to support seaplane operations. K. Ramamohan Rao, the then-chairman of the VPT, wrote to the Civil Aviation Department, recommending Visakhapatnam's inclusion in the UDAN scheme. Despite these efforts, the project has not moved forward.

While Visakhapatnam's port cruise terminal is now ready, the city awaits its first cruise ship. Tourism experts believe that seaplane operations could be a game-changer. "Visakhapatnam has

untapped potential for routes to Rajamahendravaram, Vijayawada, Srisailem, Hyderabad, Odisha's Chilika Lake, and Tirupati," said a tourism industry representative. "Seaplanes can land on both water and land, offering flexibility in connectivity."

Local routes, including those to Rushikonda, Bheemili, Araku Valley, Lambasingi, and Arasavilli, could also benefit from seaplane services. However, concerns remain about the district's commitment to tourism development. Key

positions in the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (APTDC) remain vacant.

"There's a lack of leadership and strategic planning," remarked a local tourism official. "The government needs to take a more proactive stance." As public demand for new tourism experiences grows, stakeholders urge officials to prioritise tourism reforms, allocate adequate resources, and finally bring long-awaited projects like the seaplane to fruition.

Govt to sign pact with 'Aadyam'

To provide marketing support and ensure employment for handloom weavers

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, has launched plans to provide marketing support and ensure year-round employment for handloom weavers. The State government has decided to enter into an agreement with 'Aadyam Hand-Woven', a company owned by the Aditya Birla Group, to promote the State's handloom products.

State Handloom and Textiles Minister S Savitha announced that the partnership will help in marketing famous handloom products from the State, including Uppada Jamdani sarees, Venkatagiri sarees, Dharmavaram silk sarees, and Pavada garments, all of which hold Geographical Indication (GI) status. The initiative aims to provide market-

ing facilities and bring greater exposure to these products globally. Under the new arrangement, the government will work with Aadyam Hand-Woven to market popular Andhra handlooms like Uppada-Cotton Jamdani, Pulagurt-Malka Khadi, Angara-Cotton saris, and others. The final terms of the agreement will be decided in a meeting scheduled for Thursday with Aadyam's representative, Manish Saxena, and the Commissioner of Handloom and Textiles, Rekha Rani.

Aadyam has already partnered with weavers from various regions such as Varanasi, Pochampally, and Bhuj and is expected to bring similar support to Andhra Pradesh's handloom sector. Minister Savitha expressed hope that the collaboration would provide year-round employment to weavers, ensure economic stability, and preserve traditional handloom designs. She also emphasised that the government, under the leadership of CM Chandrababu, would continue implementing the successful schemes from the previous term (2014-2019), including the exemption of GST on handloom products.

Manginapudi Beach all set for Karthika Pournami: Collector



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the Karthika Pournami, the Krishna district administration is all set to provide the necessary arrangements and facilities at the beach at Manginapudi near Machilipatnam, said Krishna District Collector DK Balaji. The Collector visited the beach and inspected the arrangements along with joint collector Geethanjali Sharma and SP R Gangadhara Rao.

After completing the inspection, Collector Balaji convened a meeting with officials at the beach and discussed the arrangements and facilities.

He said that though the Karthika Pournami would be performed on November 15, however, devotees arrived on the beach a day in advance. So, officials should provide milk to kids, he suggested.

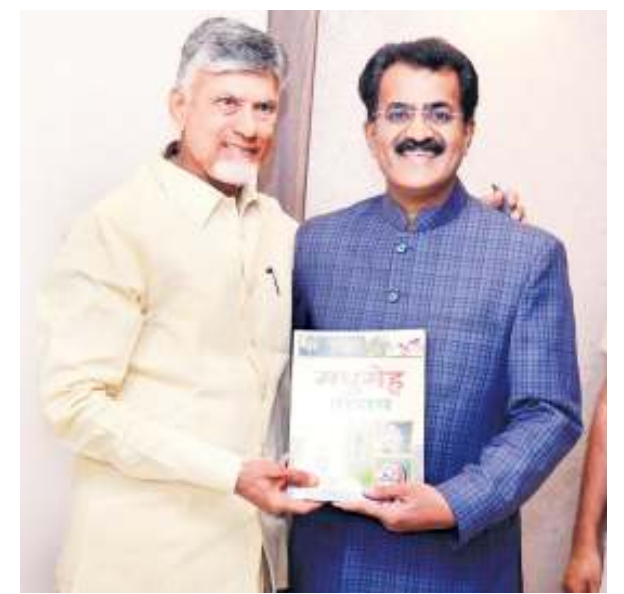
On the other hand, he instructed the officials concerned to take the necessary steps to avoid children's missing and to prevent them from making tags for the children, he said. Officials should provide adequate Prasadams and drinking water at the beach and higher officials should monitor this from time to time, he added.

Meanwhile, Balaji said that

officials should prevent stampedes while the devotees take a holy dip in the Bay of Bengal. If new persons came to the holy baths, officials kept them in one place and should take the necessary steps to avoid onward incidents, he added. Also, he asked the Police Department to make a barricade on the beach to control the huge crowd on November 15.

Subsequently, he said that officials should make availability of life jackets, and rescue teams at the beach. Also, the officials concerned should make proper illuminating along the beach where the holy baths are allowed, he said. The Police Department should arrange a control room and monitor the entire beach by drones, he said. The Collector suggested the APSRTC officials run bus services to go to Manginapudi Beach from November 14 onwards.

Machilipatnam RDO K Swathi, DPO J Aruna, DPTO Vani Sri, RTC DM Peddi Raju, Endowment Assistant Commissioner Sambasiva Rao, DM & HO Dr Geethabai and others were present.



Prevent diabetes with healthier lifestyle: Expert

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Diabetes is a chronic condition that occurs when the body cannot effectively regulate blood sugar levels. There are two main types of diabetes: Type 1, where the body doesn't produce insulin, and Type 2, which is more common and often linked to lifestyle factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise, and obesity. Gestational diabetes can also occur during pregnancy, but usually resolves after childbirth, says noted diabetologist Dr K Venugopal Reddy.

He said to mark World Diabetes Day on November 14 awareness should be created promoting healthier lifestyles among people. The key precautions to be taken to maintain sugar levels are regular testing is essential for managing diabetes and preventing complications. Consistent monitoring helps adjust medication and lifestyle choices.

He said to focus on a balanced diet with plenty of fibre, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Avoid processed foods and limit sugar intake.

Portion control is key. Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Physical activity helps regulate blood sugar levels and promotes overall health. Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight helps improve insulin sensitivity, particularly in Type 2 diabetes.

The other essential things to maintain are drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Dehydration can raise blood sugar levels, so it's important to stay well-hydrated. Annual visits to a healthcare provider are vital for managing the condition and preventing complications like heart disease, kidney problems, and nerve damage.

On World Diabetes Day, let's raise awareness about the impact of diabetes on individuals and communities worldwide. Early detection and proactive management of the condition can significantly improve quality of life and reduce the risk of complications. Share knowledge, encourage healthy habits, and support those living with diabetes, said Dr Venugopal Reddy.

Vizag Police to harness AI for safer, smarter city

AI system aims to reduce conflicts by automating e-challan issuing



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a pioneering step, the Visakhapatnam city police are gearing up to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) in a bid to streamline traffic management and strengthen crime prevention efforts. This cutting-edge AI system, set to transform the city's approach to public safety, will automatically detect traffic violations, issue e-challans, and monitor criminal activities, allowing police officers to prioritise their focus on critical operations.

This innovative project is a first for the city, reflecting a commitment to technological advancement and public welfare. Dr. Shankhabrata Bagchi, City Commissioner of Police, stated that three companies have already expressed interest in the project, with seven more firms expected to present their proposals. "We are conducting a comprehensive review to select the most suitable partner for this ambitious initiative," he told The Pioneer.

On Visakhapatnam's busy streets, traffic violations often lead to conflicts between drivers and police officers. The AI system aims to reduce these confrontations by automating the process of issuing e-challans. Violators will receive e-challans directly on their registered mobile numbers, eliminating manual intervention. "Automated fines not only simplify traffic management but also minimise confrontations," noted Commissioner Bagchi.

The AI technology, supported by high-definition cameras and real-time data processing, will detect violations like signal jumps, speeding, and unauthorised parking. This automation will free up traffic officers to handle pressing issues, such as managing accidents and improving overall traffic flow.

Beyond traffic management, the system will incorporate facial recognition technology to monitor individuals with criminal records, enhancing crime prevention capabilities. "With AI's power to track known offenders, our officers can act proactively, improving our crime prevention efforts significantly," said the Commissioner. The technology will also help identify missing persons and locate vehicles associated with criminal activity, providing officers with a powerful tool for real-time tracking.

The AI initiative is seen as a step toward increased transparency and accountability in law enforcement. By reducing direct police involvement in routine issues, it can help build public trust and reduce perceived bias. The Commissioner emphasised that the project will follow strict data security protocols and ethical guidelines to safeguard privacy and ensure responsible data usage.

The Visakhapatnam police anticipate that this AI-driven approach will lead to a significant drop in traffic violations and crime rates. If successful, the project could serve as a model for cities nationwide.

10,000 Ayyappa pilgrims only allowed to visit Sabarimala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Travancore Devaswom Board President PS Prasanth has announced that 10,000 devotees visiting Sabarimala will be permitted darshan through real-time online booking from the entry point, with booking counters set up at key locations such as Satram (Vandiperiyar), Erumeli, and Pampa.

He mentioned that a total of 70,000 to 80,000 pilgrims will be able to secure darshan daily through virtual queue booking, ensuring smoother and more organised access to the temple. All devotees are required to carry a copy of their Aadhaar card, and foreigners must carry

their passports for identification.

This guidance from the Travancore Devaswom Board has been shared with Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. Following this, Andhra Pradesh Endowment Commissioner S Satyanarayana released a press statement, relaying the details and emphasising the guidelines for Ayyappa pilgrims from the State.

Prasanth also highlighted that devotees are urged to follow specific guidelines to prevent pollution of the sacred Pamba River. This includes booking their preferred darshan date and time slot online, carrying ID proof, and avoiding the use of plastic *trumudi*.

Anakapalli MP secures major highway expansion projects

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

MP CM Ramesh has announced that Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, has approved two major infrastructure projects in Andhra Pradesh.

These include the expansion of the Rajamahendravaram and Anakapalli stretch of National Highway-16 from four to six lanes, as well as the development of the Rayachoti-Kadapa section of National Highway 40 into a four-lane road with a tunnel.

"The enhancement of National Highway-16 is crucial for accommodating the increasing traffic and will significantly improve connectivity between

Rajamahendravaram and Anakapalli," said Ramesh. "This will not only facilitate the smooth movement of goods and services but also benefit the public traveling in this region."

The Detailed Project Report (DPR) for expanding the Anakapalli-Annavaram-Diwan Cheruvu segment of NH-16, covering kilometers 741.255 to 903.000, has been submitted to a designated consultant. Similarly, the DPR for the Rayachoti-Kadapa section of National Highway 40, spanning kilometers 211/500 to 217/200, has been prepared and handed over, paving the way for the commencement of the four-lane tunnel road construction.

'Sakhi' empowers youth across Andhra Pradesh

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Women and Child Welfare Secretary advocates Sakhi groups in residential school hostels

The Sakhi initiative, a transformative programme aimed at empowering youth through nutrition, health, and social-economic education, continues to make significant strides. State Women and Child Welfare Secretary A Suryakumari lauded the project's progress, comparing it to a "small seedling" that has now blossomed into a fruitful tree. "When Sakhi started, it was like planting a small seedling, and today I am proud to see it bearing fruit," Secretary Suryakumari said during a virtual conference. She encouraged District Collector Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to sustain these programmes and consider expanding them to benefit young boys.

The Secretary emphasised the importance of instilling moral values in adolescents and educating them about the dangers of social media. She advocated for the establishment of Sakhi groups in residential school hostels to foster awareness and promote healthy practices. "Teaching our youth about kindness, staying away from drugs, and valuing nature is essential in today's world," she added.

Dr Zelalem B Taffesse, UNICEF Chief for Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka, echoed the senti-



ment, highlighting the need to empower youth as "the future of India and the driving force behind the nation." He urged Vizianagaram district to set a statewide example by expanding Sakhi programmes to address issues like trafficking and child marriage.

The Collector reaffirmed

his commitment to the Sakhi initiative, which was first introduced in 2022 by then-Collector Suryakumari. "This programme has benefited around a thousand groups in two years, and we are committed to strengthening it further," he said. The Collector also announced plans for a convergence meet-

ing with multiple departments to enhance programme coordination and outreach. As part of the initiative, the Sakhi Corner, a new resource centre for youth, was inaugurated adjacent to the Dwama office at the Collectorate. This space will serve as a hub for youth-related activities, showcasing the achievements

of Sakhi programmes and offering training and skill development opportunities.

To further amplify the impact of Sakhi, a rally was organised by Sakhi groups, followed by a recognition ceremony honouring Sakhi members, women police officers, ICDS staff, and young talents like Ritish Raj, a



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promising dancer and model.

Dr VNS. Anil Kumar, Additional Director of the State Health and Family Welfare Department, Kesali Appa Rao, Chairman of the State Child Rights Commission, and representatives from various organisations attended the conference.

60,000 MTs of ration rice seized; 1,010 cases registered: Manohar

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Since the NDA formed the government in the State, 60,000 Metric Tonnes of rice, meant to be distributed under the Public Distribution System (PDS), has been seized while being transported illegally.

Informing this in the Legislative Council on Wednesday, Minister for Civil Supplies Nadendla Manohar said that stringent steps were taken to curb the illegal transportation of PDS rice and oppress the PDS rice illegal export with iron hand.

"Since the formation of a new government by the coalition parties, 60,000 Metric Tonnes of PDS rice has been seized while being exported. The involvement of MDU operators in PDS rice illegal export was found. Criminal cases have been registered



Manohar mentioned that check-posts at all vulnerable places were set up to prevent the illegal transportation of PDS rice. He made it clear that the Port officials were ordered to give permission for export of rice, only after the exporter obtains NOC certificate from the police, revenue and civil supply officials

against 13 rice mills in Kakinada for indulging in PDS rice export illegally," Manohar told the House.

The Government with an aim of providing rice to the poor to fulfill the hunger, some mafia gangs are collecting the rice from the beneficiaries and exporting the same illegally, the Minister revealed.

Manohar mentioned that check-posts at all vulnerable places were set up to prevent the illegal transportation of PDS rice. He made it clear that the Port officials were ordered to give permission for export of rice, only after the exporter obtains NOC certificate from the police, revenue and civil supply officials.

Acknowledging that there are about 1.48 crore ration card holders in the State, the Minister maintained that the Centre and the State govern-

ments purchase a KG rice by spending Rs 43.40 to distribute under the PDS to the ration card holders. He called up on the people to extend their support to curb the illegal export of PDS rice by the rice mafia.

"Raids are conducted on the rice mills across the State as part of containing the procuring of PDS rice illegally and export the same. I have personally inspected some rice mills in Krishna, Guntur, East Godavari and Palnadu district," he claimed and underlined that the officials should play a vital role to curb the illegal export of PDS rice.

The Civil Supplies Minister informed the Legislative Council that 13 cases were registered in Kakinada against the illegal PDS rice exporters under EC ACT 1955, Section 6A.

NTPC chairman urged to set up lab on Nuzvid IIT campus: MP



PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar has said that he has appealed to the NTPC chairman to set up a laboratory on the Nuzvid IIT campus under CSR funds.

The MP held Praja Dharbar in his camp office at Santhi Nagar here on Wednesday. He received grievances from the public and assured them of taking steps to resolve them. Speaking to the media on the occasion, the MP revealed that he had met the National Thermal Power Station Chairman recently and urged him to establish a laboratory for the students of Nuzvid

IIT on the campus under the Corporate's Social Responsibility programme.

He announced that Reliance has come forward to establish a Biogas unit in the State at a cost of Rs 130 crore to Rs 150 crore. If the plant is established, it will churn out thousands of employment opportunities, he stated.

"The Coalition government in the State is leading Andhra Pradesh towards development. The Reliance company has come forward to establish the Biogas unit here as the IT Minister Nara Lokesh has convinced the company to set up the unit here," the MP.

Putta Mahesh Kumar reit-

established his commitment to establish a food processing unit in Eluru Parliamentary constituency. He vowed to develop Eluru Parliamentary constituency as an industrial zone in the coming days. He revealed that he had met Secretaries of various Union Government departments and submitted representations to resolve issues of the district.

Taking a dig at the previous YSRC regime, he lamented that the development backtracked during the five years of YSRC rule. Ganni Veeranjanyulu and other leaders were among those who were present.

Corrupt deeds will not be tolerated, says Collector



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Chhadalavada Nagarani has made it clear that corrupt deeds will not be tolerated and warned of taking stringent action against those who involve corrupt practices.

Collector Nagarani made a surprise inspection to the Tahsildar office at Palakoderu mandal on Wednesday. She made the surprise inspection to the Tahsildar office in the wake of allegations and complaints received against the employees. She interacted with all the employees.

The Collector thoroughly

examined the records related to surveys undertaken in the mandal, PGRS applications, tax collection registers and files related to various permissions. On the occasion, Collector Nagarani told the staff that the allegations of corruption would not be ignored under any circumstances and strongly warned that the action would be initiated.

She told the employees that everyone should change their style of working. The complaints of collecting cash from people should not be received and corrupt practices of employees should be stopped, she instructed them.

"Any employee who com-

mits such actions will bring a bad name to the entire district administration and this will hamper the progress of the district. It is advised to follow the office hours strictly and work without regard to the working hours during emergencies," the Collector ordered the employees.

Receiving complaints from the people against the government department is not proper and all employees should lay focus on developing the district and welfare of people, the Collector advised the employees. RDO K Pravin Kumar Reddy and Tahsildar NB Vijayalakshmi were among those who were present.



Officials directed to evolve plans to check air pollution

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Collector A Thameem Ansariya directed the officials concerned to evolve plans to check air pollution in the city. A meeting was held here on Wednesday under the National Clean Air Programme, organized by the pollution control board, presided over by the Collector.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Thameem Ansariya said that as per the directives of the National Green Tribunal, the Central Pollution Control Board has ordered to take planned measures to control the pollution in the air polluted cities of the country.

The officials should find out the root causes of air pollution in Ongole city, formulate a necessary action plan to control them and take strong measures to control air pollution.

As part of environmental protection, the officials were directed to organize a large-scale planting programme in Ongole city to control pollution and take measures to prevent

the spread of pollution by vehicles. Wet and dry waste disposal in the city should be done according to the rules, the Collector told the officials.

Collector Ansariya ordered the officials to take steps to ensure that petrol and diesel should not be adulterated in petrol filling stations and instructed them to conduct inspections on petrol filling stations. Vehicles should also be checked to ensure that they are not emitting the prescribed pollution.

She directed the officials to identify important areas where air pollution is spreading and take measures to prevent air pollution in those areas. The onus of providing fresh air to the citizens lies on officials, she made it clear.

She also underlined the need of holding awareness programmes on air pollution control. Pollution Control Board EE Raghava Reddy, Municipal Commissioner Venkateswara Rao, DTC Sushela and agriculture officer Srinivasa Rao were among those who attended the meeting.



600 lost/stolen mobile phones, worth Rs 78 lakh recovered

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The police recovered 600 lost or stolen mobile phones worth Rs 78 lakhs using the latest technology.

Informing to the media here on Wednesday, the SP Vikranth Patil advised those lost phones to utilise the services of the 'Mobi track Kakinada police' by sending a message addressing Hi to WhatsApp's app number 9490617852 and registering their lost phone details in the link given.

The SP handed over the recovered cell phones to the owners. The SP attributed the credit to the special App 'Mobi track Kakinada police' and the IT core team. The SP has complimented the IT core team inspector Durga Sekhar Reddy and team members and the DSP.

Special branch DSP Chavvakula Srirama-koteswara Rao, IT core inspector D Durgasekar Reddy, and DSRB Inspector P Eswerudu were among those who were present.

It is '15% commission governance' in TG

PNS ■ NAGPUR

At a press conference in Nagpur on Wednesday, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar launched a scathing attack on the Congress government in Telangana, characterizing it as a "15% commission regime" that had failed to fulfil its promises to the people of the state. Sanjay claimed that every contract and project under the Congress-led government involved commissions, which he said were leading to the exploitation and looting of Telangana's resources.

"Not a single promise of the six guarantees given by the Congress has been fulfilled," he asserted, while accusing the Telangana government of spending crores of rupees on advertisements in Maharashtra to mislead voters rather than focusing on fulfilling its commitments in Telangana.

Sanjay pointed to the promises of farm loan waiver, support for unemployed youth, and welfare schemes for women, and maintained that none of these had been realized in practice.

Criticizing the Congress's ongoing campaign in Maharashtra, he alleged that the Telangana government was diverting funds to influence elections in neighboring states. "The Congress is using



Maharashtra, promising the impossible and fooling the people," he remarked.

Touching on the issue of reservations for minorities, Sanjay reminded the audience that the Supreme Court had already struck down the Congress's previous attempts at implementing reservations for Muslims in Telangana. He accused the Congress of continuing to push this agenda in Maharashtra as a deceptive tactic.

In his appeal to the people of Maharashtra, Sanjay invoked the legacy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, urging them to reject the Congress's 'divisive politics' that he claimed seeks to exploit caste and religious differences for political gain.



35 cases registered for drunk driving; 14 vehicle seized

PNS ■ NANDYALA

The Nandyala police conducted checking of vehicles and registered 35 cases for drunk driving and seized 14 vehicles.

Under the direction of district Superintendent of police Adhiraj Singh Rana, the district police has focused on maintaining the law and order efficiently and visible policing. They are also conducting awareness among the people on cybercrimes.

The police conducted a special drive on Tuesday to prevent matka gambling, illicit liquor, drunk driving and rash driving. During the programme, the police teams registered 35 cases under drunk driving and seized 14 vehicles. The police also registered 120 cases for drinking liquor at public places elsewhere in the district.

Under the motor vehicles act, 663 cases were registered and Rs 2,57,94 as fine. In Dhone sub-division, the police arrested seven persons for indulging in poker gambling and seized Rs 9,100 from them. The police teams also conducted raids on illicit liquor units and seized liquor bottles and arrested two persons. The SP directed the police officials to conduct awareness programmes to the people on road safety and cyber crime.

The SP asked the district police machinery to visit villages to sensitize people against the faction politics and instill peace.

The SP ordered the police officials to collect fingerprints of suspicious persons and take action against the brats who roam during the nights on the roads.

26 stolen bikes recovered, 6 bike lifters arrested in 3 dists



PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

The police recovered 26 stolen bikes in three districts and arrested 6 bike lifters.

In Sattenapalli of Palnadu district, the police recovered 12 stolen motorcycles and arrested two bike lifters. Police said on Wednesday that the two notorious bike lifters, Manikantha and Yesubabu, stole motorcycles at various places. The police asked the shop owners to install CCTV cameras at their shops to prevent such crimes.

In Allagadda of Nandyal district, the police seized 8 stolen motorcycles and arrested a notorious bike lifter. Talking to the media in Allagadda police station on Wednesday, DSP Ravi Kumar said the police seized 8 motorcycles which were stolen from various places and arrested the bike lifter Shetti Lakshmi Kumar. The seized bikes are worth over Rs 7.70 lakh. The arrested accused Lakshmi Kumar was involved in several offences. The DSP asked the bike own-

ers to use a dynamic locking system while parking their bikes.

Meanwhile, in Tadipatri town in Anantapur district, the police recovered 6 stolen bikes. DSP Ramakrishna told the media on Wednesday that CI Sai Prasad conducted checking of vehicles in Tadipatri town. Three persons were seen moving on a bike suspiciously. When the police held them and questioned them, they confessed that they had stolen six motorcycles.

400 liters of jaggery wash destroyed, liquor bottles seized

PNS ■ AMALAPURAM

The police conducted a raid and destroyed 400 litres of jaggery wash, hoarded to distil illicit liquor, at Dwarampudi in Mandapeta mandal of Konaseema district on Wednesday.

CI Nageswara Rao told the media that on a tip off a police conducted a raid at the village and found 400 litres of jaggery wash, stored in drums to distil illicit liquor and destroyed the jaggery wash.

The police and excise officials conducted a raid on three belt liquor shops at Alamuru village and seized 33 liquor



bottles and registered cases against three persons. The excise officials also seized 18 liquor bottles after conducting a raid on a belt liquor shop at Chemudulanka village.

31 bags of adulterated tea powder seized



PNS ■ RAJAMAHENDRAVARAM

The police busted tea powder adulteration racket and seized 31 bags of adulterated tea powder at Yerrabalem village in Gokavaram mandal in EG district on Wednesday.

On a tip off, a police team led by Korukonda CI Y Satya Kishore and SI Pawan Kumar conducted a raid on a rice mill where spurious tea powder was being made in a big way. The police seized 1,250 KGs of adulterated tea which was packed in 31 bags. The police seized the material being used to make adulterated tea powder. Samples of the adulterated tea powder collected under the presence of district food inspector and revenue officials and the sample were sent to the laboratory.

Man, his son get 5 years jail in red sander smuggling

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A man and his son were sentenced to five years imprisonment in a red sander smuggling case by RSS ADJ court here on Wednesday.

Police here on Wednesday said that RSS ADJ court judge Narasimha Murthy sentenced Thota Chhinna Chengaiah and Thota Chengaiah for five years imprisonment for felling red

sander trees and transporting them illegally. The court also imposed a Rs 6 lakh fine on them. The father and son duo were sent to the Nellore Central prison.

The duo were arrested at Theendragunta reserve forest in Tirupati division in Krishnapuram section and cases registered against them under Cr. No -10/2019, SC. No 57/2022.

ACROSS THE STATES



Gadkari makes pitch for seaplane facility in Maha

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday proposed that transportation by seaplanes be encouraged in eastern Maharashtra's Chandrapur district to improve connectivity to the Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR). The BJP leader was speaking at a rally in Ballapur assembly constituency in the district in support of state forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar ahead of the November 20 state elections. In his speech, Gadkari highlighted the development projects initiated by Mungantiwar in the district. TATR is a big tourist attraction but no airport can be constructed nearby due to environmental concerns, he said. To increase connectivity, Mungantiwar should make efforts to set up a "waterport" in Irai dam in Chandrapur and facilitate transportation through 22-seater seaplanes (which can take off and land on water), Gadkari added.



Five of family get lifer for killing relative

A court here has sentenced five members of a family to life imprisonment for killing their relative in 2016 over a land dispute. Special Judge Vinay Kumar Singh found Jitendra Yadav (32), Mohit Yadav (30), Ajay Yadav (20), Ramesh Yadav (26), and Sharda Devi (56) guilty of beating to death Ram Ji Yadav on July 24, 2016. District Prosecuting Officer Brijendra Nath Tripathi said. All five were convicted under various sections of the IPC, including murder (302), unlawful assembly (149), and causing disappearance of evidence (201), he said. The court also imposed a fine of Rs 11,000 on each convict, with an additional six months in jail if they fail to pay, he said. During the trial, 11 witnesses were examined to support the prosecution's case. District Prosecuting Officer Tripathi said he argued for a strong sentence to deter similar offences.



Malegaon blast: Pragya faces new warrant

A special court here on Wednesday issued a fresh bailable warrant against former BJP MP Pragya Thakur, a prime accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, as she failed to appear before it citing health issues. This was the second warrant issued this month against Thakur by the special court for National Investigation Agency (NIA) cases. On November 5, the court had issued a warrant against her for failing to attend the proceedings, and directed her to appear on November 13. On Wednesday, Thakur's lawyer J P Mishra told the court that she could not appear as she was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Bhopal. He also submitted related medical records. The judge then issued a fresh bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 and directed her to remain present in the court on December 2. The trial is at the fog end, and the court has repeatedly asked all the accused to remain present for daily hearings.

EAM: Situation in West Asia matter of deep concern

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India supports an early ceasefire in Gaza and it has consistently stood for resolution of the Palestinian issue through a two-state solution, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday.

In his opening remarks at a meeting with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Jaishankar said the situation in West Asia is a matter of "deep concern", particularly the conflict in Gaza.

The external affairs minister described Saudi Arabia as an important force for stability in the region.

Jaishankar and Al Saud co-chaired the second meeting of the Committee on Political, Security, Social and Cultural Cooperation (PSSC) held under the framework of the Strategic Partnership Council (SPC).

In his remarks, Jaishankar said Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and India's Viksit Bharat 2047 hold complementarities for the two sides' industries to build new partnerships.

"Trade and investment are



"Trade and investment are important pillars of our partnership, and we are strengthening our collaboration in new areas including technology, energy, renewable energy including green hydrogen, connectivity, health and education," he said.

important pillars of our partnership, and we are strengthening our collaboration in new areas including technology, energy, renewable energy including green hydrogen, connectivity, health and education," he said.

Al Saud is on a two-day visit to India. On the situation in Gaza, Jaishankar said any response must take into account the international humanitarian law.

MAHARASHTRA POLLS

Mahayuti a government of thieves, says Kharge

PNS ■ LATUR (MAHARASHTRA)

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday termed the BJP-led Mahayuti as a government of thieves and called for its defeat at the hustings on November 20.

Campaigning in Latur, Kharge accused the BJP and its ideological mentor, the RSS, of having no role in the freedom struggle and the country's unity.

In a scathing attack, Kharge criticised the ruling party over the slogans—"Batenge to Katenge" and "Ek Hai to Safe Hai", describing them as divisive.

He targeted PM Narendra Modi who had questioned the waving of the book of Constitution by Congress leaders. "Congress leaders laid down their lives to keep the country and all communities united. On the contrary, the BJP and RSS had no contribution to the freedom movement and unity of the country," Kharge said, slamming 'Batenge to Katenge' and 'Ek Hai to Safe Hai' slogans being raised by UP CM Yogi Adityanath and PM Modi, respectively.

Mahayuti is a government of thieves. The assembly elections are an opportunity to teach traitors a lesson, Kharge said.

'Will ban flight of projects from Maha to Gujarat if elected' UBT chief Uddhav slams Shah

PNS ■ KANKAVLI (MAHARASHTRA)

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Wednesday criticized Union Home Minister Amit Shah over the flight of industrial projects from Maharashtra to Gujarat and asked him to clarify his vision of development.

Thackeray reiterated the Shiv Sena (UBT)'s opposition to a refinery project at Barsu in the Konkan region over the potential risk it poses to ecology.

"Amit Shah has accused me of stalling development projects during my tenure as the chief minister in the MVA government. What is Shah's definition

of development? I stayed flight of projects from Maharashtra to Gujarat. In future I will ban the movement of projects (if voted to power)," Thackeray said.

He addressed a rally for the November 20 assembly elections at Kankavli in the coastal Sindhudurg district, the home ground of his bete noire and BJP MP Narayan Rane.

Thackeray alleged that the BJP didn't even spare a submarine project which was supposed to be set up in Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena (UBT) chief framed the forthcoming polls as a battle between "Maharashtra premi and Maharashtra drohi" (between those who love the state and the traitors).

Thackeray said any response must take into account the international humanitarian law.

"The situation in West Asia is a matter of deep concern, particularly the conflict in Gaza. India's position in this regard has been principled

Rahul, Priyanka lack optimism to see the brighter side: Nadda



PNS ■ MUMBAI

BJP president J P Nadda on Wednesday claimed that Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra do not have the positive attitude of seeing the brighter side and wondered if he should teach them economics.

Speaking to media professionals ahead of the November 20 Maharashtra assembly polls, he also took a jibe at Rahul's "mohabbat ki dukan" (shop of love) pitch, saying it sells tools of division.

India's growth rate is 6.8 per cent, and the country is the world's third-largest automobile market, Nadda claimed, and attacked the Congress for harping over unemployment and inflation.

"People in rural areas also purchase vehicles. Will they do so if they don't have money? What to say to the brother-sister duo. Should I teach them economics," he wondered without naming the Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition and Congress general secretary

"They don't have the habit of seeing the brighter side," Nadda claimed.

The BJP chief called the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi pro-poor and pro-farmer and said 53 crore bank accounts have been opened in the country since

2014, when his party rode to power and continued its winning streak for two subsequent terms.

Assistance under schemes is being transferred to people's accounts through DBT (direct benefit transfers), he said, asserting that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank have called India's economy stable.

In Modi's third term, India will be the world's third-largest economy, said Nadda, and claimed that "India is manufacturing effective and cheapest medicines".

The Maha Vikas Aghadi will form a "brake government" if it returns to power, the senior BJP leader said, suggesting that the grouping of Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (SP) will slow down development in the state.

Nadda claimed that the Congress has submitted to "urban Naxals" and accused Rahul Gandhi of pursuing the agenda of anti-nationalism. "They must be taught a lesson," he said.

The BJP president also targeted Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray alleging that he has cosied up to the Congress despite his father and Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray's bitter opposition to the grand old party.

India's growth rate is 6.8 per cent, and the country is the world's third-largest automobile market, Nadda claimed, and attacked the Congress for harping over unemployment and inflation

BJP to launch 'Parivartan Yatra' in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls due in February next year, the BJP has planned to launch the "Parivartan Yatra" across the national capital starting next month, party leaders announced on Wednesday.

Besides the senior leaders of Delhi unit, including MPs, MLAs and state office bearers, the national leaders of the party will also attend the "Parivartan Yatras" in all the 70 assembly constituencies, said a party functionary.

The Yatras aimed at sending across the message to replace the Aam Admi Party (AAP) ruling in Delhi since 2015 was earlier planned to be taken out in mid November.

Compassionate appointment not vested right: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Compassionate appointment is not a vested right for getting a government job as it is not a condition of service of an employee who dies in harness, the Supreme Court held on Wednesday while declining the plea of a man whose police constable father died on duty in 1997, when the petitioner was seven years of age.

A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka, Ahsanuddin Amanullah and Augustine George Masih said no direction can be issued asking the State to perpetuate any illegality in favour of a person or a group of individuals contrary to the policy concerned.

Writing the judgment for the bench, Justice Masih said compassionate appointments are intended to address urgent financial distress at the time of a family member's death and do not constitute

a vested right that can be claimed after the lapse of a long period of time.

"As regards the compassionate appointment being sought to be claimed as a vested right for appointment, suffice it to say that the said right is not a condition of service of an employee who dies in harness, which must be given to the dependent without any kind of scrutiny or undertaking a process of selection.

"It is an appointment which is given on proper and strict scrutiny of the various parameters as laid down with an intention to help a family out of a sudden pecuniary financial destitution to help it get out of the emerging urgent situation where the sole bread earner has expired, leaving it helpless and maybe, penniless," the judgment said.

It said compassionate appointment is, therefore, provided to bail out a family of a deceased employee fac-



ing extreme financial difficulty.

"This shall in any case be subject to the claimant fulfilling the requirements as laid down in the policy, instructions or rules for such a compassionate appointment," it said.

The very idea of equality enshrined in Article 14 of the Constitution is a concept clothed in positivity based on law and it can be invoked to enforce a claim having the sanctity of law, it said.

Petitioner Tinku's father, constable Jai Prakash, died alongside an officer while on duty in 1997.

At the time, Tinku was only seven years old, and his mother, who was illiterate, could not apply for an appointment on compassionate grounds for herself.

Instead, she requested that her son's name be entered in the "Minors Register", with the understanding that he might be considered for a post upon reaching adulthood.

In 1998, the Haryana Director General of Police issued instructions for Tinku's name to be recorded, suggesting a future possibility for employment. However, by the time Tinku applied for a post in 2008, after reaching the age of majority, 11 years had passed since his father's death.

Authorities rejected his application on the grounds that Haryana's 1999 instructions had introduced a three-year limit for such claims following an employee's death.

Make Punjab a frontrunner state: CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday called upon all the intellectuals, academicians, industrialists and other stakeholders to join hands for making Punjab a frontrunner state in the country.

Addressing a gathering during 'Vision Punjab' conclave here, the chief minister said Punjab is a fertile land which has been blessed by saints, seers, prophets and martyrs. Despite being a sacred land, Punjab has lagged behind in the pace of development due to the apathetic approach of the previous regimes, he said.

Mann said the hard working and resilient farmers of the state have made the country self-reliant in food production but are facing the apathy of those in power at the Centre.

'Taking metformin during pregnancy could stunt foetus growth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Metformin, a common anti-diabetes drug, if taken during pregnancy, could possibly restrict foetus growth, including a slow maturing of the kidneys, a study has found.

The drug is known to help one manage the metabolic disorder by lowering blood sugar.

Researchers, led by Baylor College of Medicine, US, said that the drug is now prescribed to pregnant women to reduce risk of complications due to diabetes-related conditions, including pre-diabetes and gestational diabetes.

However, concerns have been raised regarding the long-term effects of metformin on childhood development, even as the drug has been shown to be effective in managing blood sugar in pregnant women.

For this study, published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, the researchers developed an experimental primate model.

Within 30 days of conception, 13 female rhesus monkeys were

initiated on twice-daily 10 milligrams per kilogram weight metformin, which is the equivalent of doses prescribed to humans, the researchers said. On the 145th day of a monkey's pregnancy, the foetus and the placenta were delivered by performing a caesarean section.

Analysing metformin levels, results showed that when given to the mother, the drug freely crossed the placenta and accumulated in the foetal kidneys, liver, intestines, placenta, amniotic fluid (in which the embryo is suspended) and urine, levels of which was similar to those found in the mother's urine.

This accumulation of metformin during pregnancy was found to be linked with a restricted growth of kidneys, liver, skeletal muscle, heart, and fat deposits known to support the abdomi-



nal organs -- all of which served to lower the foetus's body weight, the researchers said.

"Our study demonstrates fetal bioaccumulation of metformin with associated foetal growth restriction and renal dysmor-

phology after maternal initiation of the drug within 30 days of conception in primates," the authors wrote.

They added that while the anti-diabetes drug is not known to cause birth defects, the foetus

also doesn't have a way to clear the drug.

"Many drugs undergo 'first-pass' metabolism by becoming absorbed first in the liver, which decreases the concentration before it continues through the body. However, metformin does not experience the first-pass effect; rather, it is transported across the placenta, exposing the foetus to an adult dose of the drug," co-author Jed Friedman, associate vice provost for diabetes programs at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences, said.

The researchers also analysed the effects of feeding the pregnant primates different diets -- half were fed a conventional diet with 15 per cent calories from fat, while the other half received a high-fat diet with 36 per cent calories from fat.

ILLEGAL INFILTRATION ED arrests 4 including Bangladeshi nationals

PNS ■ RANCHI

Four people, including two Bangladeshi nationals, have been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to illegal infiltration from Bangladesh into Jharkhand and neighbouring areas.

Rony Mondal and Sameer Chowdhary, both Bangladeshi nationals, and Indian national Pintu Halder were arrested on Tuesday. An Indian woman, Pinki Basu, was taken into custody in this case on Wednesday.

All four accused were apprehended from Kolkata, West Bengal for "facilitating" illegal human trafficking into India, the federal agency said in a statement.

The ED is taking transit remand to bring all of them to Ranchi, it said.

In this case, the ED launched searches at 17 locations in poll-bound Jharkhand apart from West Bengal on Tuesday.

The agency said its probe found that a "syndicate" operates "extensively" across West Bengal and Jharkhand and it is engaged in facilitating the proceeds of crime out of the said activities.

The agents of this syndicate help in illegal infiltration of Bangladeshi citizens into India and provide them fake documents to obtain Indian citizenship, it said.

This is "corroborated" from the seizure of mobile phones containing various incriminating chats relating to monetary

transactions in lieu of the said illegal activities including prostitution by the trafficked girls, according to the ED.

During the searches, documents containing the details of payments made in lieu of the prostitution racket being run by the syndicate were recovered, the agency said.

"Incriminating" items like fake Aadhaar cards, forged passports, illegal arms, immovable property documents, cash, jewellery, printing paper and machines and blank proforma used for forging Aadhaar cards were also recovered during the raids, it said on Tuesday.

The action came on the eve of polling for 43 assembly seats in Jharkhand on Wednesday. The remaining 38 seats of the state will vote on November 20.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

High stakes battle

Jharkhand election is a crucial test for the ruling coalition as well as for the BJP, which seeks to reclaim its hold

The Jharkhand Assembly elections commenced with the first phase of voting on November 13, with 43 seats across 15 districts up for grabs. This election marks a pivotal moment in the state's political landscape, where two key coalitions—the BJP and the INDIA bloc led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) and Congress—are locked in a fierce battle for control of the Assembly. With high-profile candidates, pressing issues and a focus on tribal constituencies, the stakes are incredibly high for both camps. Jharkhand, carved out of Bihar in 2000, has been a battleground for various political parties, with the BJP historically dominating the state. However, in the last Assembly elections in 2019, the BJP lost power, managing to secure only 25 seats out of the total 81. The JMM emerged as the largest party, winning 30 seats and subsequently forming a coalition government with the Congress, which won 16 seats and the RJD, which held one. This alliance brought Hemant Soren of the JMM into the Chief Minister's seat,



where he has served for the last five years. Hemant Soren's tenure, however, has faced turbulence, including a brief removal from office after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a corruption case. Despite these setbacks, Soren has returned to the political stage with a renewed campaign to lead the INDIA bloc's bid for re-election.

The election campaign has highlighted multiple contentious issues. One of the most polarising topics has been "Bangladeshi infiltration." Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is spearheading the BJP's campaign in Jharkhand, has accused the Hemant Soren-led administration of facilitating illegal migration

from Bangladesh for political benefits. Soren, in response, has accused the BJP of sowing communal discord in the state, with support from Congress's national leadership. His counter-campaign has focused on emphasising the BJP's alleged divisive politics and positioning the JMM-led INDIA bloc as a safeguard for Jharkhand's communal harmony and tribal rights. The first phase features several high-stakes contests with major political figures. Among these is the Seraikella seat, where former Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren, who recently left the JMM after four decades to join the BJP, will contest. In Jamshedpur East, Congress's Ajay Kumar faces off against BJP's Purnima Das Sahu. In Jamshedpur West, Congress Health Minister Banna Gupta is up against JD(U) leader Saryu Roy, who gained fame after defeating Raghubar Das in 2019 when Das was the sitting Chief Minister. For the BJP, regaining control in Jharkhand is crucial in their larger national strategy to consolidate power in eastern India, especially given their historical dominance in the state. The INDIA bloc, however, views retaining Jharkhand as a cornerstone for strengthening their coalition at a national level. Ultimately, it is the voter sentiment on the ground and the influence of tribal constituencies which are likely to play decisive roles in Jharkhand elections.

PICTALK



Young men play cricket as dark clouds hover in the sky at the Marina Beach, in Chennai

India's tax overhaul: Why simplification is the key



SUBHASH CHANDRA AGRAWAL

There is an urgent need for structural reform, streamlining tax rates and enhanced digital transaction incentives to bring clarity, efficiency and fairness to tax regime

The Indian tax system is notoriously complex and outdated, rooted in the six-decade-old Income Tax Act of 1961, which has undergone numerous amendments. These frequent, piecemeal adjustments have created a convoluted tax structure, leaving both taxpayers and administrators struggling with a lack of clarity. Similarly, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, introduced in 2017 as a landmark reform to streamline indirect taxes, has also accumulated a variety of confusing provisions and multiple tax rates, making compliance challenging and costly for businesses. This layering of amendments and patchwork reforms in both direct and indirect tax regimes highlights the need for a comprehensive overhaul that simplifies the tax structure.

A unified, streamlined tax regime should be introduced, minimising the countless exemptions that are prone to misuse. Implementing the recommendations of the Raja Chelliah Committee to cap the highest income tax rate at 30 per cent in alignment with global norms had previously succeeded in reducing black money transactions. However, with the reintroduction of additional surcharges and cess, this advantage has largely been negated. Restoring the 30 per cent cap on the highest tax slab would encourage more individuals to report their income accurately, avoiding tax evasion. An alternative solution could be to establish a permanent Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (VDS). Such a system would bring informal transactions, especially in high-value sectors like real estate, into the official economy if accompanied by a reduction in property registration fees to around 3 per cent. To foster transparency and discourage tax evasion, names of taxpayers disclosing income under this scheme could be made public on a government website. Rationalising income tax exemptions would also help simplify the tax landscape. The baseline exemption limit should be set at Rs 5 lakh, removing exemptions for charitable donations, political contributions and even agricul-



tural income, which are often exploited by high-net-worth individuals and celebrities to channel unaccounted income under the guise of agricultural profits. Farmers typically do not earn over Rs 5 lakh annually, so a limit based on this threshold could curtail abuse. Income between Rs5-10 lakh could be taxed at 10 per cent and income between Rs10-15 lakh at 20 per cent, with income above Rs 15 lakh subject to the 30 per cent rate. Additionally, adopting the recommendation of the LK Jha Committee to shift the financial year from April-March to the calendar year would align India's practices with international standards, further streamlining the tax system.

One glaring inefficiency in the tax system is the reliance on cash transactions, particularly for small amounts. All transactions above Rs10,000 should be conducted through banks. To encourage this, transaction fees on credit card payments should be reduced to 0.5 per cent-exempt from GST- and absorbed by the central government, which would also discontinue incentives for credit card purchases. This reduced fee would significantly increase credit card usage and thus bring more transactions into the formal economy. Currently, the high 2 per cent transaction fee often deters traders from using cards, especially in sectors with low profit margins, leading to extra charges for customers. Increased credit card usage would generate substantial tax revenue and boost the income



A SIMPLIFIED GST STRUCTURE WITH JUST THREE TAX SLABS-6 PER CENT, 12 PER CENT AND 30 PER CENT -WOULD BE FAR MORE MANAGEABLE THAN THE CURRENT SYSTEM WITH MULTIPLE RATES. INDIA REMAINS ONE OF THE FEW COUNTRIES WITH SUCH A FRAGMENTED GST SYSTEM, WHICH IS OFTEN BEWILDERING FOR BUSINESSES

of banks issuing cards, despite the lower transaction fee. To facilitate smooth payments, every GST-registered dealer should maintain at least two card-swiping machines and those refusing to accept cards should face strict penalties. Another significant concern is the Input Tax Credit (ITC) mechanism in the GST regime, which has become a hotbed for tax evasion, especially in manufacturing. Unsold GST invoices are often purchased by manufacturers seeking ITC, who then receive cash back from sellers. This practice has exacerbated the currency-in-circulation issue that demonetization sought to address. To prevent misuse, an annual forensic audit could be mandated for all ITC claims. An even better solution might be to eliminate the 18 per cent GST slab and restrict ITC eligibility to specific sectors like tradable goods, which would streamline GST compliance for manufacturers and reduce tax evasion. A simplified GST structure with just three tax slabs-6 per cent, 12 per cent and 30 per cent-would be far more manageable than the current system with multiple rates. India remains one of the few countries with such a fragmented GST system, which is often bewildering for businesses. Over time, the 6 per cent and 12 per cent slabs could be consolidated into a single 10 per cent rate. Essential raw materials such as agricultural products, fish and cotton yarn, which require further processing, could remain

exempt. High-value items like cars, appliances, and electronics should fall under the 30 per cent GST bracket, while parts for these items could be taxed at 12 per cent. The existing system, which categorises similar items under different rates, such as clutch plates at 18 per cent and clutch bearings at 28 per cent, causes unnecessary confusion. Similarly, edible items sold by confectioners are subject to different rates, with sweets, biscuits and snacks varying between 5 per cent and 28 per cent. Jewelry is another area that could benefit from rationalisation. The GST on gold jewelry could be split into two parts-one for the metal content and the other for making charges. Cess on luxury items could be replaced with additional GST slabs, ideally bringing petroleum products under the GST regime to standardise fuel prices nationwide. Further reforms should address inconsistencies in applying GST to government transactions, postal services, and foreign mail tariffs. It is counterintuitive for government payments to incur GST, as this creates unnecessary accounting complexities, merely transferring funds between government departments. Similarly, postal rates, both domestic and international, require a more logical pricing structure with consistent increments. (The writer is Guinness World Record holder and RTI Consultant; views are personal)

Diverse, climate-responsive design is key to net-zero goals

As cities push toward net-zero targets, it is crucial to consider how climate-responsive design can drive a sustainable future

Diversity is the rule of nature. Unfortunately, globalisation has made uniformity a common rule of thumb. This uniform culture not only erodes the cultural diversity we used to observe in every corner of the world but also harms the environment. It is imperative to look closely at how building architecture contributes to the stability of the environment.



The universalisation of building architecture poses a significant challenge to achieving net-zero targets. Though widely adopted for efficiency and branding purposes, this "one-size-fits-all" approach may ultimately hinder the push for sustainable, regionally adaptable and carbon-neutral construction. Different regions possess unique climatic and environmental conditions, from the humidity of tropical areas to the aridity of deserts and the chill of temperate zones. The universal approach to architecture fails to acknowledge these variations, leading to buildings that are fundamentally out of sync with their surroundings. For example, glass buildings are highly

energy-intensive in hot climates, requiring powerful air conditioning to maintain comfort levels. Traditional architecture provides a blueprint for climate-responsive design. Indigenous buildings reflect local knowledge of materials and climate, demonstrating how structures can achieve comfort with minimal energy input. For example, the traditional architecture of Kerala, the nalukettu style (four-sided structure with a central open courtyard), an ettukettu (eight-sided) or even a pathinarukettu (sixteen-sided) layout brings in natural light and ventilation, creating a cooling effect within the home. The steep, sloping roofs of clay tiles that usual-

ly adorn the traditional architecture allow rainwater to run off efficiently during Kerala's monsoon season. This roof style not only serves to prevent waterlogging but also helps keep the interiors cool. Similarly, the thatched houses made from palm leaves, straw, or reeds provide excellent thermal insulation, making the interiors naturally cool. These traditional designs, often overlooked or deemed "outdated," hold valuable lessons for sustainable construction. These structures rely heavily on artificial heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems by ignoring local environmental factors, resulting in increased energy consumption and carbon emissions. Incorporating regional adaptations into building codes can encourage architects and developers to consider climate-responsive designs. Municipalities and urban planners play a critical role by mandating energy-efficient designs aligned with the local environment. Additionally, incentive structures—such as tax breaks or subsidies for buildings that achieve high

environmental ratings using regional materials—could drive more developers toward climate-responsive practices. Achieving net zero requires a fundamental shift in how we conceive, design, and construct buildings. Global architectural firms and developers must recognise that regional adaptation is not a limitation but an opportunity for innovation. A glass-and-steel tower may look sleek, but its environmental footprint should be minimised by integrating green roofs, indigenous materials, and passive climate strategies. Ultimately, the transition to net zero requires a new paradigm where buildings are no longer static, universal symbols of modernity but dynamic, responsive structures that work with—rather than against—their environment. Embracing diversity in architecture is not just about aesthetics or cultural representation; it is an essential strategy for sustainable living in a warming world. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

YUNUS FACES CHALLENGES

Madam — Bangladesh's interim government led by Muhammad Yunus, which has shown very few signs of effectively tackling major problems confronting the country, intends to approach Interpol to arrest and bring back former premier Sheikh Hasina and other members of her administration. The people in Bangladesh remain concerned about the high cost of living, law and order and the return of Islamist forces suppressed under Hasina. The world community has its concerns about violence against minority communities, especially Hindus, who make up 8 per cent of the country's population. The Yunus-led setup needs to rethink its priorities if it wants a healthy electoral democracy for Bangladesh, especially at a time when members of the caretaker administration appear to be working at cross purposes.

The Yunus government is also seeking to impose a ban on the Awami League. An election without the Awami League will be a sham; it will be the same kind of controlled democracy Hasina imposed on Bangladesh to prevent her rivals from participating in electoral politics. Yunus, an unelected caretaker, should provide the healing touch of reconciliation rather than letting radical colleagues, some with dubious antecedents, dictate the politics of revenge. At the same time, Yunus should not let political chaos return to Bangladesh, harming relations with neighbours and derailing the positive economic path the country had been pursuing.

N Sathasiva Reddy | Washington

ARAB LEADERS UNITE

Madam — Arab and Muslim leaders gathered in Saudi Arabia for a summit to address Israel's conflicts in Gaza and Lebanon. The summit, organised by the Saudi Foreign Ministry, comes a year after a similar meeting condemned Israel's actions in Gaza. Leaders are expected to discuss ongoing violence and regional developments, as well as call for an end

Health risks of tattooing



The growing trend of tattooing, which has become a widespread fashion among people of all ages, including celebrities and common individuals. However, this practice often continues without consideration of its harmful health impacts. The increase in tat-

tooning has been linked to the spread of serious diseases. For instance, in Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, 60 women were diagnosed with an AIDS-like disease due to the repeated use of a single, HIV-infected needle. Such unsafe practices pose a significant threat, leading to the spread of diseases like HIV and hepatitis. Additionally, reports warn of a potential risk of skin cancer from tattoo inks containing harmful chemicals such as polyethylene glycol. These findings emphasise the urgent need for awareness and caution. It is crucial for individuals to ensure that tattoo parlours use sterilised needles and safe, approved inks. Consulting a doctor before getting a tattoo can also help mitigate health risks. Public health authorities should conduct awareness campaigns to educate people about these dangers.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

to the Gaza conflict and Israeli military actions. Exactly a year ago, after a similar formality, the Islamic countries went home, considering their duty done. While the Israeli army has expanded the range of its bombing, it is now raining death bombs on Lebanon and Yemen as well. The figures give a count of 50 thousand deaths, but this figure could go up to lakhs as tens of thousands of people were badly wounded and injured. They are not getting proper and adequate medical help either. Obviously, they are also sure to die. Israel is claiming that Trump has become president again, so Israel will now take over the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Will the Arab countries take some concrete steps to stop the Israeli oppression cycle, or will they keep praying with folded hands in front of it? It is said that a person who is beaten does not listen to words. To defeat Israel, the Arab countries will have to increase their military strength and combat equipment. Israeli atrocities cannot be avoided by just offering prayers five times a day. For that, the countries of this group will have to

increase military equipment with immediate effect.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

RENEW CRICKET TIES

Madam — It will be nice if the BCCI reconsiders its decision of not sending the Indian cricket team to Pakistan to participate in the Champions Trophy to be held there next year. Unlike politics, sports enable people to channel emotional impulses through victory and defeat, which may help explain why some key India-Pakistan cricket games have helped both nations move closer diplomatically in tense geopolitical environments. Through phased timelines and subnational trust-based initiatives, India and Pakistan can certainly resume cricketing ties and normalise their political relations. The Champions Trophy 2025 provides a great opportunity to realise the same.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

MAKE A HABIT OF PRAYING

Praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We, souls, are intrinsically small, quite ignorant, unsafe and mostly helpless. God is omnipotent, omniscient and controller. God is quite prepared to guide and help, but we have to pray for His guidance and help. God won't do it on His own, because that will encroach upon our free will. So, what is the wise thing to do? Just pray. It is as simple as that. Not praying is not really an option. Otherwise, we will begin to speculate and, yes, worry. Why does one not pray? There are two main reasons.

One is ignorance about its benefits. The other is a feeling that one doesn't need God's help; I can manage. We don't till we get in trouble. We can pray anytime; God doesn't mind. Strangely, we request favours from so many, but not from God, who is the source of everything. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 10.41) Praying is a positive act. This is linked with our desires, which define us. Did you not know that all worship is praying only? All schools worldwide start with prayers. Prayers are of three types. One is for what we feel we need. (9.22) The second is for the protection of what we have like health. (9.22) The third and most important is to protect us when there are good times.

Lord Krishna has commended those who can tolerate 'sukha' just as one tolerates 'duhkha' (2.14, 2.38 and 12.13) Because all big mistakes are generally made in happy times only when one feels that one cannot do any wrong. This is when lust raises its ugly head the most. The mind becomes super active prodded by senses. (15.7) God can



help as only He can. But before doing that ego has to be curbed. We have to accept that someone can be superior to us and to such an extent that we must take His shelter. This is how we get started. You begin praying and start becoming deserving of favours by God, because praying is a spiritual act, as it links us with God. Does being connected with the rich and powerful not bring some benefits? Then, God owns all that we see.

Yes, it is all His; we get it to use for a limited period only. Then, we are relocated. Now I will list what all we can pray for. This is not an exhaustive list, but it will be a good beginning. The first must be for guidance because direction is all important. Who is better placed than God, who is omniscient and knows past, present and future also. The second on my list is help from God. Who again is better placed than God – the omnipotent?

Don't we get in trouble helplessly? God can help. (18.58) The third must be for 'shakti' (strength) of five kinds, which are inner strength (Atma Bala), intellectual strength, mental strength, physical strength and strength to be able to tolerate. We need all of them, especially the toleration part because we must tolerate what cannot be avoided. (2.10) Aren't we living in 'duhkhalaya' (place of miseries) (8.15) Material wealth is on everyone's list. This is possible if we remain in contact with God. (18.78) Not only wealth but success is there to be had if we pray and pray sincerely for all our 'dharma' (according to 'dharma') activities. (18.78)

The conclusion is that praying is the easiest and best way to take shelter from God. And as we receive what we crave for, and we can thank gratefully. What this will do is make us deserving of more rewards from God. Life will be nicely set. Keep praying.

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

Are e-commerce giants violating FDI norms?



UTTAM GUPTA

As policymakers consider future regulatory steps, the ongoing ED investigation may serve as a pivotal moment in clarifying the regulatory framework for e-commerce operations in India



Reportedly, on October 7, 2024, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided the offices of half a dozen sellers operating on the e-commerce platforms of Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart for alleged violations of Foreign Investment norms and Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). The intent behind the searches was to gather evidence on complaints that these sellers have been importing products from China but routing them through other locations to avoid paying higher import duties and longer time in getting the consignment cleared at the ports (that would be the case if the products were imported directly from China involving higher import tariff and more security-related checks). The agency also wanted to verify if the firms had indulged in 'under-invoicing', a practice that involves understatement of the true value of goods to save on payment of import duty. Establishing such violations will be less of a headache for the enforcement authorities although proving them in the court will remain a challenge apart from the process being long drawn. However, the big headache relates to proving violations of the norms relating to foreign direct investment (FDI). E-commerce, put simply, is the practice of buying and selling goods or services using the Internet. Amazon and Flipkart essentially operate the "market-place" model of e-commerce – a special dispensation carved out by the Narendra Modi Government under which 100 per cent FDI is permitted.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade or DPIIT in the Ministry of Commerce and Industries issued a Press Note (PN) in 2016 detailing the guidelines in this regard. The "market-place" is a platform where vendors sell their products to consumers even as its owner (say, Amazon) merely acts as a facilitator. The marketplace owner books orders, raises invoices, arranges deliveries, accepts payments, handles rejections, warehousing and so on. But, he can't own and control the inventory of goods and undertake "direct selling" to the consumer. But, this is happening.

The charge has been levelled by none other than the Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. At the launch of the Pahlke India Foundation's report 'Net Impact



AMAZON IS SELLING PRODUCTS ON ITS E-COMMERCE PLATFORM AT UNREALISTICALLY LOW PRICES WHICH RESULTS IN HEAVY LOSSES ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT A BILLION DOLLARS ANNUALLY

of E-Commerce on Employment and Consumer Welfare in India' on August 21, 2024, Goyal took a shot at Amazon, for selling products directly to consumers and indulging in "predatory pricing". That could lead to massive growth of e-commerce capturing half of the Indian retail market ten years from now. This would adversely impact an estimated 100 million small retailers across the country. Predatory pricing involves setting prices for a product at an unrealistically low level to undercut the competition and gain market share.

Generally practised by a new player, predatory pricing violates antitrust laws even as it seeks to create a monopoly. Goyal opines that Amazon is selling products on its e-commerce platform at unrealistically low prices which results in heavy losses estimated to be about a billion dollars annually. To fund these losses, it brings the money from its parent but camouflages it as FDI. Pertinently, he levelled these charges in 2020 also.

Apart from the top brass in the political establishment being fully seized of the matter, it has engaged the attention of the judiciary up to the level of the country's top court. In 2019, Delhi Vyapar Mahasangh (DVM) complained to the Competition Commission of India (CCI) alleging anti-competitive behaviour by Amazon Seller Services (ASS) and Flipkart Internet Private Limited (FIPL).

It argued that ASS and FIPL had entered into exclusive sales agreements with smartphone makers to sell certain phones through a small number of preferred sellers and offering to pay for part of the discount that such sellers would offer during key sales periods such as Flipkart's big billion day and Amazon's Prime Day.

Prima facie, the CCI agreed with DVM's contention and ordered a probe by the Director General (DG) – Investigation. ASS and

FIPL went up to the Supreme Court (SC) to get the order quashed. In August 2021, dismissing their appeal, the SC ordered "the CCI – DG will complete the probe. In its recent findings, the CCI-DG has charged ASS and FIPL with indulging in 'predatory pricing' and violation of antitrust laws. Has Amazon/Flipkart violated FDI norms also?"

To answer this let us look at the fine print. While allowing 100 per cent FDI in a market-place model of e-commerce, the PN (2016) had prescribed two main riders viz., (i) the entity can't permit more than 25 per cent of total sales on its platform from one vendor or its group companies". (ii) it can't directly or indirectly influence the sale price. The first condition didn't specify that a firm connected with the owner of "market-place" (say its subsidiary or its joint venture or JV with an Indian company) couldn't be a vendor.

Thus, contrary to the real intent of the policy which disallowed the e-commerce platform owners from direct selling to individual consumers, the fine print permitted them to do so. Putting a cap of 25 per cent on each such entity led to a bizarre scenario whereby four JVs or subsidiaries of Amazon could control all of the sales on its platform.

And, having permitted it as a direct seller, you can't prevent him from deciding/influencing the price. Thus, the second condition becomes redundant.

Meanwhile, the extant policy permits FDI in business-to-business or B2B segments in physical/offline format. This has enabled Amazon and Flipkart to set up offline stores. From these stores, they sell products to sellers (many of such entities are the darlings of the duo or JVs set up in collaboration with them), who in turn, sell those products on their marketplace platform.

So, it was a well-crafted policy framework intended to enable e-

commerce majors to do all that is necessary to control inventory and undertake direct selling to consumers on their own marketplace platform. Meanwhile, in a note issued on December 26, 2018, the DPIIT clarified that "the owner of the marketplace or its subsidiary or its JV with Indian company can't have ownership of the seller." Further, "a seller on the platform can't source more than 25 per cent of its inventory from a firm connected with the latter. The above clarification has prompted e-commerce majors to rework strategies in a manner such that their links with the 'preferred' sellers are not clearly visible.

Meanwhile, the enforcement agencies are in full action mode raiding the latter's premises, looking at the documents with the intent to identify and expose such links. But, this won't lead them anywhere. The government should face the facts head-on. If, its original intent was to ensure that the marketplace can't have any connection whatsoever with the seller whether by way of ownership or sourcing of the latter's inventory, that should have been mentioned in the guidelines issued in 2016. Anything done subsequently even if it comes by way of a clarification will be considered a retrospective change of policy and send a wrong signal.

Instead of going back, the government should clearly say '100 per cent FDI is permitted in direct selling to consumers alongside running a marketplace model'. It should also allow 100 per cent FDI in retail in all forms, single-brand or multi-brand retail (MBR), online or offline sans any riders. All these distinctions should go. This will enable millions of Indian retailers to have 'unrestrained' access to foreign capital thereby ensuring a level playing field.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Taiwan and India: A partnership in climate action and sustainable development

This partnership is poised to make meaningful contributions to net-zero transitions, green finance and climate adaptation, paving the way for a resilient future

As climate change reshapes our world, Taiwan and India, like many other nations, find themselves grappling with the profound challenges it brings. As major economies in the Indo-Pacific, Taiwan and India not only bear responsibility for their environmental welfare but also share a commitment to addressing the global climate crisis. Our cooperation on climate change holds immense potential, as Taiwan and India pursue a shared vision of green growth, innovation and sustainable development. In recent years, Taiwan has faced severe impacts from climate change, including the worst drought in a century, unprecedented rainfall and powerful typhoons. Under the leader-



BAUSHUAN GER

ship of President Lai Ching-te, Taiwan has outlined a comprehensive strategy for achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This vision includes advancing a second energy transition, accelerating the development of geothermal, hydrogen, biomass, solar and ocean energy, fostering a dual digital and green transformation of industries, and promoting sustainable lifestyles. Taiwan's

net-zero journey prioritises fairness, ensuring that every individual benefits from this transformative process. In June, Taiwan established the National Climate Change Committee under the Office of the President. This high-level initiative strengthens policy transparency and public engagement, aligning Taiwan's efforts with global climate goals.

With a focus on seven key areas—including pathways to net-zero, diverse carbon reduction technologies, green finance and sustainable living—the committee provides a solid foundation for both domestic and international climate action. Taiwan's commitment to climate governance offers an opportunity for new collaborations with

India on issues of mutual interest. India has demonstrated its ambition to become a global leader in clean energy, possessing rich resources for renewable energy development.

Taiwan, a world leader in green technology, climate adaptation and low-carbon innovation, complements India's strengths, allowing both countries to accelerate their sustainable development goals. Taiwan has integrated its 2050 net-zero target into the Climate Change Response Act and will implement a carbon fee system starting in 2025.

This initial carbon fee of approximately USD 10 per ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) will gradually increase, aligning with inter-



national standards of USD 40 to USD 60 per tCO₂e by 2030. Additionally, Taiwan plans to introduce an emissions trading system within the next four years, enhancing its role in the global carbon market. This framework presents a robust platform for cooperation in carbon markets, policy exchanges, and technology sharing. Taiwan is launching three major funds to

boost the growth of green industries, including the NT\$10 billion Green Growth Fund to support emerging net-zero industries domestically. Additionally, long-term investments in energy-saving, circular economy, and net-zero sectors will be supported by the Green Finance Innovation Fund, backed by the insurance and finance sectors.

The Taiwan Net-Zero Fund will collaborate with high-emission industries, venture capital, and financial institutions to invest in advanced carbon reduction technologies. These initiatives align with Article 9 of the Paris Agreement, which calls for mobilising climate finance from various sources to support global climate actions.

Taiwan's efforts will attract greater green investment, strengthen international competitiveness and deepen its climate partnership with India. In the realm of climate adaptation, Taiwan released its latest National Climate Change Science Report in May.

This report provides essential scientific data to assist local governments in planning effective short- and medium-term adaptation measures, enhancing urban resilience.

It underscores the need for early-warning systems and disaster prevention mechanisms that integrate prediction, response and recovery. Taiwan's adaptation initiatives align with Article 7 of the Paris Agreement and we see

great potential for Taiwan and India to collaborate on early-warning technologies, disaster prevention and resilience-building, strengthening both nations' ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Taiwan and India share a clear goal in climate action. Bilateral cooperation will promote green growth and jointly confront the global climate crisis. As Taiwan advances carbon pricing and green technologies, we look forward to deepening cooperation with India in renewable energy, net-zero transition, and technological innovation, contributing together to global climate governance.

(The writer is Taiwan's Representative to India; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold slips to Rs 77,750 per 10 gm amid global trends

Gold prices slipped Rs 50 to a four-week low of Rs 77,750 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid firm global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. On Tuesday, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 77,800 per 10 grams. However, silver prices rebounded after two days of straight fall by climbing Rs 1,200 to Rs 92,500 per kg against the previous close of Rs 91,300 per kg. Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity fell Rs 50 to Rs 77,350 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had finished lower at Rs 77,400 per kg on Tuesday. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery rose Rs 204, or 0.27 per cent, to trade at Rs 75,105 per 10 grams. "Gold saw minor gains as investors anticipate the release of US Consumer Price Index (CPI) data, which could offer some short-term support amidst an overall weak trend," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.



Rupee rises 1 paisa against US dollar to close at 84.38

The rupee moved in a narrow range and appreciated 1 paisa to close at 84.38 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, as provisional foreign fund outflows and a muted trend in domestic equities weighed on the local unit. The USD/INR pair is trading in a narrow range as strength of the American currency in the overseas market dented investor sentiments, while suspected intervention by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept the rupee supported at lower levels, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.40 against the US dollar. During the session, the local currency touched a high of 84.37. It finally settled at 84.38 (provisional), 1 paisa higher than its previous close. On Tuesday, the rupee fell 1 paisa to a new lifetime low of 84.39 against the US dollar. According to Praveen Singh -- Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas -- the USD/INR pair may rise to Rs 85 level in near term, though the intervention by the RBI may slow the pace.



PHF Leasing rebranded as Credifin Limited

PHF Leasing, a non-banking financial company has announced its rebranding as Credifin Limited. The company has also relocated its corporate headquarters to Delhi-NCR to better serve its expanding customer base across India. "The new name, Credifin, reflects a broader range of loan offerings and aligns with the company's mission to provide accessible financial solutions, backed by technology, nationwide," the company said in a release. Founded in 1998 and registered with the Reserve Bank of India, Credifin specialises in mortgage loans for first time home owners, loan against property, MSME business loans and financing for electric vehicles. The total AUM of the company was about Rs 245 crore as of June 30, 2024. Operating in 11 states and UT, Credifin is operating in over 150 locations and employs more than 550 people.

RBI: Municipal corporations need to enhance sources of revenue

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Municipal corporations need to enhance their sources of revenue through reforms in property tax, rationalisation of user charges, and better collection mechanisms, an RBI report has suggested.

The elasticity of property tax revenues, the predominant source of tax revenue, can be improved through adopting property tax formulae which are more reflective of property valuation, it said.

The 'Report on Municipal Finances' released by the Reserve Bank on Wednesday noted that the demand for high-quality public services in urban areas is growing rapidly with a rising urban population.

"Yet municipal corporations (MCs) in India invested with this responsibility generate limited revenues and rely heavily on the upper tiers of the government for their funding needs, limiting their operational flexibility," it said.

State-specific strategies to strengthen MC finances through local taxation reforms, better enforcement, augmenting institutional capacity and transparent financial management are cru-



cial for resilient municipal finances and effective urban development.

Compared to advanced economies and other comparable emerging market economies, Indian MCs generate much lower revenues and consequently, spend fewer resources as a percentage of GDP.

"The MCs have underdeveloped own-source revenue streams, including both tax and non-tax revenues," the RBI said.

At present, the report said the MCs remain heavily reliant on Central and state governments for their funding needs through revenue transfers.

Timely and adequate revenue assignment from the upper tiers of the govern-

ment is essential.

"In this regard, a State-level rule-based system of compensation and transfers, including the regular setting up of State Finance Commissions (SFCs) assumes importance," it emphasised.

The report further said municipal revenues, which were hit during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, recovered in 2021-22 and 2022-23. Despite significant responsibilities, the revenue streams of municipalities are limited and pale in comparison to those of State and Central governments.

Property taxes are the major constituent of tax revenues. Municipal bond financing has seen some recovery in recent years.

'India at forefront of digital revolution'

PNS ■ JAIPUR

India is at the forefront of the digital revolution and financial technology is speeding up digital payments, Reserve Bank Deputy Governor Michael Debabrata Patra said on Wednesday.

Vibrant e-markets are springing up and expanding their reach. It is estimated that the digital economy currently accounts for a tenth of India's GDP, he said, adding that going by growth rates observed over the past decade, it is poised to constitute a fifth of GDP by 2026.

In his inaugural address at the DEPR Conference on 'Digital Technology, Productivity and Economic Growth in India' here, Patra also said India is uniquely positioned to unlock new growth avenues and optimise existing ones with its digital public infrastructure (DPI), a vibrant information technology sector and a burgeoning youth population, including one of the largest AI talent bases.

Five-fold jump in ITR filers with income above Rs 50 lakh

Middle class tax burden falls

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tax burden on individuals earning less than Rs 20 lakh a year, broadly described as middle class, has come down during the 10 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, while there has been a substantial increase in taxes paid by those having annual income above Rs 50 lakh, sources said on Wednesday.

As per the income tax return (ITR) filing data, the number of individuals showing annual income of over Rs 50 lakh has gone up to over 9.39 lakh in 2023-24, a five-fold jump from 1.85 lakh in 2013-14. Also, the income tax liability of those earning above Rs 50 lakh has gone up 3.2 times, from Rs 2.52 lakh crore in 2014, to Rs 9.62 lakh crore in 2024.

A source said that 76 per cent of income tax collected is from those earning above Rs 50 lakh a year.

This has led to reduced tax burden on the middle class. Also, the increase in number of people filing ITRs with annual income above Rs 50 lakh is

due to "strong anti tax evasion and black money laws implemented by the Modi government", the source added.

The source further said that in 2014, individuals earning above Rs 2 lakh a year had to pay income tax. However, because of various exemptions and deductions announced by the Modi government, individuals earning up to Rs 7 lakh need not pay any taxes.

The percentage of income tax collection from taxpayers earning less than Rs 10 lakh has reduced, from 10.17 per cent of the total tax paid in 2014, to 6.22 per cent in 2024.

According to the source, the income tax liability of those earning between Rs 2.5 and Rs 7 lakh was an average Rs 43,000 in 2023-24, which is around 4-5 per cent of their income -- a level which is the lowest amongst emerging economies.

The source further said that as per official calculations, after adjusting inflation over the 10-year period, there is almost 60 per cent decrease in tax liability for those earning in the range of Rs 10-20 lakh.

Mines ministry, IEA sign pact for cooperation in critical mineral sector

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The mines ministry on Wednesday entered into a pact with the International Energy Agency (IEA) for cooperation in the area of critical minerals.

The Cabinet had earlier this month approved the proposal of signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between IEA and the mines ministry.

The present association would provide India with access to reliable data, analysis, and policy recommendations in the critical mineral sector.

The IEA is an international organisation within the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

"This collaboration would enable India to streamline its

policies, regulations, and investment strategies in the critical mineral sector, aligning them with global standards and best practices," the mines ministry said in a statement.

The agreement would also promote capacity building and knowledge exchange between India and the IEA member states, it said, adding that the collaboration on data collection, modelling, and analysis would enhance India's technical capabilities and institutional capacity in the critical mineral sector.

Joint research projects, workshops, and training programmes carried out under this agreement would help fostering collaboration and innovation in technology development, extraction techniques, and recycling methods for critical minerals, it said.

Sun TV Q2 PAT down to Rs 409.3 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sun TV Networks Ltd on Wednesday reported an 11.9 per cent decline in consolidated profit after tax (PAT) to Rs 409.32 crore for the September quarter. The company had reported a PAT of Rs 464.69 crore in the July-September period a year ago, according to a BSE filing by Sun TV Network, one of the largest broadcasters in the country. Its revenue from operations was down 10.86 per cent to Rs 934.54 crore in the quarter from Rs 1,048.45 crore in the year-ago period.

Sun TV Networks' total expenses increased 9.7 per cent to Rs 593.54 crore during the quarter, while its total income was at Rs 1,106.10 crore, down 4.66 per cent.

Moreover, in a separate filing, Sun TV said its board has declared an interim dividend of 100% -- Rs 5 per equity share of Rs 5 each for the financial year 2024-25.

Investors poorer by Rs 13 lakh cr in two days of market crash

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors suffered an erosion of Rs 13 lakh crore in market valuation in two days of crash in the BSE benchmark Sensex which lost over 2 per cent during this period.

Retail inflation soaring to a 14-month high of 6.21 per cent in October, unabated foreign fund outflows and muted quarterly earnings are the major reasons behind the heavy correction in the markets, traders said.

The BSE benchmark tanked 1,805.2 points or 2.27 per cent in two days. On Wednesday, it slumped 984.23 points or 1.25 per cent to settle at 77,690.95.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 13,07,898.47 crore to Rs 4,29,46,189.52 crore (USD 5.09 trillion) in two days.

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.

"With inflation once again



rising sharply and breaching above the RBI's comfort level, receding hopes of any major rate cuts in the near future by the central bank put the markets into a tizzy.

"Also, relentless FII selling in local equities, along with rising US bond yields and dismal corporate earnings show has prompted overseas investors to park their funds in relatively cheaper markets like China," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, Adani Ports, State Bank of India, JSW Steel, HDFC

Bank, IndusInd Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finserv were the biggest laggards. NTPC, Tata Motors and Infosys were the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,024.31 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 3.08 per cent and mid-cap slumped 2.56 per cent.

All sectoral indices ended lower. Realty tumbled 3.23 per cent, industrials (2.95 per cent), capital goods (2.72 per cent), services (2.54 per cent), metal (2.54 per cent) and commodities (2.45 per cent).

NTPC Green targets to invest Rs 1 lakh cr in solar, wind assets

PNS ■ MUMBAI

IPO-bound NTPC Green Energy is aiming to invest up to Rs 1 lakh crore in solar and wind assets by FY27, a top official said on Wednesday.

Assuming about 20 per cent of the investment to come from equity, it will need Rs 20,000 crore of its own funds for the expansion, its chairman and managing director Gurdeep Singh told reporters here, adding that Rs 10,000 crore of funds will be coming through the upcoming initial public offering.

The company will be able to raise the remaining resources through internal accruals, he added.

For the debt part, the company enjoys a very good credit rating from multiple agencies courtesy the strong parentage in India's biggest power pro-



ducer NTPC, Singh said, stressing that this enables it to land debt at softer rates when compared to rivals.

NTPC Green Energy, which has an installed capacity of 3,220 MW right now, is aiming to take up the same number by 6,000 MW by March 2025, 11,000 MW by March 2026 and 19,000 by March 2027, Singh said, adding that 11,000 MW of projects are already under implementation at multiple levels.

It will operate at a level where 90 per cent of the capacity will be solar, which requires an investment of Rs 5 crore per MW, and the rest will be wind which needs Rs 8 crore per MW, he said.

"The capital expenditure requirement by FY27 will be approximately Rs 1 lakh crore," he said speaking at the IPO roadshow here.

In the IPO, which will be open from November 19-22, the company is planning a fresh issue of shares worth up to Rs 10,000 crore at a price band of Rs 102-108 apiece.

Investors will have to apply for a minimum of 138 shares and in multiples of 138 thereafter in the IPO, which is one of the biggest offerings by any companies in recent times and comes right after food delivery company Swiggy's Rs 7,000-crore share sale.

Adani commits \$10 bn in US energy, infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Gautam Adani on Wednesday committed to investing USD 10 billion in energy and infrastructure projects in the United States.

"Congratulations to @realDonaldTrump," he posted on X, congratulating the incoming US President.

"As the partnership between India and the United States deepens, the Adani Group is committed to leveraging its global expertise and invest \$10 billion in US energy security and resilient infrastructure projects, aiming to create up to 15,000 jobs."

He, however, did not give the time period or details of the projects that his ports-to-energy conglomerate will be pursuing in the US.

'Will press for FTA with India'

PNS ■ LONDON

The UK's newly elected Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, said she will continue to press for the conclusion of the free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations which she had worked towards as former business and trade secretary.

Addressing a special diaspora gathering to celebrate the festive season at the High Commission of India in London on Tuesday evening, the Conservative Party leader said she would continue to champion the "important" bilateral partnership from the Opposition benches.

"I want everyone to know just how important the UK-India relationship is, not just to the government but also to the Conservative Party," said Badenoch.

"In the Department for Business, I did everything we could to continue strengthening relations with India and just because the Conservatives are not in government anymore doesn't mean that work will not continue. We really do value this relationship. We will continue to press for the conclusion of the India-UK FTA," said the Tory member of Parliament who succeeded Rishi Sunak as party leader earlier this month.

"The elections in both our countries got in the way; elec-

tions are now out of the way, it's time for us to get back to business and make sure our two governments are working towards this," added Badenoch.

Her intervention came as the latest Department for Business and Trade (DBT) statistics revealed that the annual two-way trade in goods and services between both countries had registered a 9.7 per cent hike over the past year to hit GBP 42 billion. India and the UK have been negotiating an FTA since January 2022 under the then Conservative-led government, something the Prime Minister

Keir Starmer led the Labour Party has committed to pursuing. We enjoy a thriving trade and investment partnership, which, through a future free trade agreement and Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT), could create one of the strongest and most prosperous relationships and partnerships in the world, which we're very proud of," said UK Treasury minister Tulip Siddiq in her keynote address to the London Global Convention organised by the Institute of Directors (IoD) this week.

"The UK and India alike have businesses crying out for greater access to export markets, and through the combination of a new trade strategy and, of course, a free trade agreement, we can provide that access.

India's workforce to increase to 457.62 mn: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India is on track to increase its workforce from 423.73 million in 2023 to 457.62 million by 2028, reflecting a net gain of 33.89 million workers, a report said on Wednesday.

According to a report by American software company ServiceNow, emerging technology will transform talent across India's key growth sectors, generating 2.73 million new tech jobs by 2028.

According to the report this surge in demand presents retail professionals with a valuable

opportunity to upskill in areas like Software Application Development and Data Engineering, equipping them for a tech-driven landscape.

This is followed by manufacturing (1.50 million jobs), education (0.84 million jobs), and healthcare (0.80 million jobs), propelled by expected economic growth and tech transformation, it stated.

"AI will be a key catalyst for job creation across India's growth engines, particularly in roles requiring advanced technical skills. This strategic emphasis will not only create



more high-value opportunities for professionals but will also empower them to build enduring digital careers,"

ServiceNow India Technology and Business Center Senior Vice President and Managing Director Sumeet Mathur said.

By equipping the country's talent with these essential skills, it can be ensured that India remains a leader in the global tech economy, he added.

The report is based on an analysis of the baseline of the country's labour market sourced from census and labour force survey data and the economic growth projections are derived from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It further revealed AI Systems Engineers will also benefit significantly from Gen AI, with half of the total tech

impact on this role coming directly from AI technologies.

Similarly, implementation consultants are poised to benefit significantly from the integration of Generative AI, saving 1.9 hours per week as AI takes over repetitive tasks, allowing them to focus on more strategic projects, it said.

Even the least-impacted role, Platform Owners, could save nearly half an hour each week. Emerging technologies will revolutionize roles across the tech ecosystem, enabling professionals to work smarter and faster, their report added.



TILDA SWINTON BRINGS TOAD TALES TO LIFE IN NEW DOCUMENTARY

The much-anticipated documentary *Some Thoughts on the Common Toad*, narrated by Oscar-winning actress Tilda Swinton, will make its India premiere at the ALT EFF 2024. This unique film, celebrating one of nature's most overlooked creatures, blends thoughtful narration with striking visuals, providing audiences with an immersive look into the life and significance of the common toad. As a vocal advocate for the environment, Swinton lends her distinctive voice to narrate the documentary, guiding viewers through a contemplative exploration of the creature's role in maintaining ecological balance. Her involvement adds a profound resonance to the film's message, underscoring the intricate connection between humanity and even the smallest members of the natural world. *Some Thoughts on the Common Toad* is one of many thought-provoking films showcased at ALT EFF 2024, which continues to be a platform for powerful storytelling aimed at fostering awareness and advocacy for the environment.



Harlem is back! This time with new faces, new dramas

After a shocking Season Two finale cliffhanger that left audiences on the edge of their seats, the news is finally out that *Harlem* will return for Season Three at the top of next year on January 23, exclusively on Prime Video. From creator and

writer Tracy Oliver (*Girls Trip*), *Harlem* will follow the core four women on the precipice of change like never before. Whether it be motherhood, singlehood, sisterhood, complicated career journeys, or even more complicated families, our stylish and ambitious best girlfriends strive to finally choose themselves above all else.

To spice things up even more, newcomers Kofi Siriboe, Logan Browning, Robin Givens and Gail Bean join the cast in recurring roles. Siriboe will portray Seth, an MLB player whose confident, charming and sweet mannerisms land him a

spot in one of the ladies' hearts. Browning will portray Portia, an edgy and beautiful woman from Ian's (Tyler Lepley) childhood, whose return to Harlem causes a stir. Bean will portray Givens' daughter Eva, a driven yet playful venture capitalist who has started working with Tye (Jerrie Johnson).

Harlem Season Three is produced by Amazon MGM Studios and Universal Television, in association with Paper Kite Productions. In addition to creator, writer and executive producer Tracy Oliver, Paper Kite's Amy Poehler (*Russian Doll*) and Kim Lessing (*Moxie*) serve as executive producers, alongside 3 Arts' Dave Becky (*True Story*), Britt Matt (*First Wives Club*), and 13-time Grammy Award winner Pharrell Williams (*Hidden Figures*) and Mimi Valdés (*Roxanne Roxanne*) from *i am OTHER*.

Denzel Washington joins *Black Panther 3*

Hollywood star Denzel Washington suggested he might retire while reflecting on his career and future endeavours, which include a part in the much-anticipated *Black Panther 3*. During the promotional tour for *Gladiator II*, Washington revealed that director Ryan Coogler is developing a part for him in the third installment of the *Black Panther* franchise. This section will rank among Washington's last film projects, in conjunction with a new collaboration with director Steve McQueen and a version of Shakespeare's *Othello*.

"It's all about the filmmakers for me. Especially at this stage in my career, I'm only interested in working with the best. I'm not sure how many more films I'll make, but it's likely not that many. I want to try things I haven't done before," he remarked. Reflecting on his journey, Washington noted, "I played Othello when I was 22. Now, I'm about to play him at 70." This mention was about his forthcoming Broadway performance of *Othello*, featuring Jake Gyllenhaal, scheduled to debut in February 2025.

He continued, "After that, I'll be playing Hannibal. Then, there's the project with Steve McQueen, and Ryan Coogler's writing a role for me in the next *Black Panther*. Following that, I'll take on Othello once again, then King Lear. And after all that, well, then I think it's time to retire." Washington's involvement in *Black Panther 3* carries special importance.



SHOOJIT SIRCAR ON ABHISHEK BACHCHAN BEING CAST FOR *I WANT TO TALK*

National award-winning director and one of the finest filmmakers of Indian Cinema, Shoojit Sircar recently revealed the real reason behind casting Abhishek Bachchan in the role of a father for his upcoming film *I Want to Talk*. "I chose Abhishek for this role because he brings a natural warmth and relatability that is perfect for exploring the depth of a daughter-father relationship," Shoojit shared. "We've wanted to work together for years and this story of family and everyday life was the ideal fit. Abhishek has delivered one of his finest performances, capturing the

subtle, slice-of-life moments that truly bring the character to life." Shoojit has the ability to showcase ordinary people in an extraordinary story making his films relevant and iconic. Some of his past films like *Piku*, *Sardar Udham*, *October* and *Madras Cafe* have been critically acclaimed worldwide.

The film narrates the story of a father-daughter relationship, where Arjun (played by Abhishek) is fighting against an illness that changes his life completely tagged along with internal battles.

I Want to Talk marks the first collaboration between Abhishek and Shoojit which will be released in theaters on November 22.

Aitraaz 2: The wait begins, but who will star in sequel?

Director and producer Subash Ghai has revealed plans for the sequel to his film *Aitraaz*, which he had produced. The movie was helmed by Abbas Mustan. The original featured Priyanka Chopra, Kareena Kapoor, Akshay Kumar and Amrith Puri, among others, in key roles.

Ghai shared the exciting news recently via his social media handle with a still of Priyanka from the film. "BOLD AND BEAUTIFUL PRIYANKA CHOPRA DARED N DID IT. That's why cine lovers can not forget her performance even after 20 years today in #AITRAAZ - produced my Mukta arts. When she was too apprehensive to do this role of an ardent ambitious woman, she did it with full confidence. Now MUKTA ARTS is ready for AITRAAZ 2 with the finest script with 3 years of hard work. Just wait n watch (sic)," read the full caption. The cast information for the sequel has not been revealed yet. *Aitraaz* was released in 2004.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



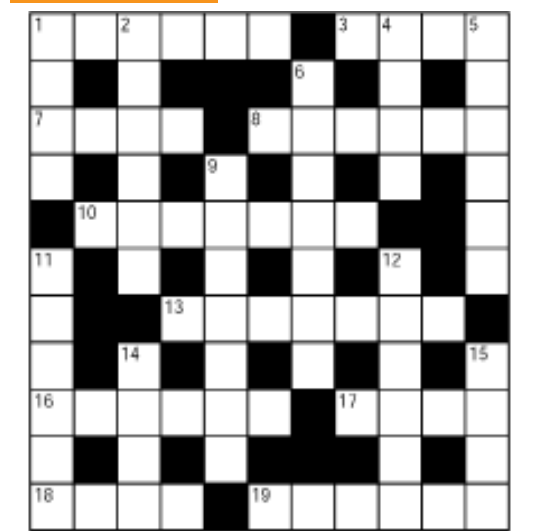
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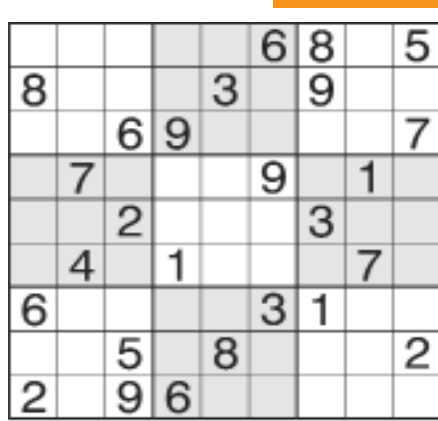
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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

ACROSS

- 1 A season
- 3 Strike with an open hand
- 7 Jump over
- 8 Having a sharp sour taste
- 10 Applauded
- 13 Bumped
- 16 Sleepy
- 17 A biting, jumping insect
- 18 Require
- 19 Something built over a river

DOWN

- 2 Not sick
- 4 Just about
- 6 Overdue
- 5 A talking pet bird
- 6 A permit to drive
- 9 The language of Spain
- 11 Concealed from view
- 12 Shouted
- 14 Gown
- 15 A strong box for storing valuables



GINGER MEGGS



SEVA TO SANGAT: TELANGANA SIKH SOCIETY'S IMPACTFUL INITIATIVES

TEJAL SINHA
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Nestled in the heart of Telangana, where ancient traditions meet modern aspirations, lies the vibrant Telangana Sikh Society. This flourishing community is a shining exemplar of unity, diversity and spiritual growth, weaving together the rich cultural heritage of the Sikhs with the warm hospitality of Telangana.

This thriving community is a testament to the power of unity, where the timeless values of Sikhism blend harmoniously with the rich heritage of South India.

With its roots firmly planted in the principles of equality, compassion and selfless service, this society has blossomed into a beacon of hope, warmth and celebration. From the majestic Gurudwaras that stand as sentinels of faith to the vibrant festivities that dance with joy and different services, every moment is a testament to the boundless spirit of the Telangana Sikh community.

Here, the gentle waters of the Musi River merge with the sacred sounds of the Gurbani, creating a symphony of love and unity. Founded in 2018 by Tejdeep Kaur Menon, the Telangana Sikh Society is a registered NGO dedicated to promoting social welfare, education, and cultural preservation within the Sikh community. As an apex body for Sikhs in the state, the Telangana Sikh Society serves as a welfare institution and NGO, catering to the needs of the downtrodden and marginalised. "We focus on those who have been left behind in the developmental process for various reasons," explains the founding president in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*.

She further goes on to highlight that there are 44 Gurudwaras across Telangana, serving a sizable Sikh population of approximately 4.5



to 5 lakhs. However, a significant portion of this community struggles with poverty. "Many, who are likely to be migrant workers, employed as welders, or manufacturing pots and pans. They face numerous challenges associated with poverty, including homelessness and displacement."

She highlights the plight of these migrant workers, who often settle in an area for 20-30 years, only to be forcibly relocated due to infrastructure development or private interests. "Governmental agencies and private entities frequently displace them, citing reasons such as road widening or construction projects."

Despite these challenges, the Telangana Sikh Society remains committed to addressing the community's needs, working tirelessly to provide support and resources to our members, ensuring their well-being and empowerment.

Her dedication to the organisation's mission is evident in her words, "We strive to create a better future for the Sikh community in Telangana and we will continue to work towards this goal."

The Telangana Sikh Society has established itself as a beacon of hope for the marginalised Sikh community, providing essential services and advocacy. Menon explains, "When our community members face challenges, we intervene, navigating courts and government agencies to ensure they receive a fair deal."

One of the organisation's significant achievements is securing housing and land for displaced Sikh families. "We've successfully obtained BHKs and alternative land for our community members, including four Sikh families who were previously denied land due to neighborhood pressure."

Then comes healthcare, which has been another critical area that they have been focusing on. The society provides free medical treatment, including cashless hospitalisation, physiotherapy and medication, primarily targeting those with congenital issues, accidents, or pro-

fessional hazards. Menon notes, "We've supported over 2,000 patients, often accompanying them throughout their treatment journey."

The organisation conducts regular health camps, including eye camps, in collaboration with hospitals like Lawrence and Mayo. "We screen patients and provide free spectacles to those below the poverty line, while others receive a 25% discount."

Menon highlights the society's partnerships with Punjabi doctors, leveraging their expertise to benefit the community. "Our network of doctors provides specialised care, from dental to orthopedic services, at subsidised rates."

The Telangana Sikh Society's initiatives extend beyond the Sikh community, supporting anyone in need. "We've helped patients from various backgrounds, including migrant workers and those with cancer."

In addition to healthcare, they operate several skill development hubs, offering training in fashion designing, computer courses and pre-primary teacher training. During summer holidays, the society conducts spoken English classes for children across various locations. Menon reflects, "We've exhausted the population in some areas, but neighboring communities also benefit from our initiatives. We offer various programs, including computer courses, spoken English classes and women's empowerment initiatives. However, during school seasons, it becomes challenging to engage children in our programs."

To address this, the society organises residential children's camps, providing a holistic experience. "We've hosted two massive camps, catering to 600 children, focusing on moral code, art, music and critical issues like alcoholism, abusive families and women's empowerment."

The COVID-19 pandemic temporarily halted these camps, but society has since shifted focus to women's development centers, offering 45- to 60-day courses.

Emphasising the society's commitment to preserving Sikh history and culture. "We showcase cultural events and exhibitions in Hyderabad, promoting our rich heritage." During the pandemic, society sprang into action, distributing essential supplies. "We provided millions of packets of food, rice, milk, and cooked meals to suburbs of Hyderabad."

Going ahead, she recounts the initial challenges to us, including a promised land allocation from the government that never materialised. The organisation collects funds from the community and channels resources from other institutions. A notable example is the approximately Rs 1 crore secured for Gurunanath High School's repairs and infrastructure development.

She notes, "We support schools with outdated infrastructure, addressing pressing issues like waterproofing, toilets and drainage."

Menon highlights the organisation's focus on holistic support. "We conduct group marriages, providing newlyweds with essential items like gas cylinders, almirahs, TVs and more." The society's healthcare initiatives are comprehensive. "We partner with Dental Hospital for regular screenings, education, and treatments like fillings and root canals."

Serious cases are transferred to government hospitals like NIMS, NAMS and Milofa, with the society covering expenses. "We utilise the Centimeters Relief Fund on a case-to-case basis, addressing expensive treatments for accidents and orthopedic, plastic and vascular surgeries." Particularly among lower-middle-class families. "We regularly counsel our community members on obtaining driving licenses and adhering to traffic rules." To amplify this initiative, the society collaborates with traffic authorities. "We organise sessions where traffic cops engage with our community, highlighting the importance of road safety."

Menon notes that many families in the community are vulnerable to road accidents. "Often, you'll see a mother, father, and child on a single bike, which is alarming."

The Telangana Sikh Society's proactive approach aims to mitigate such risks. "We strive to empower our community members, ensuring they prioritise road safety and responsible driving practices." As we are going to celebrate Guru Nanak Jayanti tomorrow (November 15), the society is organising an eye camp for the poor and needy at the exhibition grounds. "We've been organising several such camps every year. Instead of just focusing on general health camps, we try to focus on the importance of maintaining their eye and dental health. Cleaning of teeth, the filling procedure for kids, we've been doing regularly. When there are any serious cases, we transfer it to the hospitals and pay for it."

In a world often marked by division and inequality, the Telangana Sikh Society stands as a shining example of humanity's capacity for kindness, generosity and love.



With Guru Nanak Jayanti around the corner, *The Pioneer* sits down with Tejdeep Kaur Menon, the driving force behind Telangana Sikh Society, sharing the society's impactful initiatives that are transforming lives, embodying the values of compassion and more



Vegan skincare uncovered

As more consumers become conscious of what goes into their beauty products, vegan skincare has become a prominent choice for individuals seeking ethical and plant-based solutions. As we celebrate the World Vegan Month, here, we debunk the top myths surrounding vegan skincare.

Vegan skincare is not same as cruelty-free skincare

Contrary to popular belief, vegan and cruelty-free are not interchangeable terms. Vegan skincare excludes animal-derived ingredients, while cruelty-free skincare ensures no animal testing was involved in the product's development.

Vegan skincare is just as effective as traditional skincare

Many assume vegan skincare lacks the potency of conventional products, but plant-based alternatives, such as seaweed or soy protein, can deliver equally effective results.

Vegan skincare is for everyone, not just vegans

You don't need to follow a vegan lifestyle to enjoy the benefits of vegan skincare. Vegan skincare aligns with a broader shift toward environmental responsibility and products are designed for individuals of all skin types.

Vegan skincare products do contain preservatives

Preservatives are necessary to ensure product safety and our vegan skincare line includes natural preservatives like vitamin E and rosemary to maintain freshness.

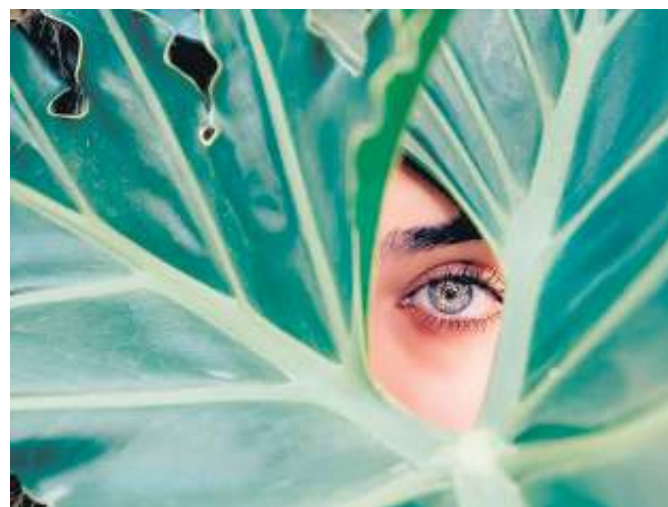
Not all natural skincare is vegan

It's easy to assume that "natural" means vegan, but many natural products still contain animal-derived ingredients like beeswax or lanolin.

Vegan doesn't always mean clean

Vegan products align with "clean beauty" standards, avoiding harmful & toxic chemicals and ensuring sustainability throughout process.

(The author, Ravina Jain, is a skin tech expert and founder of Skin Story.)



DJ Lyan's 'Tapori-C' blend of hip-hop with Kerala's folk

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Behind the decks is DJ Lyan, a master storyteller whose musical narrative is fashioned from strands of dedication, passion and inventiveness. A personal journey, each set is designed to arouse feelings, establish relationships and immerse listeners in a realm of sound that speaks to their innermost selves. He shares his soul with every beat, beckoning you to embark with him on a musical journey that will uplift your soul, move your body and touch your heart. In an exclusive interview with the maestro of mixing, the music artist shared, "I'm constantly searching through playlists for the newest music and I stumbled into one of Baby Jeans' albums. I knew I had to get him on a record right away because I could relate to his voice and flow. The basis for *Tapori* was created by fusing a South Indian drum sample with bass and trap/hip-hop beats. To be honest, I had no idea how an artist would ride the beat, but when Jean sent me a voice message expressing his thoughts, I immediately understood and let him handle the music and lyrics." What a stunning blend!

In response to the question of how the Maramadi bull surfing ritual was incorporated into a lively club song, the musician revealed, "More significantly, we wanted the image to convey Jean's cultural background. Someone from the Desi Trill team shared the Maramadi bull surfing with us and we immediately knew we had to spread the word as soon as we saw the YouTube videos. Making it work with the song wasn't too difficult because the sport is really energetic." This Kerala folk-driven dancefloor hit *Tapori*, featuring Malayalam rapper Baby Jean, was released earlier this week by the and movement Desi Trill and was produced by British-Asian producer DJ Lyan. So, "The most important thing, in my opinion, is to have faith in your work and create music that is authentic and true to you. I always come up with ideas and records that I know I adore and my music is a reflection of who I am. Everything else will work itself out as long as you are being who you truly are."

His candid responses demonstrated how innovation is fuelled by the tenacity of even successful DJs! "These days, audiences are ravenous for anything new and genuine and Malayalam offers distinctive textures,

rhythms and viewpoints. The goal of *Tapori* was to convey Kerala's unadulterated, street-level energy and music to a global audience."

A high-octane look at Kerala's thrilling bull surfing sport, Maramadi, is intercut with pictures of DJ Lyan and Baby Jean from Malappuram! The video "captures the raw energy and daring athleticism of bull surfing," according to him.

"As I previously stated, I never try to overthink a song," remarked the *Thank You Come Again* star. "It always comes down to the inspiration and energy I am experiencing at the time. Like the environment I grew up in, I constantly aim to produce a sound that feels like a genuine cultural mix. I naturally get affected by other genres and cultures because I listen to a lot of music from around the globe. With all of its colour and attitude, I wanted *Tapori* to feel unfiltered and genuine, like a snapshot of actual life here. The video was filmed with Keralans in a remote area in the state. The entire experience is local, as are the images. For me, it all comes down to continuously presenting the story of South Asian music blended with the sound of the world. You must first believe in the story in order to captivate readers. The songs on every record I release have a South Asian vibe. I want to make sure that I never forget that."



Tapori features a lot of booming, topsy-turvy bass music treatment pumped over South Indian percussion sounds and is bookended by two rap passages by Baby Jean. A reflection of the testosterone-fuelled chaos that awaits anyone who crosses the wrong person in Kerala is also seen in the video! "From beginning to end, it required a thorough investigation and cooperation with locals," explains the *Campfire* musician. "To recreate the genuine sound, I made sure to experiment with the many instruments and melodic concepts from the area. Sameer, the video's director, collaborated closely with a local team to realise the concept. We always consider cultural sensitivity and make sure to convey authenticity without sacrificing its core." It's an invitation to listeners outside of India to discover a more authentic, gritty and vibrant aspect of India than is typically portrayed. Additionally, it's a way for local listeners to celebrate their heritage and see their everyday culture elevated on a worldwide scale.

According to him, this experience deepens respect for India's vast diversity while also expanding people's horizons. "I'm expressing the realities of living in a foreign region of the world while also drawing on South Asian customs, sounds and cultural allusions. It's about accepting who I am while respecting my heritage. People who feel as though they are living in two different worlds and who are figuring out who they are in a combination of tradition and modernity will find resonance in my works because of this fusion," he reflects.

Jean gave him an explanation of the subtleties of the language while he was in Kerala. This only helped Lyan realise how many different languages there are in India, even if they are only a district or two away. He is willing to work with everyone to explore as many languages, cultures, sounds, instruments and artists as possible. He wishes to continue experimenting with various concepts while utilising India's untapped abilities.

As *Tapori* continues to electrify dancefloors and captivate audiences worldwide, *The Pioneer* catches up with the genius behind the track—DJ Lyan. In an intimate and insightful conversation, Lyan shares his thoughts on cultural identity, musical evolution and the pioneering spirit that drives him to push boundaries and redefine Indian electronic music

Work on technique and hit the reset button: Brett Lee's advice to Rohit, Kohli

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australian pacer Brett Lee has advised India skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli to hit the "reset button", work on their technique and hit the ground running in the five-Test series against Australia, beginning in Perth in less than 10 days' time. The two batting stalwarts will be keenly observed during the Border-Gavaskar series. Under following their underwhelming performance in the 0-3 Test whitewash by New Zealand recently. "When you have a couple of bad runs back to back, that's when the pressure gets set in. So, I guess the thing now is that someone like Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, they've just got to go back to the drawing board," Lee said on his YouTube channel. "They are champions because they do the basics better than anybody else. Then, just hit the reset button, almost." Lee also warned that the Australian pacers would be aiming to attack Rohit and



Kohli with the new ball, and that they should quickly sort their batting. ("They should) work on their technique, freshen up, much as they can and then get away from cricket for as hit the ground running when Lee wondered.

they go to Australia because I can promise you the Australian fast bowlers will be attacking Rohit Sharma with that brand-new ball," he added. Rohit has managed 588 runs in 11 Tests at an average of just 29.40 this year, while Kohli has accumulated 250 runs in six Test at an average of 22.72. Lee felt the tendency of the two batter to be too aggressive might have resulted in their poor show so far this year. "It's hard to put your finger on why they (Rohit and Kohli) failed. If you first look at the way that Rohit Sharma got out, a lot of the quicks. "So, I can't say there's a technical fault there because I've seen him play for the last decade. I still believe he's one of the best players of the pull shot in world cricket, but maybe he's a little bit too aggressive. "Maybe there were a couple of shots... Was there a technique issue? Was his bat leaving his pad a bit too early? Was he getting that far forward or not enough forward? Or, was he sort of being a little bit hesitant?"



Parthiv Patel joins Gujarat Titans' support staff as batting and assistant coach

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gujarat Titans have trusted former India keeper-batter Parthiv Patel with the dual responsibility of serving as their assistant and batting coach in the upcoming IPL, the franchise said on Wednesday. Parthiv will perform the dual role in the support staff led by head coach Ashish Nehra. "The Gujarat Titans are pleased to announce the appointment of Parthiv Patel as their new assistant and batting coach. With a distinguished 17-year career as a former Indian wicketkeeper-batter, Parthiv brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the team," the franchise said in a statement.

"As the Titans prepare for the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season, Parthiv's insights into batting techniques and strategies will play a crucial role in enhancing the players' skills. "Parthiv, who is known for his sharp cricketing acumen and ability to mentor young talent, will strengthen the coaching staff and contribute to player development and performance," GT added in the statement. This is the first coaching role in the IPL for Parthiv, who retired in 2020. Right after his retirement, he served as talent scout for Mumbai Indians for three seasons until 2023, and also the batting coach for MI Emirates in the inaugural season of ILT20.



Ponting, Langer could skip Perth Test commentary gig due to IPL auction

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting and his longtime teammate Justin Langer could potentially miss out commentating on the opening Test against India at Perth, starting November 22, due to commitments with their respective IPL teams for the mega auctions in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah on November 24 and 25. According to Australian newspaper "The Age", "Channel Seven could be without Ricky Ponting and Justin Langer for parts of the Perth Test due to a clash of commitments, and Australia may lose a vital backroom coach for the start of the blockbuster Border-Gavaskar series in a potential stand-off with Indian cricket."

Ponting, who has been appointed the head coach of Punjab Kings and Langer, who will be in his second season with Lucknow Super Giants, could be present at the IPL auction table for their respective franchises along with Australian team assistant coach Daniel Vettori, who is in-charge of Sunrisers Hyderabad. "Unless (Channel) Seven and Cricket Australia can protect their interests against powerful cricket authorities in India, Ponting, Langer and Australia assistant coach Dan Vettori will likely be in Saudi Arabia holding a paddle at the IPL's mega player auction in Jeddah instead of being at Optus Stadium when the first Test reaches its conclusion," the paper reported. "Seven" has a seven-year AUD

1.5 billion deal with Foxtel for broadcast of the game in Australia and even that, many fear, can't stop Ponting or Langer from missing the last three days of the Perth Test. Last year, Ponting, then coaching Delhi Capitals, left after day three of the Perth Test to attend the auction, while Langer stayed through till the end of the match. Vettori completed his duties with Australia before attending last year's auction, held two days after the Perth Test finished. "As of Wednesday morning, no decision had been made on whether Vettori would stay with the team through the entire Test or leave early for the auction, according to a team source with knowledge of the situation," "The Age" reported.

I've found ways and means to break it down: Ashwin on Smith's batting

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Senior India off-spinner R Ashwin says he has figured out ways to tackle Australian batting mainstay Steve Smith in the upcoming five-match Test series, extending their fascinating, decade-old rivalry in top-flight cricket. The two seasoned campaigners would face off during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting November 22 in Perth. They have in the past spent time together at IPL franchises Rising Pune Supergiant and Delhi Capitals, helping Ashwin to "break down the game plans" of Smith. "Steve Smith is especially fascinating as a player against spin. He has a unique technique, even playing fast bowling," Ashwin said in an interview with "Cricket". "But with spin, I think he came in with sound game plans and sound



preparations, and yeah, he used to execute it come what may. And over the years, I've found ways and means to break it down. "His time at Delhi Capitals, his time at RPSG, all these net sessions that I've seen him go about his business gave me an insight as to how he prepares and what he likes and

doesn't like." Ashwin, who first bowled to Smith during India's 2013/14 tour of Australia, lauded his fierce rival for being a "thinking cricketer", who has so far scored 348 runs in 570 balls while facing the ace spinner. Smith has got out to Ashwin three times. "He's a very thinking cricketer as well.

He wants to get one up on you all the time. But, he's got unique ways of practising and battling out with you in the middle. "And sometimes, as a bowler, when you're watching a batter go through his process, you do identify whether you have him or not. And several times in these years of having played with Steve Smith, I've felt he has me. "But several times, much later, when I think I've figured out what he does or how he bats, I've had an edge over him. I've had the wood over him." A modern-day batting great, Smith will be desperate to play some big knocks following his subdued stint as an opener after the retirement of David Warner, managing only 171 runs in four Tests at an average of 28.50. Ashwin is the third-highest Test wicket-taker for India in Australia with 38 scalps, behind Anil Kumble (49) and Kapil Dev (51).

Gambhir is prickly character, never took dig at Kohli: Ponting

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Responding to Gautam Gambhir's ribbe at him, former Australia skipper Ricky Ponting on Wednesday said the India head coach was a "prickly character" and insisted that his comments on Virat Kohli should not be construed as a dig on the star batter, who himself would be worried about his prolonged lean patch. Ponting, in an interview to ICC, had said that Kohli's poor form would be a concern and any other international player would have

struggle to keep his spot in the Test side with just two hundreds in five years. He though had also spoken highly of Kohli's ability to bounce back. Gambhir, when asked about Ponting's comments, said the Australian legend needn't be concerned about Indian cricket. "I was surprised to read the reaction but knowing the coach, Gautam Gambhir ... He's quite a prickly character, so I'm not surprised it was him who said something back," Ponting told 7News when asked about Gambhir's comments.



"If he comes my way, yeah. I don't expect him to. We have got quite a bit of history, against each other. I have actually coached him at Delhi Capitals and he is quite a prickly character," Ponting said in jest when

the anchor asked if he would shake hands with Gambhir if they cross path. One of the greatest batters of his time, Ponting then explained what he meant and felt that things were taken out of context. "In no way was it a dig at him (Kohli). I actually followed it up by saying he's played well in Australia and he'll be keen to bounce back over here...If you ask Virat, I'm sure he would be a little bit concerned that he hasn't been able to make the same amount of hundreds as he has in previous years," he said.

Indian batters 'can't stand up' to Aussie pacers: Haddin

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former captain Aaron Finch believes Rishabh Pant and Alex Carey will be crucial in determining the outcome of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, while retired wicketkeeper Brad Haddin predicts that Indian batters will struggle against the Australian pacers. Finch feels the two wicketkeepers have the ability to shift the momentum in their team's favour in the event of a top-order collapse. "I think the key could be Alex Carey and Rishabh Pant. The two wicketkeepers are going to be so important," Finch said on "Willow Talk Podcast" when asked where this series is going to be won or lost. "A time or other in series the top order will get knocked over as both fast bowling attacks are so good and they will get on a roll. For me, it is that really crucial role of Alex at number seven and Rishabh at number six likely."



Both Pant, who played a key role in India's series victory last time, and Carey are

known for their aggressive brand of cricket. "Carey is aggressive, Rishabh

is aggressive. The game is going to go one or two ways really quick. And I think that

will be so important. "Maybe when you are five down and the second new ball

comes just before stumps and they take it for 50 that 10 overs before stumps, that

changes the momentum of the game." Finch feels both side's bowling units are at par which each other, while their batters haven't been at their best recently. India head to the the marquee series on the back of an embarrassing 0-3 home series defeat to New Zealand. "It's so important that the number 7 has the impact on the game. In my opinion both fast bowling attacks cancel each other out Nathan Lyon and Ashwin or Jadeja cancel each other out, Lyon has the slight advantage of it being Australia. "Both batting line ups haven't been at their best for a little while so that's why the keepers are important." Indian batters to struggle against Australian pacers Haddin reckons the fast-bowling trio of Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood would trouble the Indian batters on bouncy pitches. "I don't think that the Indian

batters are going to stand up to our quicks," Haddin. India are likely to be without the services of skipper Rohit Sharma in the series opener at Perth, starting November 22. In Rohit's absence, either KL Rahul or Abhimanyu Easwaran will open the innings alongside Yashasvi Jaiswal, who will be playing his first series in Australia. Jaiswal has quickly established himself as one of the fiercest Test openers in recent times. In just 14 games, he has amassed 1,407 runs at an impressive average of 56.28, including three centuries, eight fifties, and a highest score of 214 not out. But Haddin is not sure how the youngster would negotiate the bouncy track that awaits India at Perth. "I know Jaiswal is a really good player, but he hasn't come out and seen Australia before, so I'm not sure whether he is going to handle the bounce. Opening in Perth is hard work," Haddin said.

IF FILMS FAIL, IT'S OUR MISTAKE, NOT THE AUDIENCE'S : CHIRANJEEVI

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Megastar Chiranjeevi attended the pre-release event of *Zebra*, starring Satya Dev and Dolly Dhananjay, directed by Eswar Karthik. Speaking at the event, Chiranjeevi reflected on the evolving film industry, noting, "This year, some films became superhits, proving that audiences still come to theatres. After the pandemic, many industries, including cinema, faced setbacks. Some filmmakers overlooked what kinds of films would truly attract audiences. Many turned to OTT platforms, watching movies in all languages," Chiranjeevi shared.

He expressed concerns that audiences were attending theatres primarily for big releases, which he believes is not healthy for the industry. "All types of films, including small ones, need to succeed in theatres for the industry to thrive. This way, more shoots happen, people get work and many families depend on it. But the audience has shown they will come if the film is worthwhile. If they don't show up, it's on us," he stated.

Chiranjeevi pointed to several successful films this year, starting with Prashanth Varma's *HanuMan*, Siddhu Jonnalagadda's *Tillu Square*, *Committee Kurrolo*, *Aye* and latest hits like *Lucky Bhaskar*, *Ka* and *Amaran*. He noted, "If a film has strong content and entertainment, audiences will support it. This year, out of around 125 films, 20% succeeded—a positive sign that audiences appreciate good content, whether it's a small or big film."

During his speech, Chiranjeevi praised actor Satya Dev, referring to him as a "younger brother" and a "versatile actor." He recalled his first impression, mistaking Satya Dev for a non-Telugu actor until he learned he was from Vizag! "Satya Dev has an intense presence and a bright future, though he hasn't yet had the right role. I cast him in *Godfather*, where he delivered a fantastic performance. He's a rare talent in Telugu cinema," said Chiranjeevi, wishing him the best. Satya Dev expressed gratitude, crediting his role in *Zebra* to his work with Chiranjeevi in *Godfather*. "Annayya (Chiranjeevi) blessing us today is unforgettable. This film is like a fresh



start for me, and I dedicate it to Annayya," Satya Dev said, promising a "new Satya Dev" in upcoming films.

During Chiranjeevi's address, a fan from Vizag shouted, "Bossuo, I came from Vizag

to see you!" Chiranjeevi responded in an Uttarandhra accent, encouraging support for the Vizag-based actors in *Zebra*. "Make this film a success in Vizag," he replied, connecting warmly with his fans.



FROM SPORTS TO CINEMA, KASHIKA KAPOOR'S REMARKABLE JOURNEY IS A TESTAMENT TO HER DEDICATION AND PASSION. IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH THE PIONEER, KASHIKA OPENS UP ABOUT HER EXPERIENCES, CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS, OFFERING A UNIQUE GLIMPSE INTO HER LIFE AS A RISING STAR

Making waves across T'wood with *Love Your Father*

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Kashika Kapoor, a multi-faceted young talent, is quickly making her mark in Indian cinema with a flair that spans both screen and stage. She has represented India in national-level swimming, throwball and basketball, showcasing her athleticism before she delved into acting.

Her journey into the films began with rigorous training at the Jeff Goldberg Studio, followed by a year at the prestigious New York Film Academy. Kashika is now set to captivate pan-Indian audiences in her Tollywood debut, *Love Your Father*, a pan-Indian, multilingual film.

With a fresh role that contrasts her previously celebrated character in *Aayushmati Geeta Matric Pass*, she opens up about the excitement and challenges of her journey across film industries, her hopes for the future and her drive to keep her audience captivated.

"It's amazing!" beams Kashika, describing the experience of joining a pan-Indian film. *Love Your Father* boasts a high-profile cast including

Sri Harsha, Nawab Shah and Aman Verma, while being helmed by Pawan Ketharaju, the creative talent who co-directed *Pushpa*. She praises the entire team, sharing how thrilled she was to work alongside such renowned faces. "Everyone on set was wonderful and it felt like a big, supportive family," she shares.

For her, portraying Sweetie in *Love Your Father* brings an exciting shift from her role in *Aayushmati Geeta Matric Pass*. Unlike her traditional portrayal of Geeta, Sweetie embraces a modern, Western flair, embodying a lively yet grounded personality. "Sweetie is bold, confident and supportive of her partner," says the young actor, highlighting her character's unique traits. She believes Sweetie's charm lies in her relatability and her unwavering support for her loved ones.

The shift to Tollywood wasn't without its challenges, particularly the language barrier. Kapoor had never acted in Telugu before, and she candidly admits it took some time to adjust. "I would get my script just an hour before the shoot. It was intense, but it pushed me out of my comfort zone," she says with a laugh. Despite her initial concerns, her first take earned praise from the

crew. "They were thrilled to hear me speak Telugu so fluently, which was a huge confidence boost."

Kashika's poster for *Love Your Father* has already generated significant buzz and she's delighted by the audience's anticipation. "First impressions are everything," she says. "The poster is what pulls people in and I'm so happy it's creating that excitement!" The film's storyline, which centers around family values, resonates with her, who expresses how meaningful it is to be part of a project that connects so deeply with audiences.

Looking ahead, she is eager to explore diverse roles, mentioning her interest in collaborating with Bollywood's top directors like Karan Johar, Sanjay Leela Bhansali and Zoya Akhtar. In Tollywood, she's excited to take on stories with mass appeal. "It's all about the content. I want to bring impactful films that everyone can enjoy," she says passionately. When it comes to what's next, the actress remains tight-lipped but hints at some thrilling projects on the horizon. With one foot planted in Bollywood and the other in Tollywood, Kashika Kapoor is clearly on her way to becoming a lasting name in Indian cinema.

Kanguva release nears; Suriya says, 'Calm before storm'

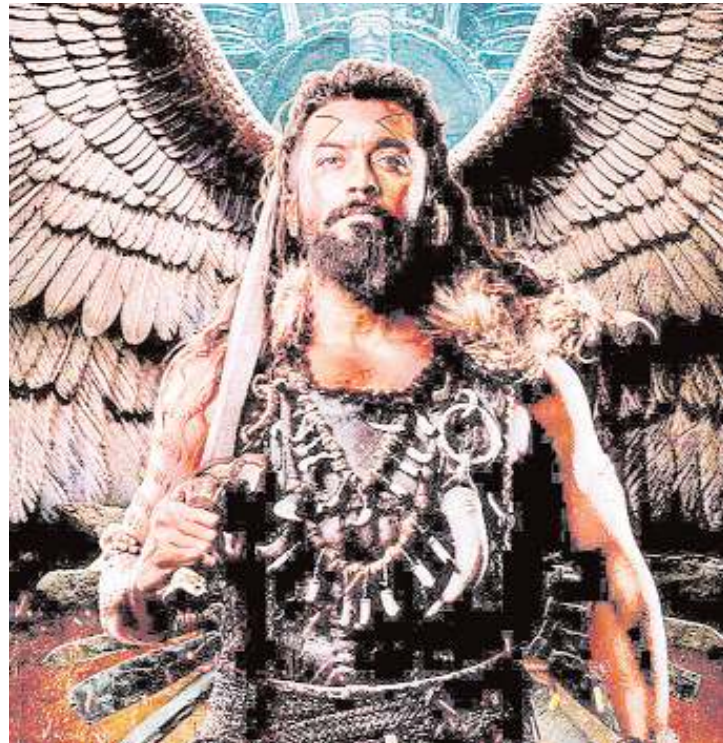
As the much-anticipated film *Kanguva* gears up for its grand release, actor Suriya and the film's producer have shared their thoughts at a press conference on the emotional journey behind the project, highlighting their dedication and optimism.

Suriya, who plays the lead role in the film, spoke about the calm before the storm as the team braces for the release! In a candid reflection at a press conference, he said, "I think a calm before this storm, trying to be as calm as possible and giving all positivity, just manifesting in. I just want everybody associated with this film to be really, really happy and proud. It's just that in Tamil Nadu, we make another person happy. That's what true hap-

piness is. I'm really hoping that happens with the film." Suriya emphasized that every film is like a baby to its creators and the entire team has poured their heart and soul into *Kanguva*. "For this film also, we have given a lot of love and hoping the 14th will be a celebration for all of us."

The producer of *Kanguva*, K. E. Gnanavel Raja, also expressed immense dedication, revealing the toll the filmmaking process has taken on him and the director. In a lighthearted yet sincere comment, the producer shared, "Siva sir didn't sleep for the last 90 days and I didn't sleep for the last 30 days. So I think after seeing the result and seeing the audience's excitement, we should take good rest."

Kanguva is the biggest and most expensive film of this year and is set to release on November 14, 2024. With an estimated budget of over 350 crore, it's bigger than the likes of *Pushpa*, *Singham* and several other big films. Moreover, the film has been shot across seven different countries on various continents of India. The makers had a very specific look in mind, as this is a very unique film showing the prehistoric period. The makers hired experts from Hollywood for the technical departments like action and cinematography. The film has one of the biggest war sequences, featuring over 10,000 people. Studio Green has signed up with top distribution houses to release the film on a massive scale across the globe!



RASHMIKA IS 'SHORT ON WORDS' AS SRIVALLI'S DUBBING IS ON GO

Pushpa 2: *The Rule* is undoubtedly one of the most anticipated films of the year, eagerly awaited by audiences. After its electrifying teaser, the nation stood still, captivated by the grandeur and intensity the film promises to bring to the big screen. This has certainly raised the excitement for the trailer and finally, the time has come—the trailer for the biggest film of the year is set to release on November 17. The trailer will be released in Patna, which is going to be India's biggest trailer launch.

Rashmika, who reprises the role of 'Srivalli' in the much-awaited sequel, shared pictures from her dubbing session with a caption that read, "Now that the fun and games are over, let's get down to business!!"

Meaning-
1- *Pushpa* shoot is almost done..
2- *Pushpa: The Rule* - dub for the first half is over.
3- 1 am dubbing for the second half and MY GOD! The film's first half is already freaking amazing and the second half is even more so..
I am literally short on words.. You guys are really really in for a mind blowing experience!!!
I can't waittttt!

Ps: this face is for the shoot almost getting over and I am sad about it!!"

Pushpa 2: The Rule has truly become a brand, creating a massive buzz in the market. It's safe to say this is the biggest film everyone is eagerly waiting for. The nationwide craze for the film is undeniable and now that the trailer has finally been announced, the excitement is palpable.

Pushpa 2: The Rule, directed by Sukumar and featuring Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna and Fahadh Faasil. The film is produced by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar Writings with music on T-Series. The film will be released on December 5, 2024.



IS BALAYYA'S UNSTOPPABLE COMPLETELY SCRIPTED?

The fourth season of Nandamuri Balakrishna's talk show, *Unstoppable*, is now streaming on the Aha OTT channel. Besides Chandrababu Naidu, the new season primarily features actors promoting their upcoming films, including Dulquer Salmaan for *Lucky Bhaskar*, Suriya for *Kanguva* and Allu Arjun for his upcoming film *Pushpa 2*. The talk show has effectively become a platform for film promotion for these stars. However, according to a source, some episodes are scripted. "The Allu Arjun episode

was shot over nearly an entire day, with both questions and answers scripted," the source stated. The types of questions Balakrishna asks and Allu Arjun's responses are all pre-determined. "Everything is written in advance before the actual show, but when you watch the final version on the channel, it appears genuine," the source added. This scripting is why season four may not be up to the mark compared to earlier seasons. Nevertheless, the talk show remains at the top of the charts, thanks to Balakrishna.

Rana Daggubati launches another talk show



After his previous talk show and Balakrishna's venture into the format on an OTT platform, Rana Daggubati is set to launch a new talk show on Prime Video. Premiering on November 23, this eight-episode unscripted series, created, hosted and executive produced by Rana, promises unfiltered conversations with top celebrities, including Dulquer Salmaan, Naga Chaitanya, Siddhu Jonnalagadda, Sree Leela, Nani, SS Rajamouli, Ram Gopal Varma and more.

Offering a refreshing twist on traditional talk shows, *The Rana Daggubati Show* combines candid chats with fun activities, showcasing a side of stars rarely seen. Each guest reveals personal stories and surprises, giving viewers a true backstage pass into the world of these icons.

New episodes will air every Saturday. "This show is all about real connections — just friends hanging out, sharing stories, and having fun. It's a no-filter, behind-the-scenes experience with the biggest names in the industry, and I can't wait for audiences worldwide to tune in," said Rana Daggubati.

