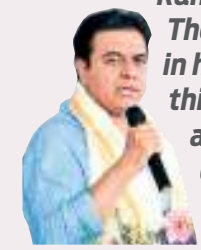


This is no less than what happened in Manipur. The national media should also show the lawlessness in Telangana. Rahul is talking about protecting the Constitution. But first stop your Chief Minister's lawlessness. Rahul is surprising. There is another man in him. He says one thing, but does another thing. The country is watching what is being done



—KT Rama Rao, BRS working president

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Goal is to capture power, says actor Vijay

STRESSFUL INTEREST RATES MAY IMPACT GROWTH ASPIRATIONS: FM

Manasa Varanasi expands horizons in Tamil CINEMA

DON'T MISS...

YSRCP complains against TDP posts

A delegation of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders filed a complaint at the Tirupati East Police Station against alleged defamatory and false social media posts circulated by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its IT wing, iTDP. The delegation included Tirupati district YSRCP president Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, Tirupati MP M Gurumoorthy, former ministers K Narayanaswamy and RK Roja, and Chandragiri YSRCP in-charge Chevreddy Mohith Reddy. Speaking to the media, YSRCP leaders accused the...

-PAGE: 3

'Companies keen to relocate to AP'

Minister for Industries, Commerce, and Food Processing, TG Bharat, has announced that several companies are expressing interest in relocating to Andhra Pradesh, citing the state's robust infrastructure in industrial parks. Speaking during a question-and-answer session in the Legislative Assembly, he addressed queries raised by MLA Yarlagadda Venkata Rao regarding industrial development. Minister Bharat emphasised that the government is committed to providing essential infrastructure in...

-PAGE: 4

After quitting AAP, Kailash joins BJP

Former Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot joined the BJP on Monday, a day after resigning from the AAP, and accused his former party of constantly picking fights with the Centre and compromising the values which drew people to its fold. He joined the BJP at its headquarters in the presence of Union ministers Manohar Lal Khattar and Harsh Malhotra, Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva, party vice president Baijayant Jay Panda and national media head Anil Baluni among others. Addressing the...

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Unemployment rate dips to 6.4 pc

The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas dipped to 6.4 per cent in the July-September quarter, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO). Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force. The unemployment rate in the September quarter of FY24 was 6.6 per cent. The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in the previous April-June quarter of FY25 was 6.6 per cent in urban areas, the...

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No 'smart meters' in farm sector: Minister

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Minister for Energy, Gottipati Ravi Kumar, has firmly stated that 'smart meters' will not be installed on agricultural motors, while also outlining steps taken to overhaul the State's energy sector.

Speaking during the Question Hour in the Legislative Council on Monday, the Minister categorically rejected the idea of introducing smart meters for agricultural motors. He attributed the current financial burden on the electricity sector—amounting to a staggering Rs 1.29 lakh crore—to the imprudent decisions made by the previous YSRCP government. The Minister specifically criticised the controversial revocation of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) during the previous administration.

"Due to the revocation of the PPAs, industrialists who had initially shown interest in investing in Andhra Pradesh moved their investments to other states. The YSRCP's ill-advised decision has severely impacted the state's energy sector. The central government itself has written a letter pointing out that the state government's decision to cancel the PPAs was incorrect," Minister Ravi Kumar stated in the Council. He further criticised the YSRCP

Minister Ravi Kumar said that the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Tariff (Second Amendment) Bill, 2024 is being introduced to correct the errors in the previous government's energy policy. However, the Minister clarified that this amendment would not lead to any new financial burden or increase in electricity tariffs for consumers.

- Minister Gottipati Ravi Kumar blames the previous YSRCP government's decisions, particularly the revocation of Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs), for the state's financial burden of Rs 1.29 lakh crore.
- The Minister criticises the YSRCP government for failing to add new power generation capacity despite increasing electricity demand.
- A new energy policy introduced by the NDA coalition government is yielding positive results, with investments flowing into the State.
- Minister Ravi Kumar claimed that the YSRCP government increased the Electricity Regulatory Commission's debt from Rs 3,000 crore to Rs 6,000 crore.

government's failure to add any new power generation capacity, despite a consistent 5 to 6 per cent annual increase in electricity demand. "While electricity consumption continued to grow, the YSRCP regime failed to generate even a single additional MW of power," the Minister said.

The Energy Minister also pointed out that the Andhra Pradesh gov-

ernment has introduced a new policy aimed at revitalising the power sector, which is now yielding positive results, with investments flowing into the state. He also mentioned that the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Tariff (Second Amendment) Bill, 2024 is being introduced to correct the errors in the previous government's energy policy.

Continued on Page 2

UTILISATION OF CENTRAL FUNDS Polavaram CE named Single Nodal Officer

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/POLAVARAM

The Andhra Pradesh government has appointed the Chief Engineer of the Polavaram Multipurpose Project as the Single Nodal Agency (SNA) to oversee the utilisation of funds provided by the Central Government for the project. An SNA account has been set up, with Rs 392 crore already transferred to it.

Officials from the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) Andhra Pradesh division conducted a training session for project officials at the Chief Engineer's office at the Polavaram site on Monday. The session was led by Assistant Controller General of Accounts Priyanka Nashine and Senior AO Shraavan Kumar.

The Ministry of Finance had directed the state government to onboard the Polavaram Project onto the PFMS-SNA module to ensure transparency and effective utilisation of central funds. The PFMS team facilitated the integration of the SNA account into the system and offered guidance on managing it during the training.

The ₹392 crore transferred to the SNA account will soon be recorded as expenditure on the PFMS platform. Polavaram Chief Engineer Narasimha Murthy and other senior officials participated in the training programme.

7 key bills cleared by AP Assembly

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Monday passed seven crucial bills aimed at reforming local governance, healthcare, land protection, and cooperative societies. These amendments are intended to enhance governance and streamline regulatory processes in the state.

The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Amendment Bill 2024 introduces reforms to improve the functioning of Panchayat Raj institutions.

The Andhra Pradesh Municipal Amendment Bill 2024 removes the disqualification clause for candidates with three children, allowing them to contest in local body elections. The NTR Health University Amendment Bill 2024 seeks to strengthen the administration and governance of NTR Health University.

Further, the Andhra Pradesh Ayurvedic and Homeopathy Amendment Bill 2024 updates provisions related to the registration and regulation of Ayurvedic and Homeopathic practitioners. The Andhra Pradesh Medical Practitioners Registration Amendment Bill 2024 simplifies the registration process for medical practitioners.

Continued on Page 2

Candidates with more than two kids can now contest local body polls

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly has approved an amendment to municipal laws, permitting candidates with more than two children to contest elections for urban local bodies. The amendment was passed on Monday, following its introduction by Municipal Administration Minister Ponguru Narayana just four days earlier. The bill, titled the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws Amendment Bill 2024, was approved without debate or opposition in the Assembly. This restriction was first introduced in the 1960s as part of family planning initiatives aimed at controlling population growth. During that period, both the central and state governments implemented measures to promote family planning, one of which included disqualifying candidates with more than two children from contesting elections to municipal bodies.

Continued on Page 2

HARASSED BY WARDEN 2 Inter girls at SC hostel attempt suicide

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Two female inmates of the Scheduled Caste (SC) hostel in Sattenapalli attempted suicide on Monday by consuming sleeping pills. The students were initially admitted to the Area Hospital in Sattenapalli and later shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Guntur due to their critical condition.

According to police, the students, who were studying Intermediate at the hostel, had repeatedly complained about the poor quality of food being served. The students had raised the issue with hostel authorities on three separate occasions, but their concerns were reportedly ignored.

The situation reportedly escalated when the hostel warden, Rani, began harassing the two girls after their complaints. It is alleged that the warden verbally abused the girls on Monday, leading them to take the drastic step of taking both sleeping pills. Both students fell unconscious and were rushed to the Area Hospital.

When their condition worsened, they were transferred to GGH in Guntur. Sattenapalli MLA Kanna Lakshminarayana visited the hospital to inquire about their health. He spoke to the media, expressing his shock and condemning the actions of the hostel warden, which he believes drove the girls to attempt suicide.

Continued on Page 2

'18% dip in crimes against women, kids'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Home Affairs and Disaster Management, Vangalapati Anitha, has claimed that there has been no significant increase in crimes against women and children in the State over the past five months. She stated that 7,234 cases of crimes against women and children were reported between June and October this year, marking an 18% reduction compared to the same period in 2019.

She was addressing the AP Legislative

Council, chaired by Chairman Kooye Moshen Raju on Monday. During the Question Hour, YSRCP members Varudu Kalyani, Dr. Monditoka Aruna Kumar, and Chandragiri Yesuratnam raised concerns over the rising incidents of atrocities and murders against women and children in the State. They linked the surge in crimes to the suspension of the Disha Act and the Disha App, questioning whether these measures would be reinstated or if there were new proposals to combat crimes against



women and children.

In her response, Minister Anitha highlighted that the police had arrested 12,115 accused persons within 24 to 48 hours in connection with the 7,234 cases. She also compared the current statistics with the same period last year, when 8,855 cases of crimes against women and children were reported, averaging nearly 59 cases per day. Anitha further claimed that atrocities against women and children had decreased since the TDP-led NDA government assumed office.

From 2019 to 2024, under the previous YSRCP government, a total of 100,548 cases of crimes against women and children were registered, marking a 20.8% rise compared to the preceding five years. In contrast, the TDP government had recorded 84,202 such cases from 2014 to 2019.

Continued on Page 2

Cabinet meet deferred to tomorrow

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The meeting of the Andhra Pradesh Council of Ministers, originally scheduled for Monday, November 18, has been rescheduled to Wednesday, November 20. The meeting will take place at 4:00 PM in the Cabinet Meeting Hall at the A.P. Secretariat, Velagapudi.

In an official circular issued on Monday, Neerabh Kumar Prasad, Chief Secretary, informed all departments of the Secretariat about the change. He also directed that all Special Chief Secretaries, Principal Secretaries, and Secretaries to the Government ensure that their proposals are submitted to the General Administration (Cabinet.L) Department by 2:00 PM on November 18, 2024.

Electoral rolls with Nov 1, 2024 as qualifying date: CEO

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has ordered de novo preparation of electoral rolls for the East-West Godavari and Krishna-Guntur Graduates' Constituencies of the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council. The electoral rolls are being prepared with reference to November 1, 2024 as the qualifying date, following the schedule issued by the Commission. In a press release on Monday, AP Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Vivek

Yadav said concerns and clarifications have arisen regarding the preparation process. Instances were reported where Tahsildars insisted on Gazetted Officer-certified documents for enrolment, contrary to guidelines. Additionally, designated officers in some areas have rejected notary-certified documents or failed

to provide receipts for physically submitted applications. He said according to ECI instructions, online applications accompanied by original or authenticated copies must be verified by designated officers, who are required to visit applicants' residences. Verification outcomes must be documented with remarks such as "verified with original/authenticated copy and found correct" or "found not correct - rejected," signed with the officer's full details. The CEO further said questions were also raised about name and surname entries for married women. The ECI clarified that the name provided in Form-18 should be entered as submitted, and mismatches in surnames due to marriage will not be grounds for rejection.

Continued on Page 2

Online stamps, registration services streamlined: Sisodia

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government has simplified online access to stamps and registration services, making them more citizen-friendly, announced RP Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary, Revenue Department. He stated that citizens can now obtain key documents such as Encumbrance Certificates (EC) and Certified Copies (CC) online,

eliminating the need to visit sub-registrar offices or Meevasea centres.

Highlighting the benefits of the revamped system, Sisodia explained that the enhanced online payment gateway on the Department of Stamps and Registration's website enables users to pay fees and download their documents within minutes.

Continued on Page 2

India top sender of students to US, followed by China

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 3.3 lakh Indians are studying in the US, making India the "top sender" of international students to America for the first time in 15 years, as it overtook China for the academic year 2023-24.

According to the Open Doors Report 2024 released on Monday, the number of Indian students studying in the US in the academic year 2023-24 is at an "all-time high" at 3,31,602, a rise of 23 per cent from 2022-23 when the number stood at 2,68,923. The year before in 2022-23, the leading source country for international students in the US was China followed by India.

"India is now the leading country of origin for international students in the United States, account-



ing for 29 per cent of the total international student population," according to a note shared by the US Embassy on the latest annual report.

According to official data associated with the latest report, the top five source countries for international students in the US for 2023-24 are -- India, China (2,77,398), South Korea (43,149), Canada (28,998) and Taiwan (23,157).

Continued on Page 2

AI to reduce darshan time at Tirumala to 2-3 hrs

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

In its maiden meeting under the chairmanship of BR Naidu, the TTD (Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams) board took several important decisions on Monday. After the meeting, which was held at Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala, TTD Board Chairman BR Naidu, along with Executive Officer (EO) J. Syamala Rao, briefed the media on the key outcomes of the discussions.

One of the major decisions was to reduce the darshan time for Lord Venkateswara Swamy from 20-30 hours to just 2-3 hours. This will be achieved by employing Artificial Intelligence and advanced technology, with advice from experts in the field. The board also decided to merge the SRIVANI Trust into the TTD account, with plans to explore the possibility of renaming the trust while continuing its existing scheme.



TTD Chairman (right) BR Naidu and Executive Officer J Syamala Rao addressing a press conference in Tirumala on Monday.

The board has approved the removal of the Tourism Corporation's darshan quota for various states. This decision follows

a thorough review of complaints regarding irregularities in the issuance of Special Entry Darshan (SED) tickets under this category.

Furthermore, the piled-up debris in the dumping yard at Tirumala will be cleared within the next 3-4 months, as part of ongoing cleanliness and development efforts.

In another significant development, the board decided to rename the Srinivasa Setu Flyover as "Garuda Varadhi," in line with efforts to enhance the sanctity and significance of the area. The board also plans to request the State Government to transfer a 20-acre land parcel at Alipiri, currently allocated for tourism purposes, to TTD, for the development of the Devlok project.

A letter will be written to the State Government requesting a decision on the employment of non-Hindus in Tirumala. Additionally, the board has decided to provide special darshan to residents of Tirupati on the first Tuesday of every month, ensuring that locals have a dedicated

opportunity for darshan.

The TTD board also issued a directive that no political statements will be allowed in Tirumala, and legal action will be taken against individuals or groups who make such statements.

To ensure the safety of TTD's deposits, the board plans to withdraw the funds from private banks and deposit them in nationalized banks, with a decision to be made in the next board meeting. In terms of religious and culinary offerings, the board has decided to improve the quality of ghee used in the preparation of Srivari Laddu, aiming to enhance the taste and purity of the sacred offering. Additionally, a new, tasty recipe will be introduced in the daily menu at the Annaprashadam Complex, providing devotees with more variety in their meals.

Continued on Page 2

# AP Electricity Amendment Act passed amid YSRCP walkout

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Amid a walkout by the Opposition YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and criticism from the Progressive Democratic Front (PDF), the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council passed the Electricity Duty (Second Amendment) Act, 2024, on Monday. The bill, which had already been approved in the Assembly, was introduced by the Minister for Energy, Gottipati Ravi Kumar.

The amendment follows the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Duty (Amendment) Act, 2020, which came into effect on June 26, 2021, under the YSRCP government. However, certain terms like "Appoint" and "Appointed date" were not defined in Section 1(2) of the Act, prompting the introduction of the second amendment bill in both the Assembly and the Legislative Council.



The bill was successfully passed after a brief discussion. Following the introduction of the bill, PDF floor leader KS Lakshmana Rao criticised the state government for imposing an additional burden of around Rs. 17,000 crore on the public under the guise of true-up charges. He expressed strong opposition to the bill, calling it detrimental to the people. YSRCP leader Botsa

Satyanarayana also condemned the bill, highlighting that his party opposed any additional charges. He reminded the House that the TDP-led NDA had promised no additional power charges and a reduction in power tariffs before the elections. However, the current proposal would impose a financial burden of Rs. 17,000 crore on consumers, he alleged. In protest, YSRCP members

staged a walkout from the Council. Council Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju later announced that the bill had been passed without any further opposition.

Before the start of Question Hour, Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju rejected the adjournment motion submitted by the opposition YSRCP regarding the Free Sand Policy. However, YSRCP members were absent in the Council at the time of the rejection.

Additionally, the Chairman also turned down an adjournment motion filed by PDF members KS Lakshmana Rao, I Venkateswara Rao, and Raghu Varma concerning the Agrigold financial scam. KS Lakshmana Rao had requested the government to conduct an auction of the attached assets of Agrigold and compensate the victims who had deposited money with the company.

# APSSDC & OMCAP sign MoU with AI Yousuf Enterprises for intl placements

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) and the Overseas Manpower Company of Andhra Pradesh (OMCAP) have signed a significant tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with AI Yousuf Enterprises LLP, a registered recruitment agency based in Mumbai. The MoU aims to enhance the skills of aspiring youth from Andhra Pradesh, enabling them to secure overseas employment in various sectors across the GCC, Middle East, Eastern Europe, and South Africa.

The agreement was formalised at the APSSDC Head Office in Tadepalli, in the presence of G. Ganesh Kumar, Managing Director & CEO of APSSDC. The partnership is designed to provide training in internationally recognised skills and offer placement opportunities in multiple



industries, with a particular focus on the healthcare sector. During the signing ceremony, D. Manohar, Executive Director of APSSDC and General Manager of OMCAP, highlighted the growing demand for skilled professionals in global markets, especially in GCC countries. He emphasised the critical shortage of healthcare workers, which remains a key area of focus for this collaboration. The APSSDC and OMCAP delegation also included

Reehana Khanam, Nursing Skill Development Officer and In-Charge of the AP State Health Care Sector, along with Satish Babu, HR Manager at OMCAP.

They underscored the importance of equipping the youth of Andhra Pradesh with the skills required to meet international standards and compete for overseas job opportunities.

Representing AI Yousuf Enterprises LLP, Safwan Yusuf Shaik, Managing Partner and

CEO, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership. He spoke about the agency's long-standing reputation as a Ministry of External Affairs-registered recruiter and outlined the potential for job placements not only in the healthcare sector but also in high-demand industries such as shipyards and oil & gas. This collaboration promises to open new avenues for the youth of Andhra Pradesh, helping them build successful careers on the global stage.

This initiative is part of a broader effort to promote skill development and create sustainable employment opportunities for the state's workforce, especially in the face of increasing global mobility and demand for skilled labour. The collaboration marks a significant milestone in Andhra Pradesh's efforts to empower its youth with the skills and opportunities required to succeed in the international job market.

# CM Naidu not sincere on SC categorisation: Adimulapu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has criticised Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu for engaging in "cheap political tactics" and attempting to create divisions among Scheduled Caste (SC) communities in the name of categorisation, all to further his political interests. The party also lauded Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy for providing equal opportunities to sub-castes during his governance.

Speaking to the media on Monday, former minister Adimulapu Suresh and former Chairman of the SC Corporation, Kommuri Kanaka Rao, alleged that Naidu had no sincerity regarding the categorisation issue. They accused him of using Krishna Madiga as a political tool to serve his selfish gains and target Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, despite the latter's government providing significant opportunities to sub-castes, including plum posts, between 2019 and 2024.

Suresh and Kanaka Rao pointed out that despite being in alliance with the Centre on multiple occasions, including in 1997, Naidu had never used



his position to bring in legislation benefiting the sub-castes. Instead, they claimed, he had allowed the issue to remain unresolved for over three decades, intending to use it for political leverage.

"Krishna Madiga is merely repeating Chandrababu Naidu's script like a puppet, instead of questioning why categorisation has not been fully implemented at both the Centre and State levels," they said. "Representatives from the sub-castes have been given important positions in the Cabinet and Corporations during Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure, but Naidu has always schemed to divide the SC communities."

They further criticised Naidu for his lack of clarity on the issue, accusing him of only wanting to extend reservations to lower-level posts that don't apply to the state cadre. "This exposes his real intentions and his insincerity towards the SC communities. In contrast, Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has given important portfolios like Home, Education, and others to representatives of the sub-castes," they added.

Suresh and Kanaka Rao stated that if Naidu were truly sincere about the categorisation, he should work towards passing legislation that extends the categorisation to the state cadre as well. "This is an opportune moment, as the NDA government is dependent on Chandrababu Naidu. He should take immediate action," they urged.

The leaders also noted that under Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy's leadership, leaders from the sub-castes, like Vanita and Suresh, were given full five-year terms and equal opportunities, benefiting greatly from initiatives like the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme and fee reimbursement.

# Dy CM Pawan vows better rail, flight connectivity for Maha devotees

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan on Monday assured improved rail and flight connectivity to the famous Lord Venkateswara temple in Tirupati for devotees from Maharashtra.

Pawan Kalyan, who recently returned from election campaigning in poll-bound Maharashtra, said devotees from the State had expressed concerns about the lack of accessibility to the Tirupati temple and the Sripada Srivallabha Swamy temple in Pithapuram, which falls under his assembly constituency.

"During my campaign in Maharashtra, I learned about the difficulties faced by devotees travelling to Sripada Srivallabha Swamy temple in Pithapuram due to the absence of a rail stop.



I assure all devotees that I will take up this matter with the Railway Department and work towards ensuring trains stop at Pithapuram," Kalyan said in a post on X.

The actor-turned-politician added that devotees from Latur had specifically requested direct rail and flight services from their town to Tirupati to facilitate visits to Lord Venkateswara shrine. "I promise to discuss and take the necessary steps to make these services available at the earliest," Kalyan said.

# YSRCP rebuts coalition govt's claims on dotted lands

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP has found fault with the NDA coalition government for its remarks on dotted lands, abolition of Sri Vani Trust and harassment of Party workers and social media activists.

Speaking to the media here on Monday, MLA Tatiparthi Chandrasekhar said the government speaking about insider trading in the registration of dotted lands is uncalled for.

"The lands have been in the possession of Dalits and weaker sections for the past two decades and if they get the rights what is wrong? Our leader YS Jagan Mohan Reddy



wanted to empower them while the Chandrababu Naidu-led coalition wanted to alienate them of land. Insider trading was rampant in Amaravati lands. I dare the government to bring out the names of actual owners," he said.

Sri Vani Trust was created to collect donations from willing

and affordable people and spread religious activities and build temples across the country and in Dalitwad.

No government had thought of giving land cremation to dalits which our government had done during the previous term.

Police have been harassing social media activists and our Party cadre foisting false cases.

A case was registered against me and a notice was sent to me. When my lawyer went to the police station, they were not cooperative. While they have been filing cases indiscriminately, our complaints are not being taken, he said.

# No 'smart meters'..

Continued from Page 1

However, the Minister clarified that this amendment would not lead to any new financial burden or increase in electricity tariffs for consumers.

Minister Ravi Kumar recalled that when N. Chandrababu Naidu stepped down as Chief Minister in 2019, the Electricity Regulatory Commission (ERC) was saddled with debts of only Rs 3,000 crore. After the YSRCP government took power, the debt rose to Rs 6,000 crore. "The YSRCP government, in its five years in office, has virtually destroyed the electricity sector," he charged.

# Online stamps...

Continued from Page 1

This is particularly advantageous for rural residents, as it reduces dependency on physical offices. Meeeva centres will continue to assist citizens without access to online platforms.

Previously, citizens had to visit Meeeva centres, complete forms, and wait for sub-registrar offices to process the documents, which often led to delays, especially on holidays. The new system, however, ensures faster processing and direct payment to the Stamps and Registration Department, cutting out intermediaries.

Addressing concerns raised on social media, Sisodia dismissed claims that these services are unavailable at Meeeva centres, terming them misleading. He asserted that the government is committed to improving services and ensuring accessibility for all.

The initiative, introduced under the leadership of CM Chandrababu Naidu, has significantly reduced the hassle of obtaining essential documents. Sisodia emphasised that the integration of Meeeva and online services offers convenience and speed, making a tangible difference in citizens' lives.

With this streamlined approach, Andhra Pradesh is setting a benchmark in digitising public services, enhancing efficiency, and reducing the burden on citizens.

# AI to reduce...

Continued from Page 1

The board also discussed the issue of Visakha Sarada Peetham, which has been found to have violated TTD rules. Based on the report of the Expert Committee, the board decided to cancel the lease agreement with the mutt. Furthermore, the repairs to the leakages in the age-old Potu (temple kitchen) and the modernization of the Vengamamba Annaprasadam Complex will be taken up by the TVS company.

Finally, the TTD board approved a 10% hike in the Bahumanam (honorarium) for employees who provided special services during the annual Brahmotsavam of Tirumala Srivari Temple, held from October 4 to 13 this year. Regular employees will receive Rs 15,400, while outsourced employees will be given Rs 7,535. Other board members and TTD mandarins were also present at the meeting.

# Candidates with more...

Continued from Page 1

The provision was codified in the Andhra Pradesh Municipalities Act, 1965 and the Municipal Corporations Act, 1955, under Section 21B and Section 13B, respectively. These provisions were further reinforced by the Andhra Pradesh Municipal Laws Amendment Bill of 1994, which stipulated that only individuals with two or fewer children could stand for elections to urban local bodies.

However, over the past three decades, significant demo-

graphic changes in the state have prompted a re-evaluation of these laws. The fertility rate in Andhra Pradesh has dropped considerably, from 2.6 children per woman in 2001 to just 1.5 today. In addition, birth rates have fallen, and the proportion of elderly citizens has risen. These demographic shifts, coupled with the need to address the state's evolving socio-economic conditions, have led to growing calls for revising these outdated regulations.

The new amendment reflects the changing social and economic landscape of

Andhra Pradesh, where the focus is now on managing an ageing population and ensuring balanced demographic growth. With the state's population growth rate slowing down, the government seeks to align the legal framework with contemporary needs and encourage greater participation in local governance.

Minister Ponguru Narayana emphasised that the amendment is in keeping with the state's broader objectives of promoting active civic engagement in urban local bodies and empowering citizens, irrespective of their family size.

# '18% dip in crimes...

Continued from Page 1

Anitha took a critical stance on the YSRCP government, accusing it of neglecting the issue of violence against women and children during its tenure. She questioned the efficacy of the Disha Act, pointing out that the number of cases had increased under the YSRCP rule. She also criticised the former government for implementing the Disha Act without proper legislative approval and for dismantling all Women Police Stations, renaming them as Disha Police Stations without any official act passed in the legislature.

The Minister also mentioned several incidents of violence, including a gang rape near the residence of Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy, which allegedly went unaddressed. She emphasized that under Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's leadership, the NDA government had taken swift action against the accused, apprehending offenders within 24 to

48 hours. She further pointed out that the state government was strengthening Women's Police Stations and improving infrastructure to facilitate the quick apprehension of offenders.

Anitha attributed the rise in crimes against women to the growing drug and ganja-related issues over the past five years. She assured that her government was taking stringent steps to curb these problems through effective enforcement of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

In response, the opposition YSRCP staged a walkout, accusing Home Minister Anitha of deflecting the discussion and politicising the issue. The Leader of the Opposition criticised Anitha for failing to provide satisfactory answers and misleading the House. Before the walkout, MLAs Yesuratnam and Varudu Kalyani lauded their government's implementation of the Disha Act and Disha App, which led to heated exchanges between the ruling NDA and the opposition YSRCP.

# 2 Inter girls at SC hostel...

Continued from Page 1

"The two girl students informed me that they were being served poor-quality food in the hostel. When they raised their concerns with the officials, the hostel warden began to harass and abuse them. The students' parents had filed a complaint with the police two days ago, accusing the warden of mistreating and abusing their daughters," Kanna Lakshminarayana told the media. He added that he would instruct the authorities to take strict action against the hostel warden, Rani.

# Electoral rolls...

Continued from Page 1

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) must ensure that all documents relate to the same applicant. The ECI has rejected requests to extend the November 6 deadline for Form-18 submissions, citing Rule 31 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. However, the process allows applicants further opportunities to register during the claims and objections period from November 23 to December 9 and until 10 days before the last date for filing nominations, Vivek Yadav said.

# India top sender of...

Continued from Page 1

"India is the top sender of international students (for the first time since 2008/2009) with over 3,31,602 students studying in the United States. The number of Indian students is at an all-time high," the US Embassy's note read.

Normally, the academic year in the US begins in September and runs through May.

In 2023-24, the US welcomed an all-time high of 1.12 million (1,126,690) international students. These students hail from more than 210 countries and places of origin, the note added. US envoy Eric Garcetti, in an exclusive interview to PTI on the sidelines of an event at the American Center here spoke of the education cooperation between the two countries.

"We are friends, we have aligned hearts, we look at the world similarly, and now this is reflected in education. And, Indians are the number one source of international students to United States universities... We have seen an increase of 50 per cent just in the last two years," he added. This year's report also shows a 300 per cent increase in American students choosing India as a study-abroad destination. The number of Americans studying in India rose from 300 to 1,300 in 2022-2023.

India also "remained the largest sender" of international graduate (masters and PhD level) students in the US for the second year.

# 7 key bills cleared by AP...

Continued from Page 1

The Andhra Pradesh Land Grabbing Prohibition Bill 2024 fortifies the legal framework to prevent and penalise land grabbing across the state. The Andhra Pradesh Cooperative Society Amendment Bill 2024 introduces measures to ensure greater transparency and accountability in the governance of cooperative societies. These legislative measures reflect the state government's efforts to modernise outdated laws and address pressing issues in governance. By focusing on key areas such as land protection, healthcare regulation, and local body elections, the government aims to align its legal framework with the evolving needs of the state. The bills will now move to the Legislative Council for further discussion and approval.

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**  
**ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT**  
**E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
No. 09 TO/2024-25 Date: 18-11-2024  
Online tenders are called for emergency repairs in Krishna District and NTR District. Estimated cost for 28 works is Rs 2405.00 Lakh. Date of availability of tenders: From 20-11-2024 to 3.00 pm on 27-11-2024. Details can be obtained from e-marketplace www.approcurement.gov.in  
Sd/- Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle, Vijayawada  
R.O.No: 14684/LAD/T/11/2024-D2, Dt: 18.11.2024

**GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**  
**ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT**  
**E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE**  
No. 13 TO/2024-25/Bhimavaram Date: 18-11-2024  
West Godavari District (R&B) Bhimavaram Division Buildings has called for tenders for repairs of main roads and State roads. Tenders are invited for 117 works at an estimated cost of Rs 2151.89 lakh. Tender schedule date from 19-11-2024 to 2.00 pm on 26-11-2024. Details can be obtained from http://tender.approcurement.gov.in  
Sd/- Executive Engineer (R&B) Division Bhimavaram  
R.O.No: 14684/LAD/T/11/2024-D2, Dt: 18.11.2024

# NTR dist to host annual sports meet for govt school students

## Meet to take place during Christmas and Sankranti holidays

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has announced that NTR district is set to host its first annual sports meet for government school students, with the aim of setting a model for other districts in the State. The event will take place during the Christmas and Sankranti holidays from December 17-January 15.

On Monday, the MP held a review meeting at KBN College in collaboration with District Education Officer (DEO) UV Subbarao, where he discussed the upcoming sports meet with physical directors and physical education teachers from schools and colleges across the district. The meeting focused on the selection of sports events and the logistical arrangements for the meet. MP Sivanath also gathered information about schools lacking sports facilities.

During the meeting, MP Sivanath expressed concern over the lack of adequate sports infrastructure in government schools due to neglect by the previous government. He assured that steps are being taken to provide necessary sports facilities in schools across NTR district.

In a release to the media, the MP stressed the need to bring out the hidden talent in rural areas and inspire students from government schools to excel in



sports. He also noted that CM Chandrababu Naidu is working to bring the National Games to Amaravati by 2027. As part of this initiative, a Sports City will soon be inaugurated in Amaravati, apart from a Sports University. The university will focus on training athletes, coaches, and support staff for various sports disciplines.

MP Srinivas further said that to take full advantage of these opportunities, it is crucial to encourage an interest in sports from the school level itself. He called for the encouragement of students' participa-

**MP Sivanath expressed concern over the lack of adequate sports infrastructure in government schools due to neglect by the previous government. He assured that steps are being taken to provide necessary sports facilities in schools across NTR district**

tion in sports right from their early education. The planned sports meet will feature competitions for students under the age of 14 and under the age of 17, and will be organised in each village, mandal, and con-

stituency, leading up to district-level events.

The MP also mentioned that, while some schools may lack sports infrastructure, efforts will be made to organise the events without placing a finan-

cial burden on the government. Discussions were held on how to address the lack of facilities in certain schools, with a focus on finding practical solutions to ensure every student has an opportunity to participate.

The meeting was attended by OSD Venkataratnam, KBN College Secretary T Srinivas, SKPVV Hindu High School Administrative Officer V Narayana Rao, former Sub-Chairman Ankam Choudhary, NTR District SGT Secretary M Srinivas, and Nandigama SGT Coordinator P Srinivas.



# Resolve grievances within stipulated time frame: DC

## Immediate and thorough action required to address root cause of problems

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad has emphasised the importance of proactive measures to prevent recurring complaints in the Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS). During a meeting held on Monday, he stressed the need for timely and effective resolution of grievances within the stipulated time frame. "Public satisfaction is paramount," the Collector said. "We must address every grievance effectively and permanently. District officials must ensure no negligence in handling applications and focus on delivering quality settlements."

The Collector personally engaged with petitioners, listening attentively to their issues and directing authorities to work towards sustainable solu-

tions. "Every grievance represents a citizen's concern," he said. "Immediate and thorough action is required to address the root cause of these problems."

He further reiterated the importance of direct engagement with petitioners by district-level officials. "District-level officials must understand the core of the complaints, interact with petitioners, and ensure no repetition of issues," he stated. He also warned of strict action against officials absent from grievance redressal programmes and called for urgent resolution of complaints forwarded from the Chief Minister's Office.

On World Toilet Day, the Collector unveiled a poster outlining activities planned from November 19 to December 10, emphasising the

significance of sanitation and hygiene. He also launched a health card initiative under the Rashtriya Child Health Programme, aimed at documenting the health profiles of children aged six months to five years in Anganwadi centres and government schools. "This initiative is a step towards ensuring comprehensive health monitoring for our young citizens," he remarked.

The grievance redressal session received 328 petitions, covering various issues from different departments. Joint Collector Mayur Ashok assured that every petition would be handled with due diligence. The District Collector concluded the session by urging officials to prioritise citizens' satisfaction and uphold the efficiency of the grievance redressal system.



# Kommareddy Pattabhi takes charge as Swachh Andhra Corporation Chairman

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Swachh Andhra Corporation Chairman Kommareddy Pattabhiram took charge in the presence of Ministers Kollu Ravindra, Kondapalli Srinivas, Vijayawada MP Kesineni Sivanath alias Chinni, and several MLAs at the Tummalapalli Kalakshetram in Vijayawada on Monday.

During the charge-taking ceremony, Pattabhiram said that he is aiming to reach the Swachh Andhra Corporation as the number one place in the country by October 2 next year. He would strive to generate power from garbage in the State. However, the previous government imposed a tax on the garbage and soon after the NDA came to power, his government cancelled the G.O. he said.

Further, he said that he would try to bring more funds to the state from the Swachh Bharat to make more activities under the Swachh Andhra Corporation. He would do justice to his role

as a Swachh Andhra Corporation Chairman as the responsibilities are assigned by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, he added. Later, he asked the youth to improve their habits of questioning.

Minister for Mines & Geology and Excise Kollu Ravindra said that the TDP is giving top priority to the Youths in the State, so, they should work with commitment in the next 30 years. Minister for MSME, SERP and NRI Kondapalli Srinivas said that Pattabhi has bravely faced the YSRCP atrocities though it put him in jail.

Vijayawada MP Kesineni Chinni, Government Whip in the Assembly Bonda Uma Maheswara Rao, MLC Paruchuri Ashok Babu, MLAs Nakka Anand Babu, Kamineni Srinivas, Y Sujana Chowdary, Gadde Rama Mohana Rao, former MLC Buddha Venkanna, former APSRTC Chairman Varla Ramaiah, ex ZP Chairperson Gadde Anuradha and others were present.

# Meet held on precautions to prevent thefts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

With the directions of NTR District Police Commissioner SV Rajashekhar Babu, Crime DCP K Thirumaleswara Reddy, Crime ADCP M Raja Rao and Inspectors conducted an awareness session for the public to prevent crimes, including thefts in residential areas. The session aimed to educate citizens on the precautions they can take to avoid falling victim to theft, both at home and during travel.

A special awareness meeting was held for residents of the AP Housing Board Towers in the Suryaraopet Police Station limits. The meeting was led by ADCP of Crime M Raja Rao, and South Division Inspector Abdul Salam.

During the session, the attendees were informed about how thefts typically occur, the precautions they can take to avoid such incidents, and the benefits of using various police services like the e-Pahara app, Dial 100, 112, 1930, and the LHMS app.

Inspector Abdul Salam stressed the importance of staying vigilant, particularly in light of crimes being perpetrated through social media and digital platforms, such as digital arrests. He advised the public to inform local police when traveling and encouraged the use of the LHMS app.

# National highway crossings in Vizag turn dangerous

## Urgent action sought to protect children at perilous intersections

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The alarmingly high number of accidents involving pedestrians, particularly school children, at crucial highway crossings in Visakhapatnam has caused concern among the residents.

The absence of flyover bridges at these intersections has turned these roads into perilous zones, sparking widespread anxiety among parents and local authorities. Every day, hundreds of students navigate the bustling national highways, risking their lives to reach their schools. "I fear for my child's safety every morning," shared Meena, a concerned parent. "The roads are packed with vehicles, and there's no safe way for them to cross."

One such perilous crossing is near Chandrapalem High School, where students and residents alike face the daunting task of crossing the busy highway daily. "It's a constant worry," said another parent. "We're always on edge, fearing the worst." Local leaders and residents have demanded immediate action. "A footbridge is the only solution to ensure the safety of our children," said a local leader. "We urge the authorities to prioritize this project."

School authorities have also raised alarms about the dangerous conditions. "It's disheartening to see children dodging vehicles," said Raghav, a school



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principal. "We've repeatedly appealed to the authorities, but the problem persists."

The grim reality is reflected in the rising number of accidents. Police reports indicate a significant increase in pedestrian accidents, especially during peak school hours. "We've witnessed numerous near-misses and, unfortunately, fatal accidents," said Inspector Kumar. "The lack of flyover bridges has made these crossings extremely dangerous."

People are now taking to the streets, demanding safer infrastructure. "It's not just about convenience; it's about saving lives," said Lakshmi, a local activist. "We need our leaders to prioritise pedestrian safety and invest in essential infrastructure." Local authorities have acknowledged the issue and promised to explore potential solutions, including the construction of flyover bridges. However, many residents remain skeptical, urging for immediate action.

# Centre mulls reinvestment, not disinvestment, for Steel Plant

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Prominent BJP leader and Independent Director of SAIL, Sagi Kashi Viswanatha Raju, has revealed that the Central government is revisiting its stance on the financially distressed Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), the corporate entity of the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant. Speaking to The Pioneer, Raju stated that the Centre is now focusing on reinvestment strategies to address RINL's financial woes instead of pursuing disinvestment.

Raju proposed a visionary solution to secure the future of India's steel sector: a mega amalgamation of RINL, NMDC Steel Limited (NSL), and SAIL. "This unified entity would form a formidable public sector steel enterprise, tackling the operational and financial challenges faced by all three companies under the Ministry of Steel," Raju said.

According to Raju, this strategic merger would provide RINL access to much-needed raw materials, shield NSL from privatisation, and enable SAIL to execute its expansion plans seamlessly. "Expanding RINL as a brown-field project is more economical than establishing a new greenfield facility," he noted.

In the short term, the Ministry of Steel has extended significant financial support to RINL, injecting nearly Rs 1,700 crore to stabilise working capital. Efforts are also underway to revive its second blast furnace, negotiate payment terms with suppliers, and



engage banks to defer loan payments and interest, thereby improving the company's creditworthiness. While these measures offer temporary relief, Raju stressed that they are not a permanent solution.

Raju is actively lobbying within BJP leadership for the proposed merger, which, if implemented, would create a steel giant with a production capacity of 30.3 million tonnes (MT), ranking it among the top 10 global producers. Currently, SAIL contributes 20 MT, RINL 7.3 MT, and NSL 3 MT to India's steel output. "This combined entity has the potential to grow to 50 MT, leveraging economies of scale, resource optimisation, and marketing synergies," Raju asserted.

The integration of SAIL's diverse product portfolio, RINL's expertise in long steel, and NSL's focus on flat steel products would drive exponential growth. "This isn't just about solving today's problems. It's about ensuring the sustainability and competitiveness of India's steel industry on the global stage," Raju concluded.

# GITAM Dental College hosts workshop on advanced surgical techniques

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at GITAM Dental College & Hospital successfully organised a live surgical workshop on 'Microvascular Surgery & Distraction Osteogenesis' on Monday. The event, led by a distinguished team of surgeons from AIIMS Raipur, headed by Dr. Santhosh Rao, attracted a diverse audience of surgeons, faculty, students, and medical professionals.

The workshop showcased two intricate live surgeries, offering participants a unique opportunity to observe and learn from experts. The first surgery demonstrated the application of Distraction Osteogenesis for Mandibular



Widening in a patient with congenital aglossia (absence of the tongue). This innovative technique aims to correct complex craniofacial deformities. The second surgery focused on Microvascular Fibula Graft for Mandibular Reconstruction,

addressing a challenging case of mandibular defect caused by a benign tumour. This advanced procedure involves using a vascularised segment of the fibula bone to restore the jaw's structure and function.

In addition to the live surg-

eries, the workshop included insightful lectures on the planning, principles, and execution of these advanced techniques. Dr. Santhosh Rao emphasised the importance of such workshops in bridging the gap between academic learning and clinical practice. Participants expressed their gratitude for the hands-on learning experience and the valuable insights gained from the workshop. They believe that this knowledge will significantly enhance their ability to manage complex oral and maxillofacial cases.

Dr. N. Rajesh, Head of the Department of Oral & Maxillofacial Surgery at GITAM Dental College, highlighted the institution's commitment to fostering excellence in surgical education.



# Students placed in Accenture felicitated

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant milestone, Accenture has successfully recruited 10 final-year students from the Degree programme at Andhra Loyola College (ALC) during a campus drive held in September. The rigorous selection process focused on aptitude and communication skills, reflecting Accenture's commitment to identifying top talent for its dynamic roles.

Andhra Loyola College Principal GAP Kishore, Placement Officer Dr G Sahaya Baskaran, Vice Principals and Deans on the campus felicitat-

ed the selected students on Monday.

The selected students will assume roles in key domains such as System and Application Services, where they will manage and secure IT infrastructure for on-premises and cloud environments. They will also contribute to Quality Engineering by designing and executing robust software testing processes. Other roles include Application and Cloud Support, ensuring the smooth operation of cloud systems, and Project Control Services, supporting program management and enhancing the delivery of technology projects.

# YSRCP files complaint against TDP social media posts

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

A delegation of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders filed a complaint at the Tirupati East Police Station against alleged defamatory and false social media posts circulated by the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and its IT wing, iTDP. The delegation included Tirupati district YSRCP president Bhumana Karunakar Reddy, Tirupati MP M Gurumoorthy, former ministers K Narayanaswamy and RK Roja, and Chandragiri YSRCP in-charge Chevireddy Mohith Reddy.

Speaking to the media, YSRCP leaders accused the TDP's IT wing of systematically targeting YSRCP leaders, women activists, and the family of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy with malicious

and obscene posts. They demanded immediate action against the culprits and assured legal support for the party's social media activists.

Bhumana Karunakar Reddy alleged that fake IDs were being created in the names of YSRCP supporters to spread defamatory content. He criticised the police for their reluctance to register cases, despite complaints from senior leaders, and vowed that such tactics would not deter YSRCP's pursuit of justice.

MP M Gurumoorthy expressed dissatisfaction over the police delay in registering their complaint and warned of moving a privilege motion if protocols were ignored. He urged the authorities to uphold constitutional rights and act impartially.

# Companies are willing to relocate to AP: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Industries, Commerce, and Food Processing, TG Bharat, has announced that several companies are expressing interest in relocating to Andhra Pradesh, citing the state's robust infrastructure in industrial parks. Speaking during a question-and-answer session in the Legislative Assembly, he addressed queries raised by MLA Yarladagga Venkata Rao regarding industrial development.



Minister Bharat emphasised that the government is committed to providing essential infrastructure in industrial parks. He highlighted that the Andhra Pradesh Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC) has acquired 1,360 acres for a Model Industrial Park at Mallavalli in Krishna district. Additionally, 100 acres have been earmarked for a Mega Food Park and a State Food Park. Infrastructure such as BT roads, CC drains, and street lighting has already been completed in dispute-free areas of the park.

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roads, CC drains, and street lighting has already been completed in dispute-free areas of the park.

To facilitate employee commutes, APSRTC buses have been arranged, while work on water supply lines from a 20-km distance is expected to conclude soon.

The Minister revealed that Ashok Leyland, which had exited the state earlier, is now returning and expanding its operations in Andhra Pradesh. Nine major companies have also committed to establishing their units in the Mallavalli Industrial Park, he added.

Minister Bharat assured that police outposts and fire stations would be set up in industrial zones. Efforts are also being made to install welcome arches at industrial parks and acquire additional land for expansion. To resolve land disputes, the government plans to establish a legal firm dedicated to handling industrial park-related issues, he informed the Assembly.

## MISMANAGEMENT OF '108' SERVICE

# Strict action mooted against Aurobindo

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP MLA from Sarpavalli, Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy, has urged the Andhra Pradesh government to take strict action against Aurobindo company in connection with the alleged mismanagement of the 108 ambulance services. Speaking during the Assembly session, Reddy presented evidence of large-scale irregularities involving the company, which is linked to MP V. Vijayasai Reddy's son-in-law.

He highlighted that, under the previous YSR Congress (YSR) government, nearly 18 lakh people were unable to

**Aurobindo had been awarded the '108' and '104' ambulance service contracts during the previous YSRCP government. However, since then, multiple allegations of malpractice have surfaced. In light of these issues, the current government has decided to terminate the contract**

access emergency ambulance services, and 17.8 lakh out of 34 lakh people did not receive timely help, according to the Auditor General's reports.

Reddy also pointed out that 61% of ambulances lacked essential equipment, such as saline solutions and first aid supplies, a deficiency con-

firmed by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

Ponnuru MLA Dhulipala Narendra further revealed that while Aurobindo claimed to operate 720 ambulances, only 430 were actually in service. He criticised the company for its negligence and questioned whether the law would hold

those responsible for the mismanagement of public health services.

Aurobindo had been awarded the '108' and '104' ambulance service contracts during the previous YSRCP government. However, since then, multiple allegations of malpractice have surfaced. In light of these issues, the current government has decided to terminate the contract. Ambulance employees, who have not been paid for months, are now demanding the resolution of their unpaid dues, while the government seeks alternative arrangements to ensure the continuity of ambulance services.

PNS ■ KADAPA

# Man gets 5-year RI in dowry death case

The Additional Assistant Sessions Court has sentenced a man Mohammad Rafi to five years of imprisonment in connection with a dowry death case that occurred six years ago in Pulivendula.

According to a police statement on Monday, Mohammad Rafi married Reshma on 19 October 2008, and the couple

had three children. However, Rafi began harassing Reshma for additional dowry and, reportedly, became addicted to alcohol, subjecting her to further torture. His parents allegedly supported his actions.

Unable to bear the harassment, Reshma died by suicide

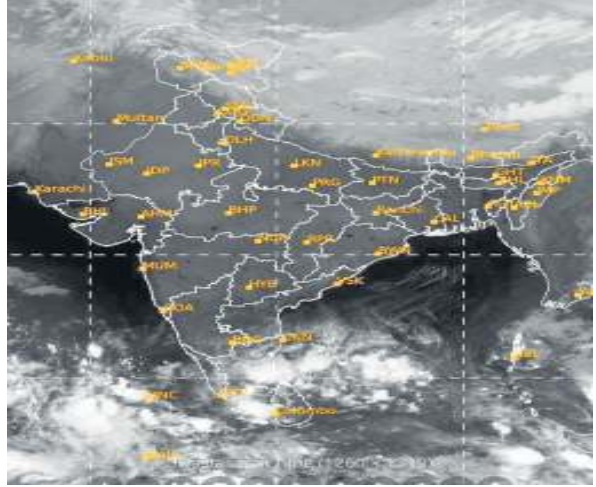
on 1 February 2018, hanging herself in their home.

Following a complaint lodged by Reshma's brother, the police registered case Cr. No. 49/2018 under Sections 498(A), 306 read with Section 34 of the IPC and Sections 3 and 4 of the Dowry Prohibition Act. The

case was investigated by the then Sub-Inspector Gopinath Reddy, with CI K. Pullaiah arresting the accused.

Additional Assistant Sessions Court Judge K. Prathasa Kumar sentenced Rafi to five years of imprisonment and imposed a fine of ₹3.09 lakh.

# Rain likely in AP over next 24 hours



PNS ■ GUNTUR

Thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema over the next 24 hours, the Meteorological Centre reported on Monday.

In its daily weather bulletin, the Centre stated that light to moderate rain or thundershowers are expected at one or two places in Rayalaseema over the next 48 hours, including November 24. A similar

weather pattern is expected in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 24 hours and again on November 24.

Dry weather is forecast for Coastal Andhra Pradesh over the next 7 days, and for South Coastal Andhra Pradesh from November 19 to 23, as well as in Rayalaseema from November 20 to 23. The report also noted that rain had occurred at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema in the last 24 hours.

# APERC chief happy with progress at Polavaram hydel power plant

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA /POLAVARAM

In-charge Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APERC), VThakur Rama Singh, visited the Polavaram Hydro Power Station on Monday to assess the progress of ongoing works. He was accompanied by APERC member P. Venkata Rama Reddy.

The inspection focussed on key components of the project, including the canal system designed to channel water from the Polavaram Multi-Purpose Project to the hydropower station, along with other critical structures such as the service bay. Senior officials from APGENCO and Megha Engineering and Infrastructure Limited (MEIL), the construction company handling the project, provided comprehensive updates on the current progress.

## Commitment to timely completion

Sujaya Kumar, Director of APGENCO's Hydrel Division, and Satish Babu Angara, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of



The APERC Chairman expressed satisfaction with the progress made so far and praised the efforts of the project team. He acknowledged the collaborative work between APGENCO, MEIL, and other stakeholders in driving the project forward.

MEIL, briefed the APERC Chairman and other officials on the status of civil and electro-mechanical works, which are progressing as per the approved plans. Both officials reiterated MEIL's commitment to complet-

ing the project within the stipulated time frame while adhering to all government guidelines and quality standards.

The APERC Chairman expressed satisfaction with the progress made so far and praised

the efforts of the project team. He acknowledged the collaborative work between APGENCO, MEIL, and other stakeholders in driving the project forward.

Key officials from APGENCO, including Chief Engineer (Civil) Y. Koteswara Rao, Superintending Engineers (SEs) Ramabhadra Raju, Ravindra Reddy, Chandrasekar, and Executive Engineers (EEs) Hanuma, Prabhakara Rao, Bhimadhana Rao, and Seetharam, as well as Vyapcos Senior Project Manager Kolagani Murthy, were present during the inspection. Senior Project Manager Kolagani Murthy of Vyapcos and MEIL General Manager Shankar also participated in the event.

The Polavaram Hydro Power Station is a key infrastructure project for the state, designed to harness the potential of the Polavaram Multi-Purpose Project for power generation. The successful completion of this project will significantly contribute to the region's energy needs and support Andhra Pradesh's efforts towards sustainable power generation.



# Awareness of cyber crimes stressed

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has stressed the need to create awareness among the public about cyber crimes and cautioned people against sharing their banking details with others.

Speaking at an awareness meeting held on Monday, where Joint Collector P. Dhatri Reddy also participated, the Collector advised people to avoid sharing personal and financial details with strangers. "In case of cyber-crime, dial the toll-free number 1930 or visit the dedicated website www.cybercrime.gov.in for assistance," she said.

The Collector appreciated District SP K. Pratap Siva Kishore for organising the programme to educate officials and the public on cyber-crime prevention.

Cyber Crime Sub-Inspector

B. Madhu Venkata Raja explained various types of cyber crimes through a PowerPoint presentation, urging the public to be vigilant. The Collector advised against responding to messages asking for OTPs or updates on platforms like OLC, Paytm, Google Pay, PhonePe, and KYC verifications.

Highlighting the rise in online fraud, she asked people to spread awareness among friends and family. "Cyber criminals exploit social media and dubious loan apps. Avoid responding to such messages," she cautioned. The Collector also explained that prompt reporting by victims allows police to block fraudulent accounts swiftly. She warned against falling prey to fake calls from individuals impersonating police officers and urged the public to report such instances immediately.

# SP consoles parents of three boys killed in road accident

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Superintendent of Police (SP) AR Damodar visited the parents of three boys who tragically lost their lives in a road accident on Sunday.

The victims — two siblings, Vadde Vikas (14) and Vadde Vishal (10), along with Kannedhara Reshmat (16) — were killed when a water tanker lorry collided with their scooter.

The SP visited the RIMS Hospital, where the bodies were brought, and expressed his condolences to the grieving parents. He assured the families that a thorough investigation would be conducted into the accident, and justice would be served.

Expressing concern over



the rising number of road fatalities involving young peo-

ple, the SP stressed that many youths, including college stu-

dents, ride two-wheelers recklessly for fun without under-

standing basic road safety. He urged parents not to allow minor boys to ride bikes, citing the lack of road sense as a major factor in these tragic accidents.

Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) R. Srinivasa, Circle Inspector (CI) Ajay Kumar, and other police officials accompanied the SP during the visit.

In a related development, on Monday, the parents and relatives of the deceased boys staged a protest in front of the Collector's office, bringing the bodies with them. They raised slogans, demanding justice for the families. The District Revenue Officer (DRO) visited the site and pacified the protesters, assuring them that the government would take appropriate action.

# Indian Red Cross Society's blood bank inaugurated



PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

The newly-established blood bank at Rayalam near Bhimavaram was inaugurated on Monday by West Godavari District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani, in the presence of Indian Red Cross Society Andhra Pradesh State Chairman Dr. Sridhar Reddy.

The blood bank, built at a cost of Rs 2.50 crore, was funded by the International Federation of Red Cross Societies. The facility is equipped with advanced medical equipment to ensure thorough testing and safe collection of blood.

Speaking at the event, Collector Nagarani, who also serves as the District President of the Red Cross Society, highlighted that the blood bank would not only provide blood but also red blood cells, plasma,

and platelets. With the addition of this new blood bank, the district now has three blood banks, with the other two located in Narasapuram and Tanuku.

She emphasised that the latest technology and procedures would be used to collect blood from donors, ensuring the highest standards of safety and quality. The Collector expressed hope that the new facility would significantly enhance the availability of blood for those in need in the district. She also urged the public to come forward and donate blood.

Dr. Sridhar Reddy, State Chairman of the Indian Red Cross Society, informed the gathering that the Society had established 59 blood banks across the country, with 18 of them in Andhra Pradesh. He also revealed that an Oxygen Bank had been set up at the

Bhimavaram blood bank, urging people to take advantage of this new facility.

Dr Reddy shared that 30% of the blood collected by the Indian Red Cross Society would be provided free of charge to white ration card holders through government general hospitals. Priority would be given to patients suffering from Thalassemia and cancer, he added.

Additionally, Dr. Reddy announced that the Red Cross Society would be providing vehicles worth Rs 60 lakh for blood collection, and pledged to improve infrastructure at all blood banks in the district headquarters. He also appreciated Dr MSVS Badri Raju, Chairman of the District Red Cross Society, for his efforts in establishing the blood bank in Bhimavaram.

# 'Lagacharla atrocities as serious as Manipur killings'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The police came drunk and misbehaved with the girls of Lagacharla village, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said.

He said the villagers had asked who gave the police the right to assault women and added that the Lagacharla villagers want action against the police who beat up farmers and misbehaved with women.

Addressing the media at the Constitutional Club in New Delhi on Monday along with Lagacharla victims, KTR said that Lagacharla villagers are saying that they are ready to die, but will not give up their lands. They also described in detail how the TG Chief Minister's brother is threatening them.

## Drunk cops misbehaved with Lagacharla girls: KTR



KTR asked whether Rahul is blind to the Revanth government's atrocities against the tribals of Telangana. Revanth is illegally grabbing the lands of tribal farmers, he said.

"The violence in Manipur, the death of small children in a UP

hospital and the suffering of the Dharavi residents of Mumbai are being shown by the media. We are asking Rahul Gandhi who talks about Manipur why are you silent about the atrocities against the tribals of Telangana? Rahul said that he

would come even if children called him, but why is he not listening to the cries of tribal women? The victims say that if you are busy they will come and meet you wherever you are. Give them time. Why is Rahul not talking about police brutality against tribal women, atrocities against farmers and land grabbing? Why are Rahul and Modi not responding to police brutality against TG's tribals," KTR said.

He said that in Telangana there is as much anarchy against tribals as in Manipur.

"Lawlessness is rampant in Telangana, which made a lot of progress during KCR's 10-year rule.

# Woman and her daughter killed as lorry knocks down bike

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A woman and her daughter were killed when a lorry knocked down their bike at Kottur village in Dornala mandal on Monday. According to the police, the victims — Dasari Nagamma (32) and her daughter Dasari Pallavi (2) — were pillion riders on a bike being driven by Guraviah. The lorry collided with their bike, killing both Nagamma and Pallavi on the spot. Their bodies were reportedly crushed under the wheels of the lorry. Guraviah, the rider, sustained injuries in the accident.

ACROSS THE STATES

# Manipur protesters defy curfew, lock govt offices

PNS ■ IMPHAL

Defying curfew orders, a group of people led by members of COCOMI on Monday locked the front doors of several government offices in Imphal West district to protest the recent killing of three women and three children in Jiribam, officials said.



The Imphal Valley region that comprises five districts including Imphal West.

The Manipur government on Monday also extended the

suspension of internet services by two more days till Wednesday in seven districts of the northeastern state.

Raising slogans demanding justice for the victims and their families killed by suspected tribal militants in Jiribam district, the protesters stormed into the office complex of the Chief Electoral Officer at Lamphelpat and locked its main entrance door with chains and locks, officials said.

The main office doors of the Institute of Bioresources and Sustainable Development (IBSD) at Takley, and the Directorate of Economics and Statistics located a few hundred metres from the CEO's office were also locked by the protesters.

Meanwhile, the indefinite sit-in staged by COCOMI at Khwairamband market in

Imphal demanding a military crackdown against "Kuki Zo Hmar" militants in the state entered its third day.

## Centre to send 50 more CAPF companies

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has decided to send an additional 50 CAPF companies comprising more than 5,000 personnel to Manipur in view of the "challenging" security and law and order situation in the northeastern state, official sources said on Monday.

This comes after the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) rushed 20 additional CAPF companies, 15 from the CRPF and five from the BSF, to the state following an order issued on November 12 after violence broke out in Jiribam district and spread to other places.



## 'Will improve online public grievance redressal system'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Jitendra Singh on Monday said that the Centre's online public grievance redressal system will be further modernised using next-generation technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Addressing a National Workshop on Effective Redressal of Public Grievances through a virtual platform, Singh highlighted that the average time for grievance resolution has dropped from 30 days to just 13 days and it "will soon be reduced further".

The Minister of State for Personnel underscored this achievement as a testament to the government's commitment to responsive and citizen-centric governance under leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Singh said the Centralized

Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS), launched in 2007, has undergone ten-step reforms that have revolutionised grievance management.

These advancements have resulted in over 1,16,000 grievances being registered in October 2024 alone, with pending grievances reduced to 53,897 in central secretariat, said a statement issued by the Personnel Ministry.

For 28 consecutive months, central secretariats have resolved over one lakh grievances each month, the minister said, adding that such bench marks underscore the effectiveness of the system.

Singh also announced the introduction of next-generation technology powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) to further modernise the grievance redressal system.



## 'Pather Panchali's actress Uma Dasgupta dies at 84

Uma Dasgupta, who immortalised the role of 'Durga' in Satyajit Ray's iconic film 'Pather Panchali' died at a private hospital here on Monday, family sources said. The 84-year-old actor, who had been suffering from cancer for a long time, is survived by her daughter, they said. Having been cast in the role of Durga in Pather Panchali, adapted from the eponymous novel of writer Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, at the age of 14, Dasgupta won the hearts of audiences worldwide for the portrayal of the character immortalising certain scenes like drenched in rains and picking up mangoes at an orchard after a nor'wester with her little brother Apu. Dasgupta was noticed by Ray during her stage performance as a child artist in a school function and the director got in touch with her school and family. Despite the worldwide acclaim and applause for her role in 'Pather Panchali', she retreated into her private space and was never seen in any other film later on.

## Shah reviews security situation for second day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday reviewed the prevailing security situation and deployment of troops in Manipur for the second consecutive day and directed top officials to focus on restoring peace and order there as early as possible, sources said.

The Union Home

Ministry is also rushing in about 5,000 paramilitary troops to Manipur to assist the state government in handling the current "volatile" situation in the Northeastern state.

The home minister reviewed the security situation of Manipur with top officials of the central and state governments, the sources said.

## Goal is to capture power, says actor Vijay

PNS ■ CEHNNAI

Actor-politician Vijay led Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam on Monday said its goal is to capture power and form a government and ruled out alliance with the main opposition party AIADMK.

Citing a news report in a Tamil daily which claimed a tie-up between the TVK and AIADMK, the party said it was 'out-and-out false and had no basis or proof', party general secretary, N Anand, said in a statement.

The goal of the party is to win majority with the people's great support and form a government that delivers good governance, he added.

Tamil Nadu Assembly election, as per the schedule, is likely during April-May 2026.

Since Vijay spared AIADMK in his party confer-



ence on October 27 and targeted the ruling parties, the DMK and the BJP, in the state and centre respectively, speculation arose on the possibility of an alliance between the TVK and the AIADMK. The party had already said that its ideology is based on secular, social justice principles

## AFTER JHANSI NICU TRAGEDY Fire safety crackdown on Lucknow hospitals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Notices have been issued to 80 hospitals found lacking in fire safety measures as authorities in Lucknow intensified inspections in the wake of the tragedy at a state-run hospital in Jhansi.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Lucknow, Mangesh Kumar, said they have identified 906 hospitals and buildings in Lucknow for fire safety inspections.

"Of these, 80 hospitals were found non-compliant with fire safety norms and have been served notices. We have also written to the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to ensure these hospitals meet the required standards," he said.

## 'India vital partner of UK' Asserts British Indo-Pacific minister

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The UK is committed to foster deeper cooperation with India as it is a "vital" partner and one of the fastest growing economies in the world, British Minister for Indo-Pacific Catherine West said on Monday as she embarked on a two-day visit to the country.

West will continue to unlock the full potential of the UK-India partnership and drive forward greater growth for both countries building upon the ambitions set out by Foreign Secretary David Lammy during his visit to New Delhi in July, a British government readout said.

She will also reiterate that the UK remains committed to negotiating a mutually beneficial free trade agreement and bilateral investment treaty, it



added. "I am delighted to be visiting India for the first time as Minister for the Indo-Pacific," West said.

"As one of the fastest growing economies in the world, India is a vital partner," she said.

Minister West's visit will include a meeting at the Ministry of External Affairs

where she will reinforce the UK's commitment to a stronger partnership and the importance of the enduring links between people of the two nations, the readout noted.

The two sides are expected to review the overall situation in the Indo-Pacific and explore ways to bolster cooperation in the region during West's visit to India.

During an education roundtable at the British Council, the Minister will learn more about the unique "living bridge" between the UK and India, representing the 1.7 million people in the UK with Indian heritage and connecting our two countries, it said.

The British minister is also scheduled to visit the Jama Masjid where she will learn about its history and architecture, it said.



## Arunachal has immense potential in pisciculture: Guv

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen (retd) K T Parraik on Monday said the northeastern state has immense potential in pisciculture, and urged youths to take up fish farming for sustainable development. Parraik, during a visit to a fish farm at Mechukha in Shi-Yomi district, interacted with farmers and officials, and released fingerlings in water, a Raj Bhavan release said. "Arunachal Pradesh, blessed with pristine environment, perennial water sources and fresh-flowing water bodies, has immense potential in pisciculture. With technical and financial support, the sector can be a popular avenue for entrepreneurship and self-employment," he said. The governor also asked officials to reach out to the agrarian community, asserting that farmers and youths of the state have the potential to 'revolutionise' the farming sector, but require proper motivation and guidance.



## Toddler starts e-rickshaw, dies after crashing into wall

A two-year-old boy died after he accidentally started an e-rickshaw and it rammed into a wall, police said on Monday. The incident occurred on Sunday evening when Yash Pandey was playing outside his house in Mukundpur village, they said. According to the family, an e-rickshaw parked nearby had keys left in the ignition. While playing, Yash accidentally started the vehicle, which sped out of control and crashed into a wall of the neighbour's house. The child suffered severe injuries in the collision and was rushed to the Maniar Primary Health Centre, where doctors declared him dead on arrival, police said. "We have not received any formal complaint regarding the incident," Station House Officer Ratnesh Dubey said.

## If Modi, Shah, Ambani are 'ek', then they are 'safe'

Rahul mocks BJP's slogan

PNS ■ RANCHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday mocked BJP's slogan 'ek rahenge toh safe rahenge' (if we remain united, we will be safe) by saying that it translated into unity between Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and billionaires like Ambani.

The Congress leader also attacked Modi for not visiting Manipur which has been "burning" for the last one-and-a-half years, and alleged that Shah was not taking interest in containing violence in the northeastern state as "vested interests" were at play.

"I will explain the real meaning of BJP's slogan - 'ek hai to safe hai'. It is if Modi, Shah and



Ambani are 'ek' (united), then they are 'safe'," Gandhi alleged at a press conference in Ranchi.

He alleged that prime assets of the country, including airports, ports and natural resources, were being handed over to billionaires like Adani

and Ambani without following transparent tender processes.

Gandhi asserted that caste census was a must for the country and it will provide wealth distribution data, helping the Congress to take accurate decisions.

## Over 77 lakh digital life certificates generated by pensioners: Centre

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 77 lakh Digital Life Certificates (DLCs) have been generated by Central and state government pensioners during an ongoing special campaign, the Union government announced on Monday.

As many as 1,575 camps have been held as of November 17 as part of the 'DLC Campaign 3.0' being held across 800 cities and towns nationwide from November 1 to 30.

"The campaign has successfully generated over 77 lakh digital life certificates by the end of the second week of the launch of the campaign, out of which 1,77,153 pensioners above 90 years and 17,212 pensioners in the 80-90 years age group have submitted their DLCs from the comfort of their homes, offices, or branches," the Ministry of Personnel,

and Pensions Welfare (DoPPW), the Controller General of Defence Accounts, the Ministry of Railways, the Department of Telecom, the Department of Posts, UIDAI, and Pensioners Welfare Associations, are working together to realise the vision of digital empowerment for the pensioners, the statement said.

Central and state government pensioners can use "Jeevan Pramaan", a biometric-enabled digital service, to have their DLCs issued.



Public Grievances and Pensions said in a statement.

This momentum highlights the commitment of the pensioners, banking institutions and government agencies towards a digitally empowered India, it added. There has been significant anticipation among all the stakeholders, particularly among the sick and elderly pensioners, at all the campaign locations, it said.

All key stakeholders, including pension disbursing banks, the Department of Pensions

and Pensioners Welfare (DoPPW), the Controller General of Defence Accounts, the Ministry of Railways, the Department of Telecom, the Department of Posts, UIDAI, and Pensioners Welfare Associations, are working together to realise the vision of digital empowerment for the pensioners, the statement said.

Central and state government pensioners can use "Jeevan Pramaan", a biometric-enabled digital service, to have their DLCs issued.

## Day after quitting AAP, Kailash Gahlot joins BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former Delhi minister Kailash Gahlot joined the BJP on Monday, a day after resigning from the AAP, and accused his former party of constantly picking fights with the Centre and compromising the values which drew people to its fold.

He joined the BJP at its headquarters in the presence of Union ministers Manohar Lal Khattar and Harsh Malhotra, Delhi unit president Virendra Sachdeva, party vice president Baijyanti Jay Panda and national media head Anil Baluni among others.

Addressing the media after joining the party, Gahlot said efforts are being made to build



a false narrative that his decision to quit the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the result of ED and CBI pressure.

The fact is that the AAP compromised its values, he said, claiming that he has never acted under anyone's pressure.

He said maintaining good relations with the Centre is essential for Delhi's develop-

ment, as he accused the AAP government of constantly being in a fight with the central government led by the BJP.

Be it chief minister or ministers, they were picking fights with the Centre over smallest of issues all the time, he alleged, claiming that he maintained good relations with the central government, including the LG.

## 'Climate change responsible for one-fifth of dengue cases'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Climate change could be responsible for nearly one-fifth of the current dengue cases in the global population, with the potential to increase instances of the disease by an additional 40-60 per cent by 2050, according to a new study.

These findings, from researchers at Stanford and Harvard Universities, provide the most definitive evidence to date that climate change is a major factor driving the global surge in mosquito-borne diseases.

The study was presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

"We looked at data on dengue incidence and climate variation across 21 countries in Asia and the Americas and

found that there is a clear and direct relationship between rising temperatures and rising infections," said senior author Erin Mordecai, an infectious disease ecologist at Stanford University.



"Our findings indicate that historical climate change has already increased dengue incidence by 18 per cent in the study region, and projections

suggest a potential increase of 40 per cent to 60 per cent by mid-century, depending on the climate scenario, with some areas seeing increases of up to 200 per cent," the authors wrote.

According to the World

Health Organisation, the increasingly warm and humid conditions driven by climate change are facilitating the spread of dengue, with new



outbreaks reported in previously unaffected regions, including parts of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean.

Countries in the Americas have recorded nearly 12 million cases of dengue in 2024, compared to 4.6 million in 2023, and locally acquired infections have been reported in California and Florida, the researchers noted.

The Asian countries studied included Vietnam and

Cambodia, among others. "It's evidence that climate change has already become a significant threat to human health, and for dengue in particular, our data suggests the impact could get much worse," Mordecai said.

The researchers also found that dengue-endemic areas now entering the 20-29°C "sweet spot for virus transmission"—such as parts of Peru, Mexico, Bolivia, and Brazil—could face the biggest future risks, with infections rising by 150-200 per cent over the next few decades.

However, areas already at the high end of the temperature range, like southern Vietnam, are likely to experience minimal additional climate impacts and may even see a slight decrease in cases, the authors added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## G20: Delhi to Rio

It is yet another crucial opportunity for world leaders to bridge divides and collaborate on creating a better future

Prime Minister is in Rio de Janeiro to attend the G20 Summit, which is one of the biggest platforms for the world leaders to make collective decisions for the betterment of the world and address the issues confronting the humanity. The 19th G20 Summit brings together world leaders to address some of the most pressing global challenges. Hosted by Brazil, this year's Summit builds on India's successful presidency, which left a lasting impact by inducting the African Union as a permanent member and fostering consensus on divisive issues such as the Ukraine conflict. The summit will feature prominent leaders, including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping. In Brazil, Modi attends the summit as a member of the G20 Troika, alongside Brazil and South Africa, reflecting India's continued influence in shaping global discourse. The summit's agenda is wide-ranging, reflecting the multifaceted challenges the world faces today.



Economic recovery remains a critical priority as nations grapple with the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and global geopolitical tensions. Issues such as inflation, debt crises and financing for sustainable development are likely to dominate discussions. Simultaneously, climate action will take centre stage, with a focus on enhancing climate financing, accelerating the transition to renewable energy, and achieving the commitments of the Paris Agreement. The geopolitical landscape, particularly the ongoing Ukraine conflict is another focal point. While the issue remains divisive, leaders will seek to find common ground on mitigating its impacts on global food and energy security. The summit is also likely to explore the role of technology in bridging development gaps, emphasising responsible use of artificial intelligence and fostering digital cooperation. For India, the summit is an opportunity to reinforce its leadership on the global stage. As part of the G20 Troika, Modi brings India's vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" to the table, advocating for greater inclusivity and collaboration. His interactions with leaders such as Joe Biden and Xi Jinping on sidelines are expected to address key issues like trade, defence partnerships and technology sharing, furthering India's bilateral and multilateral engagements. India's presidency last year emphasised the importance of representing the Global South, a theme that Brazil is expected to continue. This focus on equitable development resonates with nations across Africa, Asia and Latin America, underscoring the need for a more balanced global governance system. For India and Prime Minister Modi, it is a moment to showcase the nation's growing influence and commitment to global solutions, setting the tone for the future of multilateral cooperation. This is one of the big opportunities to bring about meaningful change, hope it is not wasted.

mon ground on mitigating its impacts on global food and energy security. The summit is also likely to explore the role of technology in bridging development gaps, emphasising responsible use of artificial intelligence and fostering digital cooperation. For India, the summit is an opportunity to reinforce its leadership on the global stage. As part of the G20 Troika, Modi brings India's vision of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" to the table, advocating for greater inclusivity and collaboration. His interactions with leaders such as Joe Biden and Xi Jinping on sidelines are expected to address key issues like trade, defence partnerships and technology sharing, furthering India's bilateral and multilateral engagements. India's presidency last year emphasised the importance of representing the Global South, a theme that Brazil is expected to continue. This focus on equitable development resonates with nations across Africa, Asia and Latin America, underscoring the need for a more balanced global governance system. For India and Prime Minister Modi, it is a moment to showcase the nation's growing influence and commitment to global solutions, setting the tone for the future of multilateral cooperation. This is one of the big opportunities to bring about meaningful change, hope it is not wasted.

## PICTALK



Riders take part in the MRF MOGRIP Supercross Championship 2024, in Bengaluru

## New tentacles of international terrorism



SUDHIR HINDWAN

Proactive leadership is crucial for implementing strategic plans, while swift judicial reforms are needed to handle terrorism cases more effectively

The recent wave of terrorist attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, following the formation of a new state government, has reignited concerns over transnational terrorism. These incidents, marked by escalating violence in vulnerable areas, highlight a disturbing evolution in militant strategies. This resurgence is rooted in multiple factors, each revealing the complexities of the situation.

Firstly, the attacks aim to signal that despite the abrogation of Article 370 and the central government's efforts to stabilise the region, Jammu and Kashmir remain unstable. Secondly, Jammu's expansive forested terrains have become a haven for militants, offering natural cover for guerrilla warfare and hindering security forces. Thirdly, the improved law and order in Kashmir has shifted insurgent focus to Jammu, where vulnerabilities are being exploited. Fourthly, while terrorist activities were temporarily subdued, the resurgence of militancy underscores the persistence of deep-rooted threats.

Lastly, despite the successful Assembly elections and the formation of Omar Abdullah's government, the region continues to grapple with relentless attacks. The situation in Jammu and Kashmir resonates with broader developments in the West Asia. Recent events, such as the targeting of an Israeli ship by Iran-backed Houthi groups in the Red Sea and subsequent retaliatory strikes by Israel, the UK and the US on Houthi positions in Yemen, have heightened regional tensions. The involvement of Hamas and Hezbollah in supporting the Houthis underscores a dangerous convergence of terrorist alliances. The killing of prominent figures like IRGC General Sayyed Razi Mousavi and Hamas Deputy Leader Saleh-al-Arouri has added to the volatility, while Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's aggressive strategies have intensified attacks. Adding to these concerns are the January 3, 2024, twin blasts in Karman, southern Iran, which left over 85 dead and hundreds injured. This violence has spread



to Lebanon and Syria, where terror networks have previously used locations like Sana, Yemen, as bases for planting explosives in international airports. These incidents reveal two critical trends: the increasing potential for transnational terrorism and the extension of terror operations into global trade routes and economies. Modern terrorist networks demonstrate an unsettling capacity for precision in choosing targets and timings. The persistence of global terrorism is not new. Tragic events, from the Oklahoma City bombing that claimed over 200 lives to the Tokyo subway gas attack, which killed 12 and hospitalised thousands, reveal its devastating history. Other instances, such as the long-running insurgency of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, have inflicted severe casualties and losses. Nations worldwide—be it Russia, Spain, the UK, Italy, Israel, or China—face the unrelenting specter of terrorist violence.

Social inequities, global economic disparities and historical grievances contribute to the conditions that foster extremism. The post-Cold War global order, shaped by power dynamics of major nations, has exacerbated these tensions. For instance, the power network established by the US and its allies in West Asia has sparked resistance in



THE PERSISTENCE OF GLOBAL TERRORISM IS NOT NEW. TRAGIC EVENTS, FROM THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING THAT CLAIMED OVER 200 LIVES TO THE TOKYO SUBWAY GAS ATTACK, WHICH KILLED 12 AND HOSPITALISED THOUSANDS, REVEAL ITS DEVASTATING HISTORY

many regions, deepening conflicts and animosities. In an interconnected world, socio-economic conditions in one region influence those in another, creating a fertile ground for transnational grievances. The rapid dissemination of advanced weaponry and transportation networks has further facilitated the expansion of terrorist activities. Suicide squads and other modern militant tactics have left security apparatuses reeling. It is imperative to reject narratives that romanticise terrorists as freedom fighters and foster cooperation between local communities and law enforcement to dismantle these networks.

A diversified approach, integrating technical expertise and on-the-ground insights, is essential. Specialised training programmes for security personnel to anticipate and respond to emerging threats are crucial. Countering terrorism requires a multifaceted approach, beginning with detailed analysis of major incidents to formulate actionable strategies. Advanced communication networks must be established to intercept terrorist communications effectively, while enhanced intelligence gathering, supported by strengthened local sources, is essential for generating actionable insights. Investment in cutting-edge technology for maintaining secrecy and secu-

ity, along with training specialists in counter-terrorism tactics, is vital to address evolving threats. Dedicated think tanks should be created to develop innovative solutions, and comprehensive training programs for police, intelligence, and military personnel must be prioritised. Proactive leadership among security officials is crucial for implementing strategic plans, while swift judicial reforms are needed to handle terrorism cases more effectively.

These measures must be accompanied by the political will to enforce them effectively. Public awareness and grassroots support play pivotal roles in countering terrorism. Localised insights should inform security measures to ensure they are contextually appropriate and effective. Ultimately, combating terrorism requires a coordinated global effort.

Nations must share intelligence, align strategies, and foster international cooperation to address this pervasive menace. Time is of the essence, as modern terrorists continuously adapt their tactics. Without addressing the underlying socio-political and economic factors that nurture terrorism, efforts will only provide superficial relief.

(Author, a Bharat Gaurav Award recipient, is a professor, HOD, and expert on strategic affairs; views are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## CLOUDS OF WAR

Madam — Apropos of the article 'US-Iran tensions: War clouds over West Asia' (November 16), the analysis of the geopolitics, particularly in the West Asian context, shows warmongering in West Asia in a long-distant future. Beyond doubt, US-Iran tensions are extremely deep-rooted, and no solutions are visible in the near future. The advent of Donald Trump in his second tenure may be seen as intolerant of any terrorism-oriented politics of West Asian countries where Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, etc., with hundreds of militia, deep state forces, and terrorist organisations, who have no obligations of following or adhering to any international, UNO, or multilateral treaties, conventions, agreements, norms and regulations. Bangladesh is the new entrant of the explosive block.

Such organisations have tacit financial, army and logistic support from these nations while their regular armies execute and control their plans, attacks, hijacks and other disruptive, destabilising and assassination activities. The USA is not solely to blame for West Asian problems and war-ridden Islamic governments rattling guns and bombs as their mainstream administration and geopolitical politics. Obviously, all these countries are devastated and ruined by the compelling influx of illegal immigration from these countries in all European countries, the US, and also India. While Hamas carried out the most sinister attacks on Israel on Oct 7, 2023, the self-annihilation of Hamas and its supportive Hezbollah was on the cards. But the truth is that such organisations supported by their sponsoring governments will never be extinct. These are the façades of the regular armies. It may be seen in European countries that unrest over illegal immigrants is growing. US-Iran enmity is only one of the factors. The world is smarting under the threats of terrorism

## Chaos in Imphal



Manipur's Imphal Valley relapsed into chaos after unconfirmed reports that the bodies of all six persons, believed to be women and children missing since November 11, had been recovered from a river along the State's boundary with Assam. As protesters took to the streets, setting vehicles ablaze and attacking the residences of several MLAs in the State capital, Imphal, the

and fighting against its tooth and nail. **Vinod Johri | Delhi**

## BLAME GAME

Madam — Farmers' issues continue to haunt the Government and the fallout from the UPA government's time continues. Blame games are played just to find an escape route for decades. Instead of punishing farmers, the government should find ways of empowering them so that they can explore alternative ways of destroying stubble. High pollution levels affect the locals. Stubble burning is environmentally hazardous, and it should be prevented. The Supreme Court seems to think that if stubble-burning is halted, the air quality in Delhi would improve dramatically. It has asked the neighbouring states to take appropriate action to prevent it. True, there are safer ways of disposing of stubble, but they are costly. The farmers do not have the financial capacity to pluck out the stubble and bury it in the fields where it will become part of the soil. Yet, the sad fact is that the poor

government suspended Internet and mobile data services in seven affected districts of the valley, which is dominated by the non-tribal Meiteis and the surrounding hills, where the tribal Kuki-Zos are in a majority. A curfew was clamped in the three valley districts of Imphal East, Imphal West and Bishnupur. Among the houses of the MLAs targeted was that of Rajkumar Imo Singh, the son-in-law of Chief Minister Nongthombam Biren Singh, whose personal residence on the outskirts of Imphal was also reportedly attacked by a mob on Saturday night. Large groups of people went about asking MLAs to quit if the government was unable to ensure peace and punish killers of women and children.

**Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad**

farmers of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan are blamed for the poor air quality in Delhi. **C K Subramaniam | Chennai**

## SANJU'S CENTURY STREAK

Madam — Sanju Samson has etched his name in the record books by becoming the first player to score three T20I centuries in a calendar year. This remarkable achievement cements his status as one of the most explosive batters in the shortest format of the game. Samson's stellar run began with his maiden T20I hundred against Bangladesh in Hyderabad on October 12. He reached the century mark in just 40 balls, the second-fastest hundred by an Indian in T20I cricket. His innings was a masterclass in power-hitting, as he smashed 111 off 47 balls, including 11 boundaries and 8 sixes, dismantling the Bangladeshi bowlers.

**Jayanthy S Manaiam | Mumbai**

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)

## Turning missteps and misjudgments into growth

Our capacity for introspection determines the kind of individuals we become. Our personal blunders and societal faux pas can shape us

I believe that we are a sum total of experiences. While most are pleasant, a few leave us red-faced at the very best. It is for us to make the choice to introspect and evolve into a better person. My wife and I gingerly stepped out of the confines of our home after the restrictions imposed during the difficult COVID times had been relatively relaxed.

We thought we had crossed the hurdle. Our optimism was misplaced. We observed many vigilantes hanging out on their balconies to catch the hapless walkers at any time of the day or night and call the PCR. The police would necessarily have to come since a complaint had been raised and then go back, irritated at the complainant. We were still terrified enough to wear a mask. However, a few had to be nudged.

My wife would good-naturedly point at her mask as a request to those not wearing one. We encountered a young lady walking with no mask, not even one dangling around her ears. The sensibilities of my wife aroused, she stopped the lady and requested her to comply with the regulations.



My wife was rudely brushed aside. The lady stopped us during the next round, to let us know that she was a doctor who spent long hours in the hospital with a mask on, and her lungs needed fresh air, uninterrupted by a mask. Unaware of a different set of rules for medical professionals, I inquired from a few doctor friends. They were unequivocal in their judgement, the lady in question is an idiot. We have all been guilty of an occasional faux pas at some time or the other. I attended a literature festival at a university, a few days before the lockdown, to speak about my book.

I made a point that communication amongst people should never stop, even if it means communicating on

social media, be it Facebook, Instagram or Tinder. The audience erupted in loud laughter and I preened with pride at my oratory skills. My jubilation was short-lived. I found out over the net during the train back that Tinder was a dating platform. I may choose to call this a blunder, but the simple fact is that it was stupid of me to speak of something about which I did not know.

This foot-in-the-mouth syndrome is nothing new, particularly amongst a certain section of society, who are supposed to be beacons of the good and should be upholding values. A minister in one of the states defended the decision of a medical college to ask the female candidates to declare their virginity in the



SANJAY CHANDRA

admission form because, "Virgin, as per the dictionary, means an unmarried and pure girl. So, all these words are not objectionable."

A senior leader observed that electricity must be provided in all villages so that people spend more time watching television than procreating. Another leader mentioned that crimes against women are happening in urban India and not in the villages since we are losing our culture in the cities. The anecdotes narrated above may appear disjointed at a cursory glance. The common thread I detect is the misplaced value system of authority: 'My word is supreme.'

Nothing gives one the right to dispense half-baked wisdom, not follow the rules, or make discriminatory statements. Our experiences should evolve us. Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paulo Freire, has said aptly, "No one is born fully-formed: it is through self-experience in the world that we become what we are."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN SEPHORA KIDS SYNDROME

By promoting safe practices, the parents and society can ensure that this trend benefits rather than exploits



SHAINY SHARMA

The beauty industry is continuously evolving, with brands adapting to trends, demographics and consumer behaviour. A notable trend is the rising interest in skincare and beauty among younger audiences, including children and pre-teens, popularly referred to as 'Sephora Kids'. While Sephora does not have a specific kids line, the term reflects a cultural shift as children become active participants in the beauty and skincare market.

The idea of 'Sephora Kids' is tied to the increasing exposure of children to social media, beauty tutorials and influencers. Platforms like TikTok and YouTube have normalised beauty routines for younger audiences, making skincare and makeup accessible and aspirational. Pre-teens, often labelled as "Generation Alpha," are drawn to the beauty industry as a way of self-expression and social connection.

Parents too play a role in this trend, with some encouraging early skincare habits to prevent future issues like acne. Additionally, brands targeting this demographic such as Bubble and Florence by Mills, offer gentle, age-appropriate skincare, further validating the interest of young consumers? Beauty brands have now recognised the buying power of younger audiences and their families.

Marketing campaigns often focus on inclusivity, fun packaging and social media visibility to attract children and pre-teens. For instance, kid influencers and beauty creators promote skincare routines and products, dri-



ving trends among their peers while brands like Bubble and BTWN emphasise safe, dermatologist-approved products for younger skin. Moreover, platforms like TikTok and Instagram amplify the trend by showcasing beauty routines and promoting luxury brands. This has contributed to an increase in spending among tweens and teens on beauty products, with estimates showing annual expenditures ranging from \$119 to \$140 per child for skincare and makeup.

Not only this, but many parents also express concerns about the safety of children using advanced skincare products with potent ingredients like retinol and acids, which may not be suitable for young skin. Dermatologists report an increase in skin issues, such as irritations and allergic reactions, linked to these products. Parents too worry about the psychological impact, such as the pressure to conform to unrealistic beauty standards and premature exposure to consumer culture?

They note that participating in beauty routines can boost their children's confidence and serve as a creative outlet. However, the same comes with the risk of adopting harmful skincare habits, overspending and feeling pressured by societal beauty ideals? The rise of Sephora Kids raises ethical questions about how much influence the beauty industry should exert over children. On one hand, critics argue that marketing beauty products to young audiences exploits their impressionability and perpetuates consumerism while on the other hand, advocates believe that when managed responsibly, it can foster creativity and self-care. Brands and regulators must emphasise transparency, safety and age-appropriate messaging.

Parents, too at times must guide their children in understanding the importance of moderation and self-acceptance. There is no denying that the concept of 'Sephora Kids' symbolises a cultural and generational shift in the beauty industry. While it opens doors to creativity and self-expression for younger audiences, it also demands careful navigation of ethical and developmental implications. By promoting safe practices and fostering positive self-images, the beauty industry, parents and society can ensure that this trend benefits rather than exploits young consumers.

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

# Redesigning education for real-world skills



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

By integrating practical lessons on earning, saving and managing money, education can better prepare students for real-world challenges



It is a truism to state that the world is becoming an increasingly complex proposition to deal with and the methods of coping with it need to be structured and understood. This alone will avoid increasing grief and bewilderment on the way matters are working in the world one is surrounded by. An illustration from the area of finance may illustrate the situation. It is an obvious matter to point out that everyone needs finance to survive and finance has to be obtained if not earned from somewhere. This business of understanding finance or earning requires the ability to understand what finance is and how it can be earned.

Finance comes in many shapes and colours. A common factor in all finance is that it is putting a monetary value to one's effort and it is compensation for what one does to keep a system going. Finance sets the equation between effort and its compensation and finance in turn becomes a tool for both purchasing and obtaining the needs of life beyond purchase. To do so, one needs to understand currency, its equivalence and how currency is measured in effort.

It is one of the enigmas of our prevailing school and college system that these matters are rarely explained through a curriculum or, for that matter, in a formal situation. Much is learned about finance through observation and the domestic environment in which one has grown, that is converted into transactions in operational life and early enough in one's life one learns that one needs to have capabilities to earn money and therefore deal with finance. Each system has its methods of equivalence between efforts and compensation and the forces that determine it are very often referred to as market forces. This by itself is an art that life teaches



FINANCE COMES IN MANY SHAPES AND COLOURS. A COMMON FACTOR IN ALL FINANCE IS THAT IT IS PUTTING A MONETARY VALUE TO ONE'S EFFORT AND IT IS COMPENSATION FOR WHAT ONE DOES TO KEEP A SYSTEM GOING

sometimes simply and frequently through trial and error. Thus, it is that finance is not only tricky, but it leads to comprehend and yet it remains one of the cornerstones of anyone's life. Taking the conversation further, it needs to be realised that finance has some basic constituents like earning, saving, investing, converting into tangible assets and more. Each area has over time become a specialised field of learning and indeed happiness or otherwise of one's existence.

There are forces in finance in the higher classes of the school where certain basic concepts are explained and certain essential foundational ideas on finance are shared. What is needed is giving it a practical orientation and teaching people through fieldwork, the value of finance and its central role in human life. Most classrooms have not graduated to that stage of thinking, or in that way of thinking which means very simply that most people pass through the completion of their schooling without getting the correlation between the essentials of finance and the foundation of living.

A situation becomes more complex when one graduate from the college or university level and then unless one is doing a specific course in finance, one may never learn anything beyond what one has learned in school about finance.

This is a loss because, as enumerated above, what is taught in school about finance does not go very far in the practice of finance. What everyone needs to know is the correlation between one's

worth in handling skills and information and how this is compensated in financial terms by the environment.

This by itself is a tricky proposition and, as suggested earlier, needs fieldwork. Then there are final areas of finance that cannot be learned unless exposed to the practical world and that is not a matter that can be brought into the classroom. Also, in a normal education system, there are again gaps where this learning goes by default and people are left to pay for themselves through trial and error.

This causes not only immense problems but complications of one variety or another. One can be shortchanged or one may not know that services cannot, in many cases, be provided without some type of compensation and that compensation very often has to be in terms of money. It will be a worthwhile approach to explain to people the relationship between money, finance and effort.

Such a perspective will help make the curriculum of not only the schools but also the colleges worthwhile and more practical in one's own life. As matters stand, if one specialises in physics, chemistry, history, psychology, geography, or whatever else, one hardly realises that beyond the so-called specialisation, there is a general education one needs.

This general education can be in behaviour concerning others, management of self, understanding income, understanding expenditure, understanding savings, and so on. Putting it simply, there is a need

to also focus on the range of learning before one crosses into adulthood and becomes a financially viable entity. As indicated earlier, much of this is happening through trial and error, embracing a method; that works in certain cases but not in others. There is a clear need to reduce the treasury for adjustment to actual life through formal inputs before one graduates into adulthood and is thrown into the open sea - as it were to take care of oneself.

The time has come to establish a philosophy of education, self-formation, and teaching that can stand on its feet and be related to the requirements of life.

The time is right for some fundamental thinking on such matters, and the sooner it's done, the better. Similarly, similar reflections are needed in making him a person through his childhood, teenage, and other phases of his life about the nature and content of what is technology.

This is so because technology touches every aspect of our lives, from not just the glasses that one may have to wear to correct one's sight but to everything else that has become such an essential part of one's livelihood and existence. Including and understanding the basic nature of technology in the curriculum of schools and colleges also needs attention. However, that may be a subject matter that needs to be treated separately and independently.

(The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal.)

# Cloud seeding, urbanisation, global warming: Where is the world headed?

Amid the climate challenges plaguing urban life, innovative approaches like cloud seeding offer promising solutions for a better future

The impact of global warming and pollution is transforming urban life, turning once vibrant towns into places that are becoming less and less livable.

Across the globe, urban landscapes, particularly in India, are evolving into concrete jungles, where the struggle for survival frequently resembles an arduous challenge. Once viewed as a shining example of culture and a centre for economic pursuits, Delhi and Mumbai now display AQI scores that seem almost staggering.

Heavy with contaminants, the noxious air has transformed into an environmental concern, leaving inhabitants struggling to breathe



RACHNA LAKSHPATI

while suffering from respiratory conditions. Have these cities become uninhabitable? In Delhi, pollution levels frequently fall into the "severe" category, with AQI readings often exceeding 400.

The outcomes are dire: children attending school only part-time; elderly individuals confined indoors; and hospitals inundated with

cases of asthma, bronchitis and various other respiratory ailments. In Mumbai, the oppressive humidity intensifies the situation, transforming the already polluted air into a dangerous mix for its 20-million-strong populace. Economic growth challenges the conventional use of various facilities and personal vehicles: although development fosters prosperity, it comes with significant expenses. Alongside factories and vehicles, construction sites contribute to the GDP; however, they also transform cities into perilous environments.

The alarming rise in disease cases compels us to confront a difficult reality: does the cost of progress come at the expense of the health and

wellbeing of the populace? Now, comes cloud seeding, a game changer in this catastrophic scenario. The practice of introducing particles like silver iodide or salt into the atmosphere to encourage rainfall can be celebrated for its potential to cleanse the air and replenish water resources through cloud seeding.

Thus, it could indeed be the virtue that aids in easing the challenges faced by cities: pollution and water scarcity. Countries such as China and the United Arab Emirates have been exploring this technology, while India has intermittently implemented it during severe droughts. Nonetheless, its use as a means to reduce pollution



remains largely uncharted. Is cloud seeding the answer to the escalating air quality crisis in India?

Some argue that cloud seeding is not an extraordinary solution. It comes with a hefty price tag, and the long-term effects on the environ-

ment remain uncertain. What truly matters is that addressing pollution at its source—minimising industrial emissions, promoting sustainable urban growth, and shifting to clean energy—continues to be the primary goal. As cities like

Delhi struggle and suffocate under the weight of toxic air, these short-term measures, like cloud seeding, may provide a fleeting but vital relief. The entire conversation regarding urban development requires a complete transformation.

Advancement must not jeopardise the wellbeing of the local population. It is essential for those in positions of authority to champion sustainable practices and enforce rigorous pollution controls to achieve a harmonious relationship between advancement and environmental stewardship. The stakes have never been higher.

The choice before us is stark: continue on a path that suffocates our cities or embrace

innovation and sustainability to breathe life back into urban spaces. The future of millions depends on the decisions we make today.

**Conclusion:** The intersection of urbanisation, global warming, and pollution demands urgent action. Short-term fixes like cloud seeding can offer relief, but true progress requires systemic change—curbing emissions, adopting clean energy, and prioritising sustainable urban growth. The future of our cities and the well-being of millions depend on decisive, forward-thinking measures taken today.

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

IN BRIEF



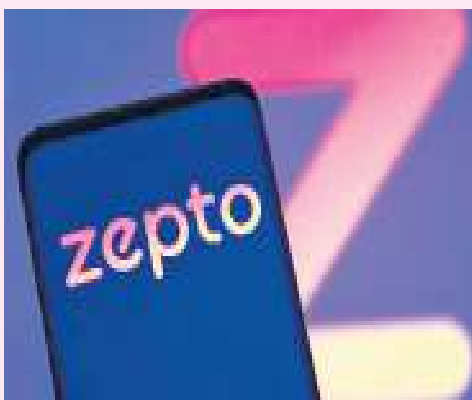
**ArisInfra Solutions gets Sebi's go to raise Rs 600-cr**

ArisInfra Solutions Ltd has received Sebi's go ahead to raise Rs 600 crore through an initial public offering (IPO), an update with the markets regulator showed on Monday. The proposed IPO is entirely a fresh issue of equity shares and with no offer-for-sale (OFS) component, according to the draft red herring prospectus. The company, which filed preliminary IPO papers with Sebi in August, obtained its observation on November 13, the update showed. In Sebi's parlance, obtaining observations means its go ahead to float the public issue. As per the draft papers, the Mumbai-based company plans to utilise proceeds of the issue for funding the working-capital requirements of the company, investment in subsidiary, Buildmex-Infra, repayment of loan and for general corporate purposes.



**NTPC pays Rs 2,424 cr as dividend to shareholders**

State-owned NTPC on Monday said it has paid Rs 2,424 crore as an interim dividend to its shareholders. The company paid its first interim dividend of Rs 2,424 crore for the financial year 2024-25 on November 18, representing 25 per cent of the company's paid-up equity share capital, NTPC said in a statement. NTPC CMD Gurdeep Singh, along with the Board of Directors of the company, presented the 'payment advice of Rs 1,238.84 crore, representing the government's share to the Minister of Power Manohar Lal, Power Secretary Pankaj Agarwal', it added. On October 24, the Board of Directors of NTPC approved the first interim dividend of Rs 2.50 on the face value of shares of Rs 10 each for the financial year 2024-25. This marks the 32nd consecutive year that NTPC has distributed dividends to its shareholders. In a separate statement, NTPC said it is setting up a plant at Simhadri in Andhra Pradesh to produce green hydrogen from seawater.



**Zepto expands cafe service to major cities**

Quick commerce platform Zepto on Monday announced the rollout of its cafe service in major cities and said it targets a revenue run-rate of Rs 1,000 crore by 2026. It will serve through over 120 Cafes at stores across Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, and soon in Hyderabad, Chennai, and Pune, a company statement said. "We have cracked 10-minute delivery with high-quality food preparation processes, which is why we are seeing strong customer love. Over the past year, our team has meticulously researched and sourced state-of-the-art equipment for our cafes, including coffee machines that employ handcrafted brewing techniques," Zepto CEO Aadit Palicha said. Serving the concept of a quick meal for today's fast-paced urban lifestyle, the online cafe features a diverse menu with over 148 items, including freshly brewed chai, coffee, all-day breakfast, pastries, and savoury snacks, promising a 10-minute delivery service, it added. Zepto Cafe was launched in April 2022 as a division of Zepto, which itself was founded in July 2021 by Aadit Palicha and Kaivalya Vohra. "The response has been phenomenal, with Zepto Cafe now achieving an (estimated) Annual Run Rate (ARR) GMV of Rs 160 crore with just 15 per cent of our expanding dark store network with proven unit economics. "As we expand into new cities and launch 100-plus new cafes every month, we are on track to achieve an ARR of Rs 1,000 crore by the next fiscal year," Palicha said.

**Stressful interest rates may impact growth aspirations: FM**

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said people are finding current interest rates "very stressful" and urged banks to make them affordable. Speaking at an event organised by SBI, the finance minister said that at present, India requires industry to ramp up and invest in new facilities, and added that lowering lending rates can help achieve the "Viksit Bharat" aspiration.

"What is important is when you look at India's growth requirements, and you can have so many different voices coming out and saying the cost of borrowing is really very stressful, and a time when we want industries to ramp up and move (to) building capacities, bank interest rates will have to be far more affordable," Sitharaman said. Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal last week urged the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to cut interest rates to boost economic growth. He also suggested looking through food prices while deciding on monetary policy. It can be noted that most of the commercial banks are tied directly or indirectly to the RBI's calls on interest

Stresses that the banks need to make loans affordable



"What is important is when you look at India's growth requirements, and you can have so many different voices coming out and saying the cost of borrowing is really very stressful, and a time when we want industries to ramp up and move (to) building capacities, bank interest rates will have to be far more affordable," Sitharaman said.

rates, with the majority of loans using the repo rate as an external benchmark to which loan prices are pegged. The consumer price inflation overshoot the RBI's comfort level of 6 per cent, with the 6.2 per cent reading for October dashed hopes of a rate cut soon. Sitharaman said a set of three or four perishable commodities is driving the headline inflation, currently, and the rest of it, the core items, are at manageable levels of three or four per cent. The finance minister also made it clear that she does not want to get into the debate of whether food prices should be

considered while constructing the inflation indices or to take calls on rates by the RBI's monetary policy committee. Inflation is a complex issue which affects the common man, she said, adding that the government has been working on the supply side measures, including edible oils and pulses. However, she was quick to add that India "cyclically" suffers from supply issues and the government efforts are mainly focused on improving the storage facilities to lessen the volatilities. Meanwhile, amid widespread concerns about a slowdown in growth, Sitharaman

assured that the government is fully aware of the domestic and global challenges and added that there is no need to have 'undue concerns'. She said that a slew of high-frequency indicators are pointing to strong activity on the ground. Acknowledging that there are voices wondering if the government's fiscal consolidation is hurting economic activity, the finance minister denied any such thing, saying that growth is a priority for the government. She also pitched for a rating upgrade, saying it is time for independent rating agencies to take a call on it.



**GST Council may decide on insurance levy on Dec 21st**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The GST Council will meet on December 21 in Jaisalmer, in which the much-awaited decision on exemption or lower GST rate on health and life insurance is likely to be taken. The council, chaired by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and comprising her state counterparts, may also take up some rate rationalisation exercise and reduce tax rates on a host of common man items from 12 per cent to 5 per cent slab as per the recommendations of a panel of state ministers. "The 55th meeting of the GST Council will be held on 21 December 2024 at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan," the GST Council

said in a post on X. The council, in its previous meeting on September 9, had tasked the GoM to finalise the report on GST levy on insurance by October-end. Following that, the group of ministers (GoM) on health and life insurance GST last month met and broadly agreed on exempting insurance premiums paid for term life insurance policies, and senior citizens' health insurance from GST. Also, GST on premiums paid by individuals, other than senior citizens, for health insurance with coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh is proposed to be exempted. However, 18 per cent GST will continue on premiums paid for policies with health insurance cover of over Rs 5 lakh.

**ICRA cuts PV factory dispatch outlook down to 0-2 pc**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Rating agency ICRA on Monday revised downwards the outlook for passenger vehicle factory dispatches to showrooms in the current fiscal on account of high inventory levels. Despite good retail sales, a year-on-year growth of 6 per cent in April-October FY2025 partially on account of an early festive season, the high inventory levels for the industry curtailed wholesale volume growth, as per a report on the domestic automotive industry by the domestic ratings agency. "ICRA has thus revised the outlook for the wholesale vol-

ume growth for the industry in FY2025 downwards to 0-2 per cent," it added. The rating agency had earlier pegged PV wholesale growth at 3-6 per cent for 2024-25 fiscal. Retail sales of passenger vehicles during the festive season grew at a moderate pace of 6 per cent year-on-year to 6.5 lakh units, aided by attractive discounts and competitive financing rates. ICRA also revised the outlook for the wholesale volume growth for the industry to 11-14 per cent in FY2025, led by steady replacement demand and an improvement in rural demand on the back of healthy monsoon precipitation.

**IT Ministry finalising voluntary code of conduct, ethics for AI cos**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT Ministry is crafting a voluntary code of conduct and ethics for work around Artificial Intelligence (AI), and talks are on with companies and stakeholders for the same, according to a source. The code would take into account aspects like how to look at data, the nuances of data being used, and labelling among other aspects. The source said that the work on voluntary code of conduct and ethics for AI firms is currently on. Amid an AI gold rush of sorts among companies, nations across the globe are stressing the importance of responsible



practices related to Artificial Intelligence. Last week, UNESCO in collaboration with the IT Ministry held a stakeholder

consultation on safety and ethics in Artificial Intelligence, as India aims to craft a policy that envisions 'AI for All'. This initiative came at a crucial moment as India embarked on its ambitious 'IndiaAI Mission' backed by over Rs 10,000 crore in funding. Central to the mission is the safe and trusted AI pillar, which underscores the commitment to ensuring safety, accountability, and ethical practices in AI development and deployment. By promoting indigenous frameworks, robust governance tools, and self-assessment guidelines, the IndiaAI Mission aims to empower innovators and democratise AI benefits across sectors.

**Premji Invest, SBI Mutual Fund sell 6.6 pc stake in MedPlus Health**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Premji Invest and SBI Mutual Fund on Monday divested 6.6 per cent stake in MedPlus Health Services for Rs 552 crore through open market transactions. MedPlus Health Services is a retail pharmacy and diagnostics chain in India. Billionaire Azim Premji's PE firm Premji Invest, through its arm PI Opportunities Fund - I, sold 68.93 lakh shares or 5.77 per cent stake in MedPlus Health Services and exited the firm, according to the block deal data on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Additionally, SBI Mutual Fund offloaded 10 lakh shares, representing a 0.84 per cent stake in the company.



The shares were sold at an average price of Rs 700 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 552.55 crore. After the stake sale, SBI Mutual Fund's holding in the pharmacy chain has come down to 4.04 per cent from 4.88 per cent. Meanwhile, Morgan Stanley Asia Singapore, Franklin Templeton Mutual Fund (MF), Invesco MF and Kotak

Mahindra MF acquired shares of MedPlus Health at the same price. Shares of MedPlus Health Services rose 2.10 per cent to close at Rs 719.05 apiece on the NSE. In August, private equity (PE) major Warburg Pincus exited MedPlus Health Services by selling its entire 11.35 per cent stake in the pharmacy chain for Rs 836 crore.

**Kerala plans major investment push in plantation sector**

PNS ■ KOCHI

Kerala is set to attract significant investments in the plantation sector as the state government prepares to introduce a policy promoting diversification, Industries Minister P Rajeev said on Monday. "A study report by IIM-Kozhikode is under review, and discussions with stakeholders are ongoing. We expect large-scale investments in the plantation sector by leveraging this opportunity," Rajeev stated at a regional conference on plantations, high-tech farming, and value-added rubber products industries. The roundtable, part of an ongoing series to establish Kerala as a global hub for innovative technology, aims to cre-



ate a conducive ecosystem for investments. Plantations, listed as one of 22 priority sectors under Kerala's new industrial policy, were a key focus during the discussions held as part of preparations for the Global Investor Meet scheduled for February next year, according to an official release.

The IIM-Kozhikode report, submitted last month, recommended the introduction of tropical fruit trees of exotic varieties alongside traditional plantation crops. It also proposed a public-private partnership model to develop a Kerala brand for plantation products and promote silviculture and agroforestry.

**SBI raises Rs 10,000 cr through infra bond issuance**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Country's largest lender State Bank of India on Monday said it has raised Rs 10,000 crore through its seventh infrastructure bond issuance. SBI raised Rs 10,000 crore on Monday at a coupon rate of 7.23 per cent through its seventh infrastructure bond



issuance, the lender said in a statement. The issue attracted overwhelming response from investors with bids in excess of Rs 11,500 crore and was oversubscribed in excess of 2 times against the base issue size of Rs 5,000 crore, it said. The total number of bids received was 85 indicating

wider participation with heterogeneity of bids. "The investors were across provident funds, pension funds, insurance companies, mutual funds etc. The proceeds of bonds will be utilized in enhancing long-term resources for funding infrastructure and affordable housing segments," SBI said.

**'AI-Vistara merger pivotal moment for Indian aviation'**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choon Phong on Monday said the airline group will support the ongoing transformation of the enlarged Air India Group by offering "our stewardship and expertise where possible" as he emphasised that Air India-Vistara merger marks a pivotal moment for Indian aviation. In his first comments after the completion of the merger on November 11, he also said that Singapore Airlines is committed to deepening its commercial collaboration with Air India. Vistara was a joint venture between Singapore Airlines and Tata, and with the merger, Singapore Airlines has a 25.1 per cent in Tata Group-owned Air India. At a symbolic ceremony in the national capital on Monday, Tata Sons and Singapore



Airlines celebrated the merger. Tata Sons Chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Goh Choon Phong, as well as senior management and employees from Tata, Singapore Airlines, Air India, and Vistara were present, according to a joint release by Singapore Airlines and Tata Sons. "This merger marks a pivotal moment for Indian aviation. Working with our valued, long-standing partner Tata Sons, the SIA Group will support the ongoing transformation of the enlarged Air India Group, offering our stewardship and expertise where possible.

**Unemployment rate dips to 6.4 pc : Survey**

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above in urban areas dipped to 6.4 per cent in the July-September quarter, according to the National Sample Survey Survey (NSSO). Joblessness, or unemployment rate, is defined as the percentage of unemployed people in the labour force. The unemployment rate in the September quarter of FY24 was 6.6 per cent. The unemployment rate for people aged 15 years and above

in the previous April-June quarter of FY25 was 6.6 per cent in urban areas, the 24th Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) showed. The unemployment rate among females (aged 15 years and above) in urban areas declined to 8.4 per cent in July-September 2024 from 8.6 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 9 per cent in April-June, 2024.

Among males, the unemployment rate in urban areas declined to 5.7 per cent in July-September 2024 from 6 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 5.8 per cent in April-June 2024. Labour force participation rate in Current Weekly Status (CWS) in urban areas for people aged 15 years and above increased to 50.4 per cent in July-September from 49.3 per



cent in the same quarter a year ago. The rate was 50.1 per cent in the April-June 2024. Labour force refers to the part of the population, which supplies or offers to supply labour for pursuing economic activities for the production of goods and services and, therefore, includes both employed and unemployed persons. The NSSO had launched PLFS in April 2017.



# BAAGHI 4 FILMING BEGINS

Sajid Nadiadwala's highly anticipated action franchise *Baaghi 4*, starring Tiger Shroff, is set to hit theatres on September 5, 2025. The release date and the filming were announced with a powerful new poster showcasing Tiger in an intense, never-before-seen avatar.

Directed by A. Harsha, known for films like *Bajrangi* and *Veda*, *Baaghi 4* promises to deliver raw, man-to-man action at its best. With this fourth installment, Tiger Shroff cements his place as one of the youngest stars to lead a major franchise across four films. *Baaghi 4* is expected to take the action genre to a bolder, more thrilling level. As a franchise, the *Baaghi* series has garnered over 500 crore worldwide at the box office, solidifying its place as one of the most loved action franchises in Bollywood.



# SAMAY RAINA'S SHOW SLAMMED FOR MOCKING DEEPIKA PADUKONE'S DEPRESSION

With its edgy and frequently dark humour, Samay Raina's YouTube series *India's Got Latent* is renowned for pushing the envelope. The last episode, in which a competitor seemed to make fun of actor Deepika Padukone's struggle with depression, appears to have crossed a boundary, according to the internet.

Tanmay Bhat, Raghu Ram, neurologist Dr. Sid Warrier and Balraj Singh Ghai joined him in this latest episode. In one episode snippet, a competitor named Bunty Banerjee mentions the birth of Dua, the daughter of Deepika and Ranveer Singh. She states in the video, "Great, now she knows what depression really looks like." The founder of the show, Samay and other panelists, such as Raghu Ram and Tanmay Bhat, are shown laughing and yelling in shock. Tanmay initially puts his head in his hands before turning to face Samay and giggling. Samay chuckles and cheers the humour as well. "I am not trying to insult breakup-wala depression," the candidate continues, stopping then continuing, "I am."

Social media users criticised the joke for "trivialising mental health" when it was posted on Reddit. As one user put it, "This! Choose me with the utmost respect." Someone also commented, "It's not about Deepika, but a woman's mental health being made fun of on national television, all for male validation by a female comedian." Deepika Padukone has openly discussed her struggles with depression and anxiety. She established The Live Love Laugh Foundation in October 2015 with the goal of raising awareness of mental health issues in India. She started the More Than Just Sad campaign the following year to help general practitioners handle patients with anxiety or depression.



# Diljit's challenge to the Telangana government: 'BAN LIQUOR, I'LL DROP BOOZY SONGS'

Singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh boldly challenged all state governments in the nation after the Telangana government banned him from performing songs that promoted drugs and alcohol during his concert in Hyderabad. He suggested that if alcohol use is outlawed nationally, he will never again sing songs about drinking.

Despite not getting any notification from the Gujarat government, Diljit did not sing any songs with an alcohol theme during his performance in Ahmedabad after his Hyderabad show. "Even today, I won't sing any song about alcohol," Diljit clarified when addressing the audience. Gujarat is a dry state, which explains this. The artist made it clear that there are considerably more spiritual songs in his discography than ones that make reference to drinking. "I've performed numerous spiritual tunes. I released two devotional songs in the last ten days alone, yet nobody has mentioned them," Diljit said, "Everyone on TV is solely interested in 'Patiala Peg'."

The artist also talked about how a TV host singled him out, accusing his followers of sticking with him in spite of his songs about booze. "I have never personally called someone and asked if they drink," Diljit



remarked in response to the criticism. "All I'm doing is singing. I might listen to one or two of the many songs about booze in Bollywood. That's all."

Then, declaring, "I won't even sing those songs," the singer challenged the administrations. I can easily change the tunes, dude. In addition, I don't drink myself. Celebrities in Bollywood advertise booze, but I don't. Don't prod me. I finish my program quietly and head out." He went on, "Let's start a movement—I will never sing a song about alcohol again in my life if all states outlaw it completely. Is this feasible? Except for liquor stores, everything was closed during COVID. You cannot deceive young people. Declare a dry day in your state on the day of my concert and I will not sing any songs about alcohol, if not a total prohibition."

Diljit had complained about the government restricting his music during his performance in Hyderabad. "When artists come to India from other countries, they are allowed to do whatever they want, sing whatever they want," he said, making analogies to foreign performers. "However, there are a lot of issues when a singer from your own nation performs."



# JLO'S DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO REUNITE WITH BEN!

Actors Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck's relationship is becoming as complex as their breakup. Jennifer Lopez appears to be attempting to resume their relationship just a few months after divorcing. According to a latest story, the actress is attempting to re-establish a relationship with her separated husband through "family time."

According to a source cited by Heat World, Jennifer Lopez is "refusing to give up" on Ben Affleck in spite of their well-publicised divorce. Marca provided a remark from another person with knowledge of the relationship to support this. Ben has been making an effort to keep his distance from Jen, but she simply won't allow him. She has been attending the same events as him and insisting that they keep performing group

activities with the children; if he disagrees, he is the villain. The magazine cited the insider as stating, "Now, she's pushing for them to do joint celebrations for Thanksgiving and Christmas, saying it's for the children, but Ben isn't buying it's just about them."

Since their families became close during their marriage, JLo is reportedly concerned about how their kids would react to their divorce. Ben is apprehensive about a reconciliation, though.

One of the first power couples in Hollywood in the twenty-first century was Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, who started dating in the early 2000s. After a brief engagement in 2005, they called it quits and ended their relationship. Before rekindling their romance in 2021, they both went on to date and even get married to other people. After getting married in 2022, Jennifer and Ben filed for divorce in August 2024, only two years later.

## FUN

### ARCHIE



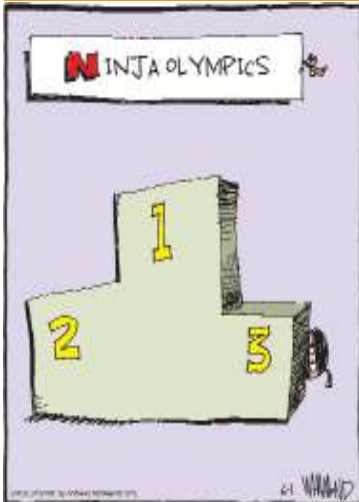
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



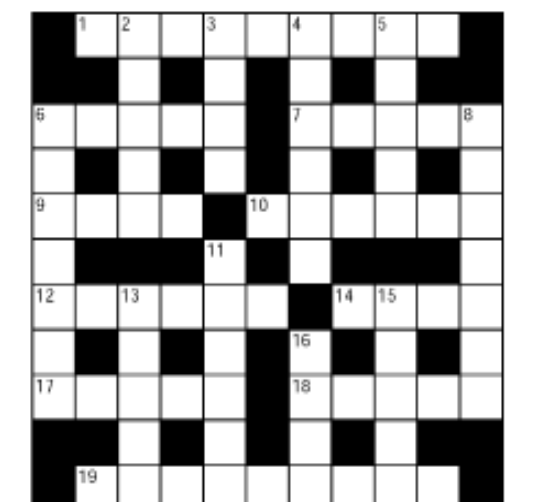
### REALITY CHECK



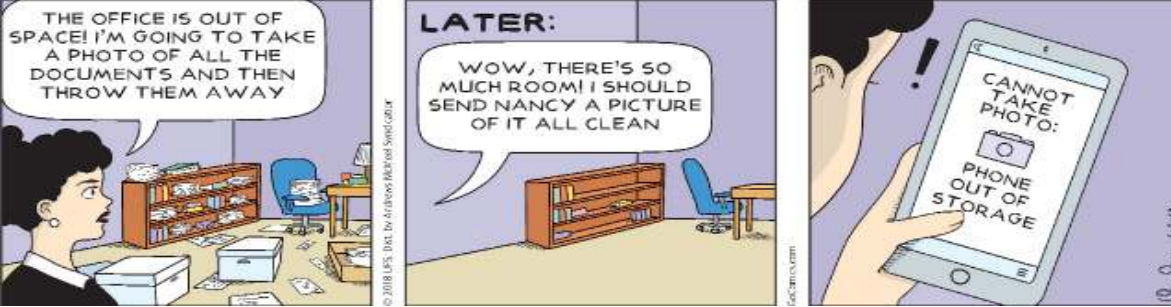
### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



### NANCY



### SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution  
2 7 5 1 8 6 3 9 4  
9 4 1 2 7 3 6 8 5  
8 3 6 5 4 9 2 1 7  
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6 8 7 4 2 5 1 3 9  
4 2 3 9 1 8 7 5 6  
7 6 8 3 5 2 9 4 1  
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Rules  
• Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.  
• The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

ACROSS  
1 Don't jump out of a flying aeroplane without this  
6 A compass direction  
7 Time of darkness  
9 Decays  
10 A large seal-like animal with whiskers and long tusks  
12 Sampled by mouth  
14 Where Peruvians live  
17 Places where people live  
18 Parts of a sentence  
19 Vegetable growers

DOWN  
2 Crown-up  
3 A throbbing pain  
4 A building for an aeroplane

5 A large striped wild cat  
6 Make longer by pulling  
8 Paper hankies  
11 Unkindly made fun of a person to annoy them  
13 Where Samoans live  
15 Mistake  
16 A brother or sister born on the same day as you

SOLUTION  
P Y R A M I D S  
I D U O I S  
N A I S V I S I T  
C N S E R  
O B T A I N S O L O  
R A S N  
R E S T R I N G E  
E P S A T E  
C L O T H T H A W S  
T I T U L T

### GINGER MEGGS



# Vijayawada

## SREERAMA CHANDRA, PLAYBACK SINGER, ACTOR & HOST

As a renowned singer and influencer, I've had the privilege of inspiring many young people with my music. When I think about what defines a positive male role model, I believe it's about embodying qualities like being responsible, ambitious and successful in achieving goals. These traits transcend gender. For me, a role model is someone who brings positivity, makes things happen and doesn't give up. They're always there for their loved ones, take care of their family and possess a pure soul. That's the kind of role model I aspire to be. I believe everyone deserves equal chances to thrive, regardless of their background or generation. I've been fortunate to have opportunities in life and I want others to have the same. Personally, I haven't had mentors besides my parents. They've been my guiding light and I've relied on my gut feeling to navigate the tough world of the music industry. Regarding traditional masculine norms, I think it's essential to recognise that men can be vulnerable and cry. It's a personal choice and I believe in being strong when needed but also embracing my tender side. To prioritise self-care, mental health and emotional well-being, I've found solace in meditation, retreats like Inner Engineering by Sadhguru, working out and spending quality time with loved ones. These activities help me balance out the stress and pressure of my career. Ultimately, being a positive force for change requires embracing our true selves, vulnerabilities and all, and striving to make a positive impact on those around us.



## INSPIRING STORIES OF POSITIVE ROLE MALE MODELS!

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International Men's Day serves as a powerful reminder that men's contributions, achievements and struggles matter. This day shines as a light on the importance of promoting positive male role models, challenging gender norms and fostering a more inclusive understanding of masculinity. In honour of this special day, *The Pioneer* presents exclusive conversations with a group of inspiring men, who embody the values of empathy, kindness and responsibility. These role models, from diverse backgrounds and walks of life, share their insights on what it means to be a positive force for change, challenging traditional notions of masculinity and paving the way for a brighter future for all.

## ZABI KHAN, ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND PADMA SHRI NOMINEE

Growing up, I refused to stay silent in the face of mistreatment or abuse, even if it meant standing alone. Many people, including my relatives, friends and even school administrators, would say, "You're too sensitive." But I see sensitivity and compassion as a strength. Weak people try to convince you otherwise because they can't face their own lack of empathy. As a boy, you're taught to suppress your feelings, "be strong," and avoid anything deemed "feminine." Crying is seen as weakness and expressing care or sensitivity is often mocked. I've redefined masculinity for myself. To me, being a man means embracing your emotions, practicing kindness and understanding coexistence. True strength isn't about dominance; it's about control—choosing not to harm when you have the power to do so. Whether it's physical or emotional harm, strength lies in restraint.



## SUBRAT SARKAR, DIRECTOR OF TARANGINI KATHAK KENDRA

When I think of role models, I don't look at muscular figures or Bollywood actors; they're not part of my world. Instead, I look up to someone like Mahesh Khale from Maharashtra, one of the greatest classical singers. For me, he epitomises dedication and excellence in my field. I believe the most essential quality for someone to embody the title of a positive male role model is the ability to pursue their career with unwavering determination—as if it's their last opportunity in life. Coming from the Kathak field, I've had countless male students who are eager yet hesitant due to societal pressures. I've been in their shoes. For the last 20 years, I've faced immense criticism—not just from society but from my own family. My brothers, sisters and others doubted my decision to pursue classical dance. But now, they're proud of me and even praise me for my achievements. So, my advice to anyone pursuing classical dance—or any art—is simple: Don't let society or family hold you back. Their opinions will change once you prove yourself. The societal stereotypes I've faced as a male Kathak dancer have been massive—far too many to describe. Masculinity through art is about authenticity and dedication. To better support male artists in classical dance forms like Kathak, society and the art community need to let them do what they love. Kathak requires both physical and emotional discipline, and balancing them is essential. Classical dance incorporates both masculine and feminine energies—what we call *Lasya* and *Tandava*. One of the biggest misconceptions I've encountered is the idea that Kathak is a woman's art form. Ancient gurus and rishtis—most of whom were men—pioneered classical dance. Even Lord Shiva, the epitome of divine masculinity, performs *Lasya* and *Tandava*. Kathak is about balance—embracing both feminine grace and masculine vigour. When the moment calls for it, I channel Shiva; when needed, I become Parvati. Mastering this balance is what makes a true artist.



## DAMODAR NAYAK, KARATE EXPERT, HEAD OF JAPAN KARATE ASSOCIATION OF INDIA

To be a positive male role model, I realise it's about embodying a unique blend of qualities that inspire and empower others. My personal experience that I've had has made me who I am today. These qualities include respect for all, empathy, kindness, responsibility, confidence, self-awareness and a growth mindset. I strive to lead by example, demonstrating integrity, respect and compassion in my personal and professional life.

Emotional intelligence is about recognising, understanding and managing my emotions, while empathy allows me to understand and share the feelings of others. Accountability means taking responsibility for my actions and their impact on others and respect involves valuing diversity, inclusivity and individuality. Self-awareness helps me recognise my strengths, weaknesses and areas for growth, with a hunger to learn more.

To the next generation of men, I want to convey that being a positive force for change requires embracing vulnerability, empathy and kindness. I believe traditional masculine expectations can be limiting and harmful. By prioritising self-awareness, emotional intelligence and compassion, you can become a powerful force for good in the world. My mantra is: Respect all, fear none; be kind to all creatures and be thankful to God always. I prioritise physical health through regular exercise and healthy eating habits, avoiding alcohol, and staying positive. I set realistic expectations, learn to say "no" to maintain a healthy work-life balance and stay positive, following and respecting my culture and traditions and doing something for society—even a small step counts.



## MOHAMMAD ALI BAIG, PADMA SHRI RECIPIENT AND FILMMAKER

As I reflect on what defines a positive male role model, I think of my father, a creative genius who was ahead of his time. He embodied two qualities that I strive to emulate: the blend of art and commerce and balancing professional and family life. My father's ability to create critically acclaimed and commercially successful plays taught me the importance of finding that balance. He also showed me that being a legendary figure doesn't mean compromising on family time. He made time for birthdays, household staff and quality time with loved ones. For me, a positive male role model is someone who prioritises integrity, value systems, and human relationships without agendas. In today's world, it's easy to get bogged down in the rat race and forget these essential aspects. To the next generation of men, I want to convey that integrity and value systems are crucial in any field. Don't compromise on work ethics or personal ethics for success. Human relationships should be genuine, not just networking opportunities. Personally, I've learned that shedding bitterness is key to positivity. My mother taught me how to maintain dignity and live a dignified life, regardless of circumstances. She instilled in me the importance of respecting femininity, which enhances masculinity. I believe true masculinity comes from respecting women and recognising that our existence begins in a mother's womb. We should shed societal expectations that men must be strong and unemotional. Women are often stronger and more emotional, and men should learn from that. To prioritise self-care, mental health and emotional well-being, I think men should recognise that societal norms shouldn't define their vulnerability. We don't have to suppress emotions to be strong. Instead, we should focus on being strong in our own circumstances, without comparing ourselves to others.

## ADVOCATE RAMESH MUDHIRAJ, TELANGANA

For me, being a positive male role model is about understanding and fulfilling the needs of my family, respecting my life partner's wishes and decisions and supporting her goals. It's also about maintaining a balance between family life and work life. I believe that stability with your life partner is crucial. Beyond family, I think being a positive male role model means recognising that there's no difference between men and women. When faced with problems, I don't believe in being scared or intimidated. Instead, I try to identify the issue and think of solutions. To the next generation of men, I want to convey that we should value respect for women and family and seize opportunities without getting comfortable. We should strive to be better versions of ourselves and remain competitors to our own selves.

Personally, my experience as a lawyer shaped my understanding of positive masculinity. I went beyond my comfort zone and memorised the entire Indian Constitution and IPC sections. I also spread legal literacy among people, creating a positive impact on society, especially for distressed women and men falsely accused. I believe decision-making plays a vital role in tackling problems or taking a step back. Having a positive mindset is essential for strong decision-making. Regarding traditional masculine expectations,



## HIGH COURT

I think men should prioritise self-care, mental health and emotional well-being. In Indian tradition, the husband or elder son is often the head of the family and their emotional well-being affects the entire family. I believe expressing emotions is essential and men shouldn't suppress their feelings. We're human beings, not robots and we can laugh, cry and respond to emotions. However, as men, we should also be strong and face our emotions to resolve them. Ultimately, being a positive male role model is about embracing vulnerability, respecting others and striving for personal growth.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL EXCELLENCE IN WELLNESS

AARTI SREENATH  
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This National Entrepreneurs' Day, we spotlight the innovators reshaping the wellness and healthcare industries, showcasing how passion meets purpose in this transformative sector. With insights from two trailblazing entrepreneurs, Dr. Preeti Seth of Pachouli Aesthetic and Wellness Clinic and Jitin Bhasin of SaveIN, we explore their philosophies and the challenges of navigating the delicate balance between commerce and genuine care. For Dr. Preeti Seth, wellness is about fostering harmony between mind, body and spirit. "True wellness transcends temporary fixes; it's about sustainable, holistic health," she shares. They focus on aligning aesthetics with wellness, ensuring that health remains a way of life rather than a marketed product. The challenge lies in balancing commercialisation with authenticity. By designing

In a world where health and happiness are increasingly intertwined, two entrepreneurs are making a lasting impact. Entrepreneurs share their inspiring stories of perseverance, innovation and dedication to holistic well-being.

solutions rooted in Ayurveda and modern sciences, her programs not only enhance appearances but also address deeper health imbalances. Meanwhile, Jitin Bhasin of SaveIN echoes this sentiment, emphasising the growing demand for preventative and elective healthcare services in India. "Customer education and transparency in service delivery are pivotal," he says. His platform connects patients with healthcare providers, offering innovative financing options like no-cost EMIs to make private healthcare

more accessible. By reducing financial barriers, it enables Indians to prioritise their well-being without compromise. Both entrepreneurs recognise the evolving dimensions of wellness, which now encompass mental, emotional and spiritual health. Dr. Seth has introduced corporate wellness programs and home-based wellness services to address these aspects. These initiatives not only improve physical health but also tackle productivity issues and mental stress, offering personalised care that fits seamlessly into modern lifestyles. Jitin Bhasin, meanwhile, is preparing to launch mental health and counseling services. "Mental well-being is a growing concern," he says. In an industry driven by ever-changing trends, both entrepreneurs stay grounded by aligning innovations with core philosophies. The high cost of wellness services often limits their reach. However, these entrepreneurs have reimagined financial models to ensure inclusivity. Dr. Seth emphasises value

over affordability, offering transformative programs that guests consider essential investments. Through personalised care and home services, she has expanded access to her holistic solutions. Meanwhile Jitin explains, "Our no-cost EMI payment plans remove the burden of high upfront costs." This approach democratises healthcare, encouraging broader adoption of new-age treatments while maintaining financial sustainability for providers. Both leaders are determined to challenge unrealistic health ideals. Dr. Seth promotes wellness as a continuous journey, addressing societal pressures with personalised strategies that blend technology and tradition. Her programs celebrate diversity, offering tailored solutions for different demographics, including geriatrics and the third gender. Jitin observes a growing awareness among Indians about balanced health outcomes. "The digital generation is more informed, but also conscious of the risks of extreme pursuits," he notes.



# 'Hungry' Virat's record in Australia will give him confidence: Gavaskar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Virat Kohli will be "very, very hungry" for runs following his lean patch against New Zealand, according to former Indian captain Sunil Gavaskar, who feels the veteran batter's strong track record Down Under will boost his confidence heading into the upcoming Test series against Australia.

Kohli has faced a challenging patch in all formats over the past few months. In his last 60 Test innings, he has managed just two centuries and 11 half-centuries.

This year, he has averaged only 22.72 across six Tests, and in the three games against New Zealand, he could manage only 93 runs.

"Because he hasn't scored runs against New Zealand, he'll be very, very hungry," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

"Even in that Adelaide Test, where India was bowled out for 36 in the second innings, Kohli scored 70-plus runs in the first innings before being run out," he added.

Despite these recent struggles, Kohli has an outstanding record in Australia. The right-hander, who has been part of four tours Down Under, averages a stellar 54.08.



Gavaskar believes these stats will provide a significant confidence boost as Kohli prepares for the upcoming five-match series,

starting with the first Test in Perth on Friday.

"He has consistently performed in Adelaide, a ground he knows well.

Before Adelaide, it's Perth, where Kohli played one of his finest Test centuries in the 2018-19 series — a terrific hundred.

"Having performed on these grounds, he'll feel an extra bit of confidence. Of course, you need a bit of luck at the start, but if he gets off to a good beginning, he will score big runs," Gavaskar added.

As the series approaches, all eyes will be on Kohli, who will look to bounce back with his trademark resilience and continue his fine record in Australia.

Kohli knows what's coming: Manjrekar.

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar also weighed in on how Australia might target Kohli.

"I think Virat knows exactly what's coming," Manjrekar said.

"They'll start with a line outside the off stump to assess his mindset. These days, he often leaves balls outside off and looks to drive anything pitched up. Australia may try to cramp him for room and attack his body, especially since he likes to get forward. New Zealand used this tactic effectively."

Manjrekar continued, "If he's focused on balls outside off stump, bowlers like Josh Hazlewood could target the middle-stump line, much like Vernon Philander used to do. Australia will experiment with different strategies, and Virat Kohli is well aware of that."



## Sri Lanka beats New Zealand in 2nd ODI to win another home series

AP ■ PALLEKELE (SRI LANKA)

Kusal Mendis hit a patient 74 not out as Sri Lanka beat New Zealand by three wickets under the DLS method with six balls remaining in the rain-hit second ODI.

Sri Lanka took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series with the final game also at Pallekele on Tuesday. Sri Lanka won the first one-day international by 45 runs — also by DLS — after rain disrupted that game at Dambulla.

It was Sri Lanka's fifth ODI series win at home in 2024 after it had beaten Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, India and West Indies. Sri Lanka couldn't qualify for next year's Champions Trophy after finishing ninth at last year's 50-over World Cup in India, but has since then lost just one ODI series in Bangladesh while winning five at home.

"It is really tough for batters to score runs here," Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka said. "This is just another series. As a team, we are moving towards a big goal and we have to achieve that, this is a process."

Mendis followed his career-best 143 in the series opener with a determined 102-ball knock as Sri Lanka reached 210-7 in 46 overs.

The match was cut to 47 overs-a-side after two rain interruptions when New Zealand batted and was bowled out for 209 in 45.1 overs. Sri Lanka was set a target of 210.

Off-spinner Michael Bracewell's first four-wicket ODI haul (4-36) gave New Zealand a sniff when Sri Lanka slipped to 163-7 before Maheesh Theekshana (27 not out) shared a match-winning

47-run stand with Mendis and carried the team home. Earlier, Sri Lanka grassed a few hard chances but Avishka Fernando took three spectacular catches after Asalanka won the toss and elected to field.

Mark Chapman ended his struggling batting form with 76 off 81 balls, but his dismissal in the 37th over would see New Zealand lose its last six wickets for 36 runs. Mitchell Hay made a well composed 49 off 62 balls and shared a 75-run stand with Chapman. Hay was the last man to be dismissed.

New Zealand struggled against a four-pronged spin attack with Theekshana (3-31) and Jeffrey Vandersay (3-46) sharing six wickets. Left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage, the only change Sri Lanka made from the team which won the first game, and Asalanka took one wicket each.

Bracewell mopped up the top order but Mendis stood firm as he completed his half century off 84 balls with four boundaries. He added 39 runs with Janith Liyanage and another 31 with Wellalage, who struck three successive boundaries in his 18-run knock against Nathan Smith before holing out at mid-on to give Bracewell his fourth wicket.

But Theekshana showed some aggression against pace, slicing fast bowler Jacob Duffy for the only six in the Sri Lanka chase and also struck two boundaries.

"It is always a challenge when you are defending a low score," New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said. "Kusal played the situation very well ... that partnership (between Kusal and Theekshana) at the end took it away, but we also left a few runs out there."



## Vaughan shocked by India's call to skip warm-up matches ahead of Australia series

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Baffled by India's decision to head into the high-profile Border-Gavaskar Trophy against Australia without a proper warm-up game, former England captain Michael Vaughan has raised concerns about how the tourists would get into a "competitive mindset" without match practice.

India decided against playing a match against an Australian domestic side in the run up to the five-match Test series, starting in Perth from November 22, marking a departure from their approach on the previous two tours of Australia.

"I can't get my head around a team like India only wanting to play an intra-squad game leading into a series against Australia in their own backyard," Vaughan told 'Fox Cricket'.

"I just can't see how you get yourself in that competitive mindset of consequence by playing an intra-squad game. Time will tell."

But India have also called off their scheduled three-day intra-squad match with their 'A' team. They have instead opted to focus on centre-wicket training at the WACA in Perth. The Indian think tank believed that the bounce of the WACA centre strip closely mirrors that of



the Perth Stadium pitch. As a result, they felt it would be beneficial for all top-order batters to spend more time in the middle.

"I'm surprised that this Indian side didn't want at least one game of cricket, and the WACA's the perfect venue because it's a similar pitch to Optus (Stadium), so you get used to the bounce," Vaughan said.

Australia had also skipped warm-up matches before last year's Test tours of India and England, citing issues with scheduling and a lack of trust in local curators as contributing factors.

"These players have a different kind of

mindset to what we had, whereas we probably needed more games," Vaughan continued.

"They're playing 12 months of the year and get straight into it, but it'll be intriguing to see how both sets of players settle on that first day when they're playing the longer form."

"The modern player maybe believes that they don't need (tour matches). They think they get enough cricket throughout the year and they can react and just adapt. I just like to see teams win and stick a marker down," he added.

## India name 20-member team for men's Junior Asia Cup

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Defender Amir Ali will lead a 20-member Indian squad in the men's Junior Asia Cup hockey tournament starting in Muscat from November 26. India have won this tournament for a record four times, including 2004, 2008, 2015 and 2023. They beat nemesis Pakistan 2-1 in the final last year to lift the title. This year, the event will have 10 teams from the continent divided into two pools with India, Chinese Taipei, Japan, Korea and Thailand clubbed in pool A.

Bangladesh, Malaysia, China, Oman and Pakistan are in Pool B.

The tournament is also a qualifying event for next year's FIH Junior World Cup and India have automatically qualified for it by virtue of being hosts.

However under the guidance of coach PR Sreejesh, the team will be looking to build on its recent success at the Sultan of Johor Cup.

Rohit will serve as Amir Ali's deputy.

"The Sultan of Johor Cup was a first-time experience for

many of the players, yet they showed great spirit in doing well and I am quite pleased with how they performed," Sreejesh said in a media release.

The team will be taking confidence from that performance and will be working towards a successful outing in the Junior Asia Cup.

"The players have been putting in a lot of hard work at the ongoing national camp in SAI, Bengaluru and we have made certain changes to our game to be more effective in defence and efficient in converting goals," he added.

Squad: Goalkeepers: Princedeep Singh, Bikramjit Singh. Defenders: Amir Ali (C), Taleem Priyobarta, Shardanand Tiwari, Yogembar Rawat, Anmol Ekka, Rohit(VC). Midfielders: Ankit Pal, Manmeet Singh, Rosal Kujur, Mukesh Toppo, Thokchom Kingson Singh. Forwards: Gurjot Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Dilraj Singh, Arshdeep Singh and Arajiet Singh Hundal. Iternate Players: Sukhvinder and Chandan Yadav.

## IOA gets involved as India host first Kho Kho World Cup from January 13-19

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) on Monday confirmed its partnership with the Kho Kho Federation of India as the country gets to host the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup, to be held here from January 13 to 19.

The IOA has pledged its "unwavering support" for the event to be organised at the IGI Stadium.

In a statement to KKFI chief Sudhanshu Mittal, IOA president PT Usha expressed the association's strong commitment to elevating indigenous sports like Kho Kho.

Usha said, "We recognise the

significance of this event in celebrating our cultural heritage and promoting traditional sports, and we look forward to collaborating with Kho Kho Federation of India to ensure the success of the tournament.

"Together, we aim to make this event memorable and impactful, encouraging the spirit of sportsmanship among participants and fostering a deeper appreciation for Kho Kho worldwide."

Mittal said the partnership between IOA and KKFI will be a "game-changer" for Kho Kho.

"The support of the IOA, led by President PT Usha, is a game-changer for Kho Kho. This



collaboration is pivotal in putting Kho Kho on the global map, and we're thrilled to be hosting the first-ever Kho Kho World Cup, a truly historic event for the sport," Mittal said.

The World Cup will feature both men's and women's teams, with 25 countries from six continents set to compete.

Teams from Asia, including hosts India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, will face off alongside competitors from Africa, Europe, North America, South America, and Oceania.

Nations like Ghana, Kenya, England, Germany, Brazil and Australia will be among the participants.

## Ashwin, an incredibly smart bowler, has taught me a lot: Nathan Lyon

PTI ■ PERTH

Veteran Australian spinner Nathan Lyon believes that rival players often serve as the "best coaches", acknowledging that his Indian counterpart Ravichandran Ashwin has "taught" him a great deal through their faceoffs since 2011-12.

Having made their Test debuts in the same year, Lyon and Ashwin will face each other for the eighth time in the longest format during the Border-Gavaskar Trophy five-Test series beginning in Perth on November 22.

"Ash (Ashwin) is an incredible bowler. I've gone head-to-head with him for basically my whole career, so I've learned a lot from Ash," Lyon told Fox Cricket.

"He's an incredibly smart bowler, and he's able to learn and adapt very quickly, and I think the best bowlers in the world are able to do that. He used his skills to benefit himself and his team.

"So, you've got to give credit

where credit's due, he was the best bowler (in 2020/21), as he usually is. So, hats off to Ash."

It will be Ashwin's fifth Test tour of Australia, where he has claimed 39 wickets in 10 Tests at an average of 42.15.

Lyon further admitted to having studied Ashwin's bowling closely, especially before Australia toured India in the last few years.

"He's taught me a lot," Lyon said. "I'm a big believer in the players that you play against are your best coaches that you eventually come across."

"I've watched a lot of his footage heading over to India, the way he goes about it here in Australia, see if I can pick up anything.

"The way I look at cricket is that I've never met anyone who has conquered the game, never played against or with anyone who's conquered the game.

"There's so much to learn in this great game, and there's so much for me to learn from Ash. He's a world-class bowler. He's taken



over 500 Test match wickets, and he should be extremely proud of that."

Ashwin (21.76) outshines Lyon (30.81) in terms of having the best Test bowling average in Asia.



However, the Australian has better bowling figures outside Asia -- Lyon: 30.09, Ashwin: 33.14.

Asked if they could face again post this tour, Lyon reckoned,

"Spin bowling is a craft that the older you get, the better you get with age.

"There's definitely no limit for me, and I don't think there should be a limit for us as well.

He's absolutely world-class, and there's a series in a couple of years' time. So, who knows?"

Asked the secret of his success on non-spinning tracks, Lyon quipped: "I know Jadeja reads all of this stuff, so I can't really share all my secrets."

"My big thing is spinning up the back of the ball and getting bounce, but it's a hard craft to be able to do that in Australia. Your size for error is extremely small," he said. They may not have won a Test series against India in nearly a decade, but Lyon feels their World Test Championship final triumph last year would give them the edge.

"India's got the wood over us in the past few series, but if you're looking at the World Test Championship (final) in England, we were able to beat them there, and I know that should give us a bit of confidence heading into (this summer)," Lyon said.

"We understand that we're

coming up against a world-class side, but we can take a lot of confidence out of where we are at as an Australian cricket team.

"I feel like we're on the journey to becoming a great team. We're not there yet. There's a bit of work to do, but we have the opportunity to do something pretty special this summer."

India are reeling from an unprecedented 0-3 home defeat against New Zealand, a result Lyon believes will make the second-ranked team even more determined.

"I think they're extremely dangerous. They're a class outfit, and they know their best preparation and how to come out here and perform. It's going to be a cracking Test series."

"It's been a long ten years since Australia's held the trophy. There's only a few of us that would probably be in the squad that's actually held the trophy, so it's time to bring it home," he concluded.

# MANASA VARANASI EXPANDS HORIZONS IN TAMIL CINEMA

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**M**iss India 2021, Manasa Varanasi, is making her debut as a lead actress in the film *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva* alongside Ashok Galla. She reveals that acting was not her first choice after winning the Miss India crown.

"I was born in Hyderabad and moved to Malaysia for my schooling until 10th grade because of my father's work. After returning to Hyderabad, I completed my engineering and later worked in a corporate company," Manasa shares.

Her life took a dramatic turn after winning the Miss India pageant. "In two years, my life changed completely," she says. Reflecting on her post-Miss India phase, she adds, "I had many questions—should I continue with my corporate job, or should I pursue something new? Cinema has always been a passion and I decided to take steps toward learning this new world."

Her manager, Pushpa, connected her to the producer of *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*, followed by the lead actor Ashok Galla and his family. "I'm grateful to be a part of this film. It's a commercial divine thriller and I play Satyabhama, a character who hails from Vizianagaram, where most of the film was shot. She's mysterious, courageous, and stands strong in any situation," she explains.

Many Miss India winners have turned to Bollywood after their titles, but Manasa's focus was initially on the Miss World competition. "After winning Miss India, my priority was preparing for Miss World and I had a hectic schedule. As part of Miss World, I worked on child safety and women's development with the Telangana government," she shares.

She also spoke about the differences between the beauty pageant world and the film indus-

**Miss India 2021 Manasa Varanasi, is all set to make her acting debut with *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. In this interview, she opens up about her initial career choices, preparation for Miss World, her transition into films and her future plans.**



try. "There's a grace in walking at Miss India, but acting in front of the camera requires a different body language and style. I had many offers post-crowning, but I was in two minds about entering the film industry. It was only after Miss World that I decided to take acting seriously."

Manasa's journey into films began with workshops, including a 10-day crash course at the Adishakti Theatre in Pondicherry. "It boosted my confidence and taught me a lot," she says.

Despite the glamour of her fame, Manasa remains grounded. "The moment Miss India happened, my family and I had to adjust. Our lives are no longer private, and I've learned to manage that balance," she reflects.

Looking ahead, Manasa is committed to continuing her film career. "I've already signed another film, opposite Santosh Sobhan and the shooting is underway," she reveals. She describes her experience with *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva* as a "roller coaster" filled with highs and lows, adding, "It's been a huge learning experience for me."

Manasa also shared the challenges she faces as an actress: "Body language is different in front of the camera and I had to learn to be uninhibited. Another challenge is getting into a role quickly and leaving it behind once the shoot is over. But I enjoy these creative challenges," she says.

She also reflected on the time constraints in the film industry compared to theatre. "In theatre, we had months to prepare, but in films, we often get only one or two days before the shoot," she says.

As a Telugu girl, Manasa feels grateful and determined to make her mark. "Cinema is an art form, a level playing field where caste, creed, or gender don't matter," she adds. Manasa is keen on expanding her career into different languages and genres. "I am learning Tamil and I'd love to do a Tamil film. My interests lie in romantic comedies and mystery thrillers, but I'm open to exploring exciting opportunities," she concludes.



## Eashvar Karthic uncovers bank scams with *Zebra*

**D**irector Eashvar Karthic is set to release his upcoming film *Zebra*, which explores the concept of black and white, leading to the choice of the title. Satya Dev and Daali Dhanunjay play the lead roles in the film. Eashvar explains that bank scams don't come out into the open as easily as other scams, primarily due to the potential harm to a bank's reputation. When asked about his previous film, *Lucky Baskhar*, which also depicted the banking and stock market system, he said, "That was a family drama and a period film and at that time, the system was mostly on ledger books. But my current story is contemporary, mostly computerized. It's much harder to commit a crime now, with CCTV cameras and increased monitoring."

Eashvar, an engineering graduate who began his career at Infosys, worked in several corporate companies before transitioning into the film industry. "My last job was in a bank and I know how the banking system works. There was a scam that happened when I worked there and I've put all my experiences and the characters I encountered into this film," he shared.

With numerous web series and English films focusing on banking, finance, and white-collar crimes, Eashvar's film stands out. "The story begins from the perspective of a common man. If you deposit just 500 rupees in a bank, you'll wonder how safe it really is. My story deals with banking, money laundering, and gangsters and after watching the film, audiences will be curious to learn that such crimes exist," he explained.

The film features a star-studded cast, including Satyaraj, Priya Bhavani Shankar, Daali Dhanunjay, Satya Raj and Sunil. "I cast actors who suit the roles and also serve the marketability of the film. To expand its reach into other languages, we roped in actors from Tamil as well," said the director.

Ravi Basrur, known for his work in *KGF*, is the music director for *Zebra*. "It's a musical crime story and there are seven songs in the film. Music and background score are crucial to the story and Ravi has done a fantastic job with both," said Eashvar.



## NAYANTHARA'S RAKKAYIE TEASER UNLEASHES ACTION-PACKED FURY

**C**elebrating Lady Superstar Nayanthara's birthday in style, MovieVerse Studios and Drumsticks Productions released the gripping title teaser for their upcoming period-action drama, *Rakkayie*. The teaser, launched digitally, offers a tantalising preview of Nayanthara's electrifying new avatar in a high-octane role, marking a major milestone for both production houses. Helmed by debutant director Senthil Nallasamy, *Rakkayie* promises to reimagine the period-action genre, blending heart-pounding drama with adrenaline-fueled sequences. The teaser has already taken the internet by storm, leaving fans eager for more. The film boasts a stellar crew, with music by acclaimed composer Govind Vasantha, cinematography by Gautham Rajendran and razor-sharp editing by Praveen Antony. As filming gears up to begin, fans can look forward to more updates on the cast and production details in the coming weeks. With its powerful narrative and Nayanthara leading the charge, *Rakkayie* is shaping up to be a landmark film in Tamil cinema.

## Karanam Gari Veedhi promises heartfelt entertainment

**R**enowned music director R.P. Patnaik released the highly anticipated first-look poster of the upcoming film *Karanam Gari Veedhi*, a love and family entertainer set against the picturesque backdrop of a village. Directed by Hemanth and Prasanth, the movie promises to offer a perfect blend of heartfelt family emotions, humour and relatable storytelling. The film stars Kittu Thatikonda, Kashmira, Rohit, Vaishali, Suneel Ravinuthala and Sri Gopichand Konda in key roles. Produced by Adavi Ashok under the South Blockbuster Creations banner, *Karanam Gari Veedhi* is gearing up for a grand theatrical release soon, bringing fresh talent to the forefront of Tollywood.

At the poster launch event, R.P. Patnaik expressed his excitement about unveiling the film's first look, calling the poster and title design "fresh" and "promising." He shared his belief in the importance of new talent in the industry, offering aspiring filmmakers advice to understand and passionately pursue their craft. Directors Hemanth and Prasanth shared insights into the film's story. Hemanth described



Adavi Ashok, in his address, thanked R.P. Patnaik for his support in launching the poster and added, "We are excited to present a film that includes all the elements audiences love. We'll soon bring the movie to theaters for everyone to enjoy." Directors Hemanth and Prasanth shared insights into the film's story. Hemanth described

*Karanam Gari Veedhi* as a "realistic yet entertaining" portrayal inspired by real-life incidents, while Prasanth highlighted the movie's blend of comedy and family emotions set in a village, hoping it resonates with viewers. The cast also shared their thoughts on the film. Actor Suneel Ravinuthala, who plays an important role, spoke about the

"picturesque village setting" and the meaningful content crafted by the talented directors. Hero Kittu Thatikonda, excited about his role as an auto driver, praised the movie for its beautiful narrative and Vaishali's standout performance as the second heroine. Hero Rohit expressed happiness about portraying the struggles of a middle-class family in such an entertaining manner, while heroine Vaishali thanked the team for the opportunity to play the lead role. Actor Sri Gopichand Konda added that the film feels like a story from everyone's real life, with its relatable middle-class village backdrop.

The technical team behind *Karanam Gari Veedhi* includes editing by Raviteja G., cinematography by Vinod Shiningam and music by Sukumar Pammil. The posters and title design were crafted by Moonlight Designers, with B. Veerababu serving as the PRO.

With a stellar cast and crew, *Karanam Gari Veedhi* is shaping up to be a complete love story filled with family emotions, set against the backdrop of rural India. The movie promises to strike a chord with audiences, offering both entertainment and heartwarming moments that will make it a must-watch upon its release.

## Inside Sobhita Dhulipala's wedding trousseau!

**S**obhita Dhulipala is leaving no stone unturned as she prepares for her wedding to Telugu star Naga Chaitanya. Known for her understated charm and cultural pride, Sobhita is curating a wedding trousseau that beautifully reflects her heritage and individuality—a refreshing shift from the stylist-driven celebrity weddings we often see.

Insiders reveal that the actress has handpicked a stunning Kanjivaram silk saree intricately woven with real gold zari, a choice she made during a shopping trip with her mother. Adding to the charm, she's also commissioned a traditional white khadi saree from the master weavers of Ponduru, Andhra Pradesh. In keeping with custom, she's even ensuring a coordinated outfit for Chaitanya, embracing the spirit of togetherness. "Every detail has Sobhita's personal

touch," shares a source close to her. "It's all deeply sentimental and rooted in tradition."

This hands-on approach to her wedding reflects Sobhita's deep connection to her Telugu roots. Her engagement ceremony offered a glimpse into this ethos, where she stunned in traditional attire, accentuated with an orange gajra—a picture of elegance that sparked widespread admiration.

The wedding promises to be an intimate, culturally rich celebration, with close family and friends in attendance. From her wardrobe to the rituals, every element emphasizes Sobhita's grounded yet sophisticated style, blending love and tradition in a way that only she can. Fans eagerly await the first look at what's bound to be a wedding steeped in grace and heritage.

