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Tawde seeks apology from Rahul, Kharge; warns of defamation lawsuit

THUKRA KE MERA PYAAR: LOVE LOST IN EXECUTION



RC 16 begins in Mysore; Ram Charan and Janhvi Kapoor to join

NEXT WEEK

QUOTE OF THE DAY



If Rahul Gandhi is honest about his corruption charges against Adani, why hasn't he asked the Telangana Congress government to cancel its agreements with the Adani Group? How can the Congress portray Adani as corrupt in Delhi and treat him as trustworthy in Telangana? The Telangana Congress Government accepted a Rs 100 crore donation from the Adani Group for the Telangana Skill University. The donation must be immediately returned.

— KT Rama Rao, BRS working president

DON'T MISS...

2 railmen tied to scam-accused DRM

Two railway employees are at the heart of a growing corruption scandal tied to the Waltair Railway Divisional Manager (DRM) Saurabh Prasad. Reports suggest that approximately 70 lakh rupees in bribe money were converted into foreign currency, with the corrupt practices centred around large sums of money being exchanged to reduce penalties imposed on contractors. The illegal activities are believed to have been coordinated from the East Coast Railway Sports Association office in Visakhapatnam, where the alleged deals were...

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'Push AP's key projects in Parl'

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu directed Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MPs to prioritise critical projects for Andhra Pradesh during the upcoming winter session of Parliament. The instructions were issued during the Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party meeting held on Friday at his residence in Undavalli. The Chief Minister emphasised the importance of advancing the '2047 Vision Document' and underscored the necessity of central government support for its successful...

—PAGE: 4

All eyes on outcome of UP bypolls today

The counting of votes for the bypolls to nine Assembly segments in Uttar Pradesh, the first major face-off between the ruling BJP and its political rivals since the Lok Sabha polls held earlier in the year, will be taken up at 8 am on Saturday amid tight security arrangements, officials said. While the results of the bypolls will not directly impact the composition of the 403-member state Assembly, the contest is being seen as a prestige fight between the BJP and opposition parties...

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Shares of six Adani firms bounce back

Shares of six Adani group firms bounced back on Friday from the previous day's sharp drubbing, in tandem with a bull rally in the equity market wherein the BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 1,961 points. The stock of Ambuja Cements jumped 3.50 per cent, ACC climbed 3.17 per cent, the group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises advanced 2.16 per cent, Adani Ports rose 2.05 per cent, Adani Total Gas shot up by 1.18 per cent, and NDTV edged up 0.65 per cent on the BSE. In contrast, shares of...

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ADANI BRIBERY CASE CM: Will study US chargesheet reports

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday said the State government has the "chargesheet reports" filed in the US related to the alleged bribery scam involving the previous YSRCP government and the Adani Group, and "promised" to act on the irregularities. Business tycoon and Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani has been charged by the US Department of Justice over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay US\$ 250 million bribe to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts, an allegation refuted by the Indian conglomerate.

The previous YSRCP regime is embroiled in the alleged scam with claims that government officials received bribes from the Adani Group. Addressing the Assembly, the Chief Minister said his government will study those charges and act on them. "I have all the chargesheet reports filed there (US). It is in the public domain. Will study it (the allegations and indictment). Will act on it and inform you," said Naidu.

Continued on Page 2

No comments for now: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party, a key ally of NDA, will react only after going through the issue of Adani Group allegedly paying bribes for solar power contracts in Andhra Pradesh, said party spokesperson Komareddy Pattabhiram on Thursday. "We need to study the report before concluding. It would take two to three days," he said when asked about the party's reaction.

Gautam Adani, India's second-richest man, and seven others, including his nephew Sagar Adani, have been charged by the US Department of Justice with paying bribes to unidentified officials of state governments in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to buy expensive solar power, potentially earning more than US\$ 2 billion in profit over 20 years.

Continued on Page 2

NAIDU'S VISION FOR AP @ 2047

Wealth, health, happiness

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday introduced the SwarnaAndhra@2047 Vision document in the Assembly, outlining a roadmap to transform the state into a 'wealthy, healthy, and happy' region by 2047. The vision aligns with the centenary celebrations of Indian independence and reflects aspirations for a progressive Andhra Pradesh.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Viksit Bharat 2047, and we are launching SwarnaAndhra@2047. Our goal is to build a state that is wealthy, healthy, and happy, embodying these three pillars," said Naidu while addressing the Assembly.

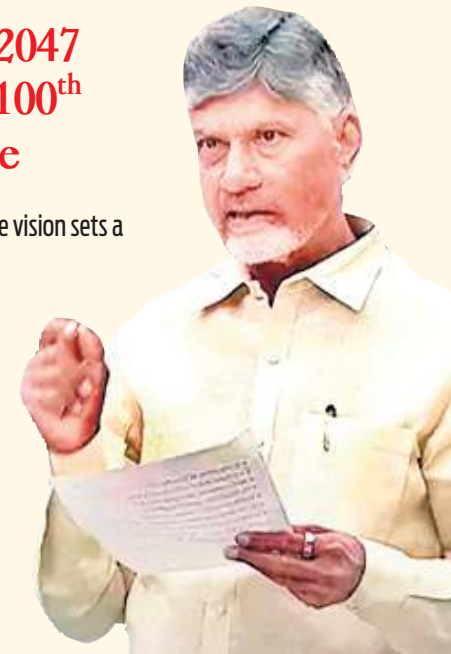
The vision document, prepared through extensive consultations, involved workshops at the mandal and municipal levels, engaging over 1.18 crore households. Naidu highlighted that the state envisions fostering a thriving and inclusive community, a hub of innovation, and a leader in global ease of doing business.

Key objectives include achieving the highest per capita income in the country, embracing deep tech across sectors, and positioning Andhra Pradesh as a global skills hub. The vision also emphasises eradicating poverty, creating employment,

Naidu unveils SwarnaAndhra@2047 vision document aligning with 100th year of India's independence

- Over 1.18 crore households were engaged through grassroots-level workshops in drafting the vision.
- Objectives include top per capita income, deep-tech integration, global skill hub status, and inclusive growth.
- The framework focuses on poverty eradication, water security, clean energy, logistics, and tech-driven development.

- Naidu emphasises that the vision sets a foundation for sustained growth, irrespective of future governments.
- Constituency-specific vision documents will be prepared with MLA involvement.
- AP secures Rs 4.38 lakh cr in investments, promising 4.53 lakh jobs since June.



ensuring water security, promoting agricultural technology, optimising energy costs, and enhancing logistics and cleanliness under the ten guiding principles (Padhi Sutralu). "The foundation we are laying today will set Andhra Pradesh on an irreversible path of progress, irrespective of future governments," assert-

ed Naidu. He urged MLAs to develop constituency-specific vision documents aligned with this initiative. Additionally, the Chief Minister announced plans to formulate actionable strategies for implementing the vision. He also highlighted the state government's success in attracting potential investments

worth ₹4.38 lakh crore, projected to generate 4.53 lakh jobs since the NDA government assumed office in June. Naidu concluded by calling upon all stakeholders to contribute towards realising the SwarnaAndhra@2047 vision, ensuring a prosperous future for the state.

THE ADANI CONUNDRUM

Will Jagan be a beneficiary of political silence?

SEELAM AROZIE
zieman1964@gmail.com
■ VIJAYAWADA

The indictment of Indian business magnate Gautam Adani by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (USSEC) has stirred political ripples in Andhra Pradesh, with former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's name surfacing as a key beneficiary in the alleged bribery scandal. Adani is accused of funnelling Rs 1,750



crore of slush money to Jagan from a total alleged bribe amount of Rs 2,036 crore for favouring his Adani Green Energy Ltd. .

The pressing question remains: will Jagan face legal consequences without Adani being held accountable? Despite an arrest warrant issued by a US court against Adani, the silence from political stakeholders, especially the NDA coalition partners in Andhra Pradesh, has drawn significant attention. There has been no major demand for a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe into the allegations.

Political parties such as the

Congress, CPI, and CPM have called for a judicial inquiry into the matter, but the response from the ruling coalition has been muted. Establishing the allegations against Jagan hinges on a comprehensive investigation, but neither the Centre nor the State government has shown any inclination to initiate one.

Adding to the intrigue is the USSEC's claim that Adani met a "high-ranking official in Andhra Pradesh" multiple times.

Continued on Page 2

Rs 17,232 cr will be spent on Vizag Metro: Narayana

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Municipal Administration and Urban Development, P. Narayana, announced that the State government would undertake the construction of the Visakhapatnam Metro Rail Project at a cost of Rs 17,232 crore, based on current estimates. The project will be executed in two phases, and a Detailed Project Report (DPR) has already been submitted to the Central Government. He stated that the first phase, covering 46.23 km with three corridors, is estimated to cost Rs 11,498 crore.

Responding to a question raised by TDP members during the Assembly's question hour, the Minister elaborated that the original plan encompassed four corridors spanning 76.90 km, with provisions for 54 metro stations and two maintenance depots. However, the revised cost stands at Rs 17,232 crore. He added that under the Metro Rail Policy 2017, the state government has sought 100% central assistance for the first phase.

Minister Narayana also suggested adopting the "Calcutta Model" for the Metro Rail Project and said feedback from public representatives would be

considered. The first-phase corridors include 14 key junctions such as Hanumanthawaka, Wipro Junction, Gurudwara, and Akkayyapalem. He mentioned requests from several MLAs to integrate an 8-metre flyover with the Metro Rail Corridor.

Minister for Social Welfare, Dola Sri Bala Veeranjanyulu, stated that the state government has allocated Rs 2,217.06 crore for the fee reimbursement scheme for the 2024-25 academic year. As per the policy, tuition fee reimbursements will be credited directly into college bank accounts. The Minister assured that pending dues from the previous government would be cleared in phases.

Pay hike for Tribal Welfare teachers
Tribal Welfare Minister Gummadi Sandhya Rani revealed that 1,659 outsourcing teachers are employed in Tribal Welfare Residential Schools and Gurukuls. While their current honorarium is Rs 18,000, the government has proposed increasing it to Rs 24,150, continuing efforts initiated in 2017 to enhance their pay.

Financial support for Haj pilgrims
Minister NMD Farooq, addressing a short-notice question, announced plans to provide ₹1 lakh financial assistance to Haj pilgrims departing from Vijayawada Embarkation Point starting next year.



Jana Sena MLA Pulaparthi elected as PAC Chairman

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena MLA Pulaparthi Ramanjaneyulu has been elected as the new chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Public Accounts Committee (PAC). The election for PAC membership was held in the Assembly Committee Hall, where voting was conducted using the preferential voting system, with MLAs casting their votes via ballot papers.

Continued on Page 2

Lokesh assures commitment to Lokayukta

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Human Resources and IT, Nara Lokesh, assured that the NDA coalition government would uphold the spirit of Lokayukta, despite the absence of an opposition leader in the Assembly. Presenting the Lokayukta Amendment Bill in the Legislative Council on Friday, Lokesh addressed the evolving political scenario following the 2024 elections, emphasising the government's commitment to democratic principles. The amendment

seeks to alter the composition of the Lokayukta Members Selection Committee. Traditionally comprising the Chief Minister, Speaker of the Assembly, Home Minister or any minister, Leader of the Opposition, and the Council Chairman, the committee now faces a restructured four-member format due to the absence of an opposition leader, ensuring the appointment

process remains uninterrupted. Council member K.S. Lakshmana Rao proposed including an alternative opposition representative in the committee. In response, Lokesh clarified that the amendment applies only in the absence of an opposition leader, reiterating the government's commitment to democracy. He highlighted the administration's dedication to transparency, stating, "The spirit of Lokayukta will continue under this government."

Lokesh also criticised the absence of former Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and other YSRCP leaders during key Assembly proceedings, including the PAC elections, underscoring the need for responsible participation in legislative processes.



CAG points out CFMS lapses

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), in its State Finances Audit Report for the year ended March 31, 2023, has highlighted major lapses in the Andhra Pradesh Comprehensive Financial Management System (CFMS). The report states that the CFMS was "not only weak and vulnerable but also failed to deliver the expected outcomes," which included real-time information availability, facilitating decision-making agility, speed and certainty of service delivery, convenience to stakeholders, minimal reconciliations, and enhanced financial discipline. One of the major issues identified was the non-enabling of the 'Duplicate Check' feature in the CFMS application, which result-

ed in excess payments from the state exchequer. The report pointed out that this led to excess payments amounting to Rs 968 crore across 1,41,917 bills between April 2018 and September 2021, indicating weak processing controls in the system.

The administrative departments were notified of such payments and were advised to recover the excess amounts if not already done. Another key observation was the absence of a 'Limit Check' feature in the application, which allowed excessive pensionary benefits to be drawn by 2,545 pensioners, involving 193 Treasury Officers/DDOs. This resulted in overpayments of Rs 218.15 crore during the same period.

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US exploring new Visa Application Centre in AP

Vizag and Vijayawada considered key locations due to growing visa demand in southern India

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The United States is planning to open a new Visa Application Centre (VAC) in Andhra Pradesh, possibly in Visakhapatnam or Vijayawada. This was announced by US Consul General Rebekah Drame during her recent visit to Visakhapatnam. Currently, India has five VACs in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi. People from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, including Visakhapatnam and Vijayawada, currently have to go to Hyderabad for visa-related services.

This decision comes in response to the growing demand for US visas in southern India. According to data from the Hyderabad consulate, 56%



Speaking to The Pioneer, Rebekah Drame said, "The demand for US visas in India is at an all-time high. Last year, we processed 1.4 million visa applications, setting a global record." India continues to be the largest source of international students in the US, with over 331,602 Indian students currently enrolled, according to the Open Doors Report 2024. Graduate student enrolment increased by 19%, while undergraduate enrolment grew by 13%.

Alexander McLaren, Public Affairs Officer at the Hyderabad consulate, mentioned that US student enrolments in India have risen sharply, with a 300% increase compared to the previous year. During the 2024 summer visa season alone, the Hyderabad consulate conducted over 47,000 student visa interviews,

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a significant rise from 35,000 in 2023. To handle the surge, the consulate has increased its staff and infrastructure. Drame added, "Over the last 18 months, our staff has more than doubled, and we plan to nearly triple it by early 2025." Currently, the consulate processes 1,600 visa applications daily, with plans to increase this to 2,500 by next year.

The announcement also highlighted the success of the H-1B domestic revalidation pilot programme, which allows visa renewals within the US. Drame said, "In just three months, we facilitated 10,000 appointments under this programme, and we expect it to become a regular service next year."

Continued on Page 2

Rahul's big blow to Congress over Adani

By now, the media has widely reported that Gautam Adani, the Chairman of the Adani group, has been indicted in a New York court. The indictment alleges that Adani and others conspired to and bribed Indian politicians and officials to sign power purchase agreements (PPAs) for the renewable power produced by one of his companies. On Thursday, Rahul Gandhi addressed the press about Adani's indictment in a US court. He opened with the statement, "It's now pretty clear and established in America that Mr Adani has broken both American law and Indian law." He immediately followed up, saying, "He has been indicted in the United States, and I am wondering why Mr Adani is still running a free man in this country".

Rahul's statements raise many questions that only Rahul can answer. Rahul says Adani was indicted. An indictment means prosecutors filed a case against an individual accusing him of crimes. Rahul claims it has already been established that Gautam Adani has broken American and Indian laws. One wonders why Rahul would make two statements, one after the other, that contradict each other. Is it because he does not understand the difference between an indictment and a conviction, wherein the prosecution proves its allegations? It is hard to believe Rahul is ignorant of the difference between indictment and conviction, especially since he faces multiple court cases or indictments himself. For example, Rahul and his mother, Sonia Gandhi, face fraud and land-grabbing allegations

If Adani had indeed paid bribes, as alleged in the indictment, this implies two things: the leaders of Congress and its ally DMK are guilty of demanding and receiving bribes, and their corruption is the reason Indian investors lost more than 2 lakh crore in the stock market on Thursday

in the National Herald case and are out on bail. Multiple cases of criminal defamation are also pending against him. Yet, he is still running a free man in this country. Rahul may not see the double standard in this because he believes the law does not apply to him and his family members as it applies to the rest of Indians. Another explanation could be that Rahul has immense faith in investigative and regulatory agencies and prosecu-

tors and considers they do not need to prove their accusations in a court of law. But, we have seen Rahul rejecting cases filed by agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) as bogus and politically driven. Rahul and his Congress party often denigrate and cast aspersions on Indian institutions like the Army, Election Commission, Securities and Exchange



KISHORE POREDDY

Board of India (SEBI) and even the Supreme Court and its judges. Yet, it appears Rahul reposes complete faith in foreign ones. Rahul's and Congress leaders' calls to foreign countries to meddle in India's democracy imply this to be the case.

The main accusation in the indictment against Gautam Adani is that he bribed Indian politicians and officials of various Indian states to secure power purchase agreements for the solar energy his company produces. The indictment lists Chattisgarh, which the Congress ruled at the time of the alleged offence, and Tamil Nadu, ruled by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), an alliance partner of the Congress. The list does not mention any state government ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). If Adani had indeed paid bribes as alleged in the indictment, it means that leaders of Congress and its ally DMK were guilty of demanding and receiving those bribes. If the allegations are true, it implies that the greed of the corrupt Congress and its alliance partner, the

DMK, along with the leaders of the YSRCP and BJD parties ruling Andhra Pradesh and Odisha at the time of the alleged offence, are the sole reason for Indian investors losing more than Rs 2 lakh crore in the stock market on Thursday. If anyone, it is Rahul, the de facto owner of the Congress and leader of the INDI Alliance, to which the DMK belongs, who is answerable to the allegations of corruption raised in the indictment filed in the US court. Rahul should come clean on the bribes Congress leaders received in Chattisgarh. He should reveal the quantum of bribes and names of the Congress leaders who received those bribes and immediately expel those leaders from his party. Also, Rahul should demand Stalin, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu,

and the DMK supremo do the same. If the DMK does not oblige, he should immediately expel the party from the INDI alliance. Otherwise, Indians will continue to place little faith in his argument that Adani indulged in corrupt practices and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is shielding Adani. On the contrary, if Rahul asserts his party in Chattisgarh and his ally, the DMK in Tamil Nadu, did not receive any bribes, it only implies one thing. Rahul, who could not defeat BJP in the last three elections and couldn't win even three-digit seats for his party, bringing his leadership ability into question, is ready to inflict any pain on India and Indians to divert their attention from his failures. (The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

Savitha blames previous govt for youth's addiction to ganja

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC Welfare, EWS Welfare, and Handloom & Textiles, S Savitha, stirred controversy with her remarks in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council, alleging that many youths, including women, had become addicted to ganja and drugs. She further claimed that the financial assistance provided by the previous YSRCP government had been misused, as it failed to serve productive purposes such as employment generation or skill development. During the Question Hour in the AP Legislative Council, chaired by Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju, opposition members raised queries about the schemes meant to uplift the EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) community. Minister Savitha made controversial comments in response to these questions, which sparked heated debates within the council. Opposition members refuted the allegations and defended the



schemes as initiatives to uplift vulnerable communities. At this point, YSRCP members rushed to the house's well and staged a protest, demanding an apology from the Minister. Meanwhile, the ruling TDP members gathered at the podium and raised slogans in support of Savitha. Amid the commotion, Chairman Moshen Raju adjourned the proceedings for 10 minutes. When the session resumed 34 minutes later, the opposition continued its protest,

insisting on an apology from Minister Savitha. In response, TDP members accused the opposition of humiliating the BC Welfare Minister and called for an apology from them as well. The council chamber was filled with slogans from both sides, with YSRCP members chanting "Down, Down Minister" and TDP members responding with "Zindabad, Zindabad Minister Savithamma." Earlier, Minister Savitha had mentioned that the State government had allocated Rs

10,273 crore for EWS schemes. She also criticised the previous government for failing to implement self-employment schemes, which had left many youths and women unemployed. According to her, the financial aid provided under these schemes was misused, with some individuals using it to fund their addiction to ganja and drugs. This remark prompted strong reactions from opposition members, who rushed to the podium to stage a protest. Ministers Dola Sri Bala Veeranjayulu and others attempted to clarify Savitha's statement, but the YSRCP continued its agitation. They later stated that if any part of the Minister's statement was deemed objectionable, it could be withdrawn. In response, Chairman Koyye Moshen Raju assured that any objectionable words would be removed from the record. He also urged members to avoid prolonging the issue and brought the question hour to a close.

CM: Will study US...

Continued from Page 1

He noted that over the past five months, the TDP-led government has been discussing the alleged corruption that took place between 2019 and 2024. The YSRCP had on Thursday dismissed the allegations made against the government headed by it and said there was no direct agree-

ment with the Adani group. Highlighting that the allegations involving the YSRCP regime and Adani group, have hurt the prestige and brand image of the southern state, Naidu termed it as a "very sad development". Some members of the House wanted former CM Jagan Mohan Reddy to be held accountable if the charges against him were proven.

No comments for now...

Continued from Page 1

Adani Group, however, denied the charges saying the allegations by US prosecutors are "baseless" and the conglomerate is "compliant with all laws." Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh Congress leader Kolanukonda Sivaji alleged that Gautam Adani and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are the same, and called for a suo motu probe by the Supreme Court.

PAC POST GOES TO RULING PARTY

A blow to democracy, says YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) spokesperson and MLA Tatiparthi Chandrasekhar criticised the coalition government for denying the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Chairman post to the Opposition, calling it a "dark day for parliamentary democracy." Addressing the media on Friday, he alleged that the move was aimed at preventing scrutiny of financial irregularities in state administration. Chandrasekhar stated that it has been a long-standing convention in parliamentary democracy to appoint an Opposition member as PAC Chairman, a practice upheld by various governments irrespective of party strength. He noted that past chairpersons, including stalwarts like Atal Bihari Vajpayee, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and Murlu

Manohar Joshi, played key roles in exposing major scams such as Bofors, 2G Spectrum, and Commonwealth Games. The MLA highlighted that despite YSRCP's nomination of Peddireddy Ramachandra Reddy for the post, the ruling coalition deliberately excluded the Opposition. "Even with just two members, BJP held the PAC Chairman post in Parliament. This government's actions mock the democratic institution," he said. Chandrasekhar accused the government of seeking to suppress dissent and avoid accountability, especially regarding budget allocations and fund management. "YSRCP, with 11 seats, is the only Opposition in the Assembly. Denying it the PAC post undermines the institution's role as a financial watchdog," he remarked.

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This marks a historic first, as the election of the PAC Chairman in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly has never been held before. Additionally, the ruling party has secured the position of PAC Chairman for the first time. Traditionally, the PAC Chairman's post has been allocated to the opposition, but in an unexpected turn, the ruling party has not agreed to hand over the role to the opposition this time. In other developments, the results of the elections for the

three Finance Committees for the financial year 2024-25 in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly were also announced. The members of the Government Accounts Committee include Ananda Babu Nakka, Arimilli Radhakrishna, Ashok Reddy Muthumula, Burla Ramanjaneyulu, B Jayanageswara Reddy, Kolla Lalitha Kumari, Rajagopal Sriram, Ramanjaneyulu Pulaparthi, and Vishnu Kumar Raju Pennatsa. The members of the Estimates Committee

Will Jagan be...

Continued from Page 1

Proving this charge without a thorough inquiry may prove challenging, particularly in the current political climate. For the opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP), the controversy presents an opportunity to target its primary rival, YSRCP chief Jagan.

Revoking the sale of 2,000 acres to Adani Gangavaram Port, reportedly sold for a mere Rs 600 crore, could be a strategic move. However, the State government is unlikely to take such a step, as it heavily relies on Adani's investments to address Andhra Pradesh's power crisis and attract industrial growth.

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu appears cautious, focusing on rebuilding the State's economy rather than risking a confrontation with Adani. This political pragmatism benefits Jagan, as the silence of stakeholders effectively shields him from accountability.

As the political drama unfolds, questions about transparency and accountability loom large. Whether the Adani-Jagan connection will see a thorough investigation or be consigned to political oblivion remains to be seen.

NAREDCO donates Rs 75L to CMRF

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Representatives of the National Real Estate Development Council (NAREDCO) presented a cheque for Rs 75 lakh to Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu at his residence in Undavalli on Friday.

Earlier, NAREDCO had donated Rs 25 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF). With this latest contribution, their total donation now stands at Rs 1 crore.

During the meeting, NAREDCO representatives expressed their gratitude to the government for withdrawing the Land Titling Act, a move they said safeguards citizens' property rights. They also appreciated the decision to increase land rates but requested a one-year postponement of its implementation, citing the ongoing challenges faced by the real estate and construction sectors.

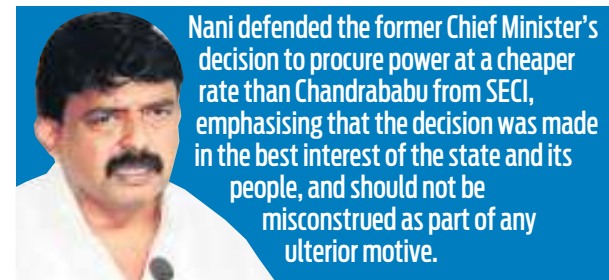
Responding to their concerns, the Chief Minister assured full government support to help stabilise these



sectors. He emphasised the construction industry's vital role in the state's economic development. NAREDCO representatives commended the government for its innovative policies, particularly the faster approvals for investments and industries, which they believe will boost industrial growth and generate employment. They also appreciated the introduction of single-window clearances for construction projects, which they said would significantly aid the sector's progress.

NAREDCO State President Gadde Chakradhar, along with Executive Vice Presidents Paruchuri Kiran Kumar, Yaganti Durga Prasad, and Talluri Sivaji, Secretary General Mamidi Sitaramiah, Treasurer Chava Ramesh Babu, and other representatives, including P. Rajasekhar, K.N.V. Nares, Mandava Sandeep, P. Nag Vamsi, K. Murali Krishna, Galla Ramachandra Rao, Vemuri Subbarao, and V. Samsikrishna, attended the meeting.

Perni Nani says media is biased against Jagan



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Perni Nani has strongly criticized a section of the media for alleged bias against YSRCP chief and former chief minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy. Speaking to the media, Nani accused certain media outlets of spreading false narratives and attempting to tarnish the image of YS Jagan by highlighting unsubstantiated corruption claims.

Nani defended the former Chief Minister's decision to procure power at a cheaper rate than Chandrababu from SECI, emphasising that the decision was made in the best interest of the state and its people, and should not be misconstrued as part of any ulterior motive.

Nani pointed out that despite the ongoing campaign against YS Jagan, the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) continues to maintain a significant 40 percent vote share in the state, which he suggested has led to media hostility. He specifically referenced the media's coverage of business dealings involving industrialist Gautam Adani and former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu. He claimed that while such deals were portrayed

positively when associated with Chandrababu and his son Lokesh, the same transactions, including the data center deal, were cast in a negative light when linked to YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. The former minister also dismissed allegations regarding a purported Rs 1,750 crore corruption issue, particularly concerning an agreement signed with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). He asserted that these agreements were legal and that the media's portrayal of them as criminal was misleading and unfair. Nani further criticised the negative propaganda against YS Jagan, contrasting it with the lack of scrutiny over the alleged corruption scandals involving Chandrababu Naidu, especially his associations in Singapore.

CAG points...

Continued from Page 1

The report also noted failures in the management of Deposit Accounts within the CFMS, both in terms of design and control, and recommended that the department incorporate necessary controls to prevent repetitive and excessive payments.

Additionally, it was discovered that 1,44,493 Personal Deposit (PD) accounts were created through the CFMS backend without the involvement of the Cash and Debt Management Section of the Finance Department. Moreover, PD administrators were unaware of the lapsing of funds totalling Rs 71,568.44 crore in 3,41,410 cases, carried out between March 2019 and March 2021 by the CFMS backend team as part of year-end activities.

The report further criticised the system's lack of effective design, process, and validation controls in the creation of multiple PD accounts, adjustments of amounts, and cancellation of bills via a single platform. This neglect of key process owners poses a potential risk to the integrity of the CFMS, the CAG concluded.

Jana Sena MLA Pulaparthi elected...

Continued from Page 1

are Bhuma Akhila Priya, Bandaru Satyananda Rao, Jayakrishna Nimmaka, V Jogeswara Rao, Kandula Narayana Reddy, Maddipati Venkata Raju, Parthasarathi Valmiki, Pasim Sunil Kumar, and Eluri Sambasiva Rao. The members of the Public Sector Undertakings Committee are Aitabaththula Ananda Babu, Eswara Rao Nadakuditi, Giddi Satyanarayana, Gauthi Sirisha, Koona Ravi Kumar, Kumar Raja Varma, RVSKK Ranga Rao, Tenali Shravan Kumar,

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GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT SHORT TENDER NOTICE
NIT No. SER&B/GNT/34 to 73/2024-25 Date: 19-11-2024
Roads and Buildings has been inviting tenders for 40 works in Guntur, Bapatla and Palnada Districts at an estimated value of Rs 2757.20 Lakh. For details: www.tender.aeprocurement.gov.in. Last Date for submitting tender is at 3.30 pm on 04-12-2024, Ph. No. 9491063144. Sd/- Superintending Engineer (R&B) Circle, Guntur
R.O. No: 14636/CLAD/NT/11/2024-DI, Dt: 22.11.2024

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IACC hosts interactive session on US business and tourism visas

US Consulate official says honesty in visa application process is crucial

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Indo-American Chamber of Commerce (IACC) for Andhra Pradesh has organised an exclusive interactive session on US business and tourism visas in Vijayawada. The event, held at the Efftronics Systems Seminar Hall, featured the US Consulate General team from Hyderabad, including Rebekah

Drame, Consular Chief, Jeanne Sokolowski, Deputy Consular Information Unit Chief and Aishwarya Rawat, Supervisor. Rebekah Drame spoke on the overview of US Consulate services, focusing on the visa processing procedure. She highlighted the strong and growing ties between the United States and India, noting the deepening trade, economic, and cultural relationships between the two democracies. Drame also discussed efforts to streamline and expedite the visa process to meet the increasing demand from India.

During the session, attendees, including about 40 members from various industries and academic institutions, raised several queries related to US business and tourism visas. Drame stressed that honesty in the visa application process is crucial for success. The event provided valuable insights into the US visa process and underscored the continued collaboration between India and the United States.

Anvesh Dasari, Director of Efftronics Systems Pvt. Ltd., delivered the welcome remarks, introducing IACC and its role in promoting business relations. Sreedevi Devireddy, Vice Chairperson of IACC AP & TG, also spoke, stressing the importance of awareness programmes on US business and tourism visas, particularly for those in industry and academia. Ramakrishna Dasari, MD of Efftronics, was also present.

Minister resumes NDB road works in Nidamarru

Work was stopped during previous government's tenure



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Roads, Buildings, Investments, and Infrastructure BC Janardhan Reddy, on Friday, resumed the construction of the NDB road in Nidamarru, Mangalagiri constituency, which had come to a grinding halt during the previous government's tenure. While inspecting the roadwork, the Minister, along with officials, addressed the ongoing progress.

Minister Janardhan Reddy was satisfied that the NDB road works are being restarted in Mangalagiri in the constituency of his cabinet colleague, Minister Nara Lokesh. He criticised the previous government under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for neglecting the State's infrastructure, causing disruptions and halting several road projects, including NDB roads

Minister Janardhan Reddy was satisfied that the NDB road works are being restarted in Mangalagiri in the constituency of his cabinet colleague, Minister Nara Lokesh. He criticised the previous government under YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for neglecting the State's infrastructure, causing disruptions and halting several road projects, including NDB roads.

potholes and other road issues before Sankranti. The Minister assured that the NDB road projects are being reinitiated with the cooperation of contractors, after resolving their issues. He also mentioned that ₹120 crore is being spent on roadworks in the district, with ₹51.06 crore allocated for Mangalagiri.

The Minister highlighted that under the newly formed coalition government, road construction activities are now progressing rapidly across the State. He mentioned that the government is focusing on repairing roads, with an initial budget of ₹861 crore to address

Further, the Minister stressed the government's commitment to the State's infrastructure, stating that new roads will be developed through a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, and the government is planning to upgrade 13,000 km of roads. The goal is to complete the State's road network within the next two years.

Minister Reddy also addressed local residents' concerns during his visit to Nidamarru, where he participated in a community program and assured the public of better infrastructure.

He promised to expand the Mangalagiri-Parimi road to address heavy traffic issues, responding positively to residents' requests.

The programme was attended by Sub-Collector Sanjana Sinha, R&B officials, and others including the Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Padmashali Corporation, Nandam Abaddayya, and members from the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams governing council.

Two ill after consuming contaminated water

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GVMC Commissioner Dr P. Sampath Kumar confirmed on Friday that several residents of Sainagar, Ward 6, Zone 67, were affected by contaminated drinking water, with two individuals contracting diarrhoea. All those affected have received treatment and are now reported to be in good health.

Speaking to The Pioneer, Dr. Sampath Kumar explained that the contamination occurred due to road development work in the area. "Excessive soil from the work-site fell into the canals, and when a freshwater pipeline was being repaired, it led to the contamination of the water supply," he said. The Commissioner pointed out that the issue was worsened by neglect in managing the situation.

Three individuals were affected by the contaminated water. B. Triveni, 35, is undergoing treatment at RK Hospital, while 57-year-old P. Padmavati is being treated at Steel Plant Hospital.

Tejaswi Podapati assumes office as Creativity and Culture Council chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tejaswi Podapati, Chairperson of the Andhra Pradesh State Creativity and Culture Council, has vowed to play her part in preserving and passing down the rich cultural heritage of Telugu people to future generations. Tejaswi assumed her responsibilities as the chairperson during a ceremony held at Haritha Berm Park here on Friday. Following the traditional lighting of the lamp, Tourism Minister Kandula Durgesh administered the oath of office to Tejaswi.

Kandula Durgesh spoke about Andhra Pradesh's rich cultural heritage. He expressed confidence in Tejaswi, with her IT background, to uphold her role by unveiling creativity.

During her address, Tejaswi highlighted the increasing interest among professionals to venture into politics to serve society. She expressed her gratitude to Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister Lokesh for offering her this opportunity, describing it as an honour to contribute to the visionary goals of



the Chief Minister. Tejaswi assured that she would work with complete responsibility, as advised by the Chief Minister, and strictly uphold the culture and traditions of the State. She stressed the importance of promoting the State's culture globally, integrating technology

for wider reach, and committed to working diligently in line with the Chief Minister's vision.

Deputy Speaker K Raghurama Krishnam Raju praised Tejaswi as a trailblazer who played a pivotal role in rallying IT professionals

around Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu during challenging times in Hyderabad. He underlined the need to prioritise cultural preservation for future generations and expressed hope that Tejaswi would become recognised as a 'Culture Queen'.

2 railway employees tied to scam-accused DRM



PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Two railway employees are at the heart of a growing corruption scandal tied to the Waltair Railway Divisional Manager (DRM) Saurabh Prasad. Reports suggest that approximately 70 lakh rupees in bribe money were converted into foreign currency, with the corrupt practices centered around large sums of money being exchanged to reduce penalties imposed on contractors.

The illegal activities are believed to have been coordinated from the East Coast Railway Sports Association office in Visakhapatnam, where the alleged deals were brokered. In response, the Central Bureau of

CBI investigates alleged bribe network, with over Rs 70 lakh funnelled into foreign currency, coordinated from Visakhapatnam office

Investigation (CBI) has already questioned key individuals in the case, including engineering staff member Reddy Srinivas and protocol inspector Behara Raju. "Reddy Srinivas and Behara Raju are under intense scrutiny as part of the ongoing investigation," an official from the CBI confirmed. "We are piecing together the full extent of their involvement in this extensive corruption network."

Skill Census: APSSDC, J-PAL hold capacity building workshop

Over 90 officers from APSSDC, Skill Development & Training Department attend workshop

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To strengthen the implementation of the Andhra Pradesh Skill Census, the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC) partnered with J-PAL to conduct a one-day capacity building workshop at Acharya Nagarjuna University in Guntur on Friday. The workshop was attended by over 90 officers from APSSDC and the Skill Development & Training Department.

J-PAL, a global research centre from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has been a long-standing partner of the Government of Andhra Pradesh through its South Asian regional office. The CLEAR South Asia centre, hosted by J-PAL, is dedicated to building the capacity of government officials across India through rigorous training and evidence-sharing initiatives.



The workshop began with a welcome address by the CEO of APSSDC, followed by a keynote speech from the Principal Secretary of the Skills Development and Training Department. The session provided an introduction to the key principles of evidence-based policy-making, with J-PAL South Asia stressing its commitment to fostering data-driven decisions.

The workshop focused on several key areas essential for effective survey implementation. Participants were trained on primary data collection techniques using app-based questionnaires, with a focus on ensuring high-quality data and addressing common challenges.

A session highlighted the importance of field protocols, including effective planning, issue management, and maintaining respondent confidentiality during data collection. The final session delved into strategies for ensuring data

integrity, with insights on implementing back checks and managing quality control throughout the process. Interactive activities throughout the day allowed participants to apply their learning in real-world scenarios, reinforcing the practical skills needed to successfully implement the skill census.

This workshop is a key milestone in the ongoing collaboration between J-PAL and APSSDC, aimed at enhancing the Skill Census. By strengthening the capacity of government officials in data collection and monitoring, the initiative is expected to contribute to more effective policy formulation and programme implementation in the State.

Representatives from APSSDC, including Executive Directors BJ Benny, K Dinesh Kumar, D Manohar, and K Raghur, attended the workshop.

Solar Energy Expo showcases PM Suryagarh, Kusum

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Solar Renewable Energy Expo-2024, organised under the banner Re Next by the AP Solar Energy Association, began at the Maddilapalem grounds of Andhra University on Friday. APEPDCL CMD Prithviraj Immadi inaugurated the event, spotlighting the significant benefits of the PM Suryagarh (Muft Bijli Yojana) and PM Kusum (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha Evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) schemes.

"PM Suryagarh benefits common households by reducing energy bills, while the Kusum scheme empowers farmers by enabling solar power adoption. Together, these schemes aim to drive savings and sustainability," stated Immadi. He urged attendees to leverage these initiatives to achieve financial and environmental benefits. The expo serves as a crucial

platform for stakeholders across the solar energy value chain, from manufacturers to consumers. Prithviraj Immadi inaugurated various stalls showcasing cutting-edge solar technologies and interacted with exhibitors, emphasising the role of renewable energy in shaping a sustainable future.

"Already, over 40,000 applications for solar installations have been received in our DISCOM region. However, our ambitious goal is to reach 10 lakh households. Awareness drives supported by Panchayat Raj and DWCR groups are being conducted to achieve this," Immadi added, inviting Visakhapatnam residents to explore the offerings of the expo running from November 22-24. Rajya Sabha member Golla Baburao lauded the government's proactive solar policies, emphasising their potential to create both direct and indirect employment opportunities. "Affordable electricity through solar energy not only benefits consumers but also provides jobs to educate



ment's proactive solar policies, emphasising their potential to create both direct and indirect employment opportunities. "Affordable electricity through solar energy not only benefits consumers but also provides jobs to educate



ed youth. Events like this in Visakhapatnam pave the way for progress," he noted.

Engineering students from Andhra University will showcase innovative solar projects on the final day of the expo, furthering the event's focus on innovation and education.

AP Solar Energy Association president Hema Kumar called for public participation, highlighting the accessibility of subsidies and benefits under the PM Suryagarh and Kusum schemes. "This expo is a golden opportunity for people to learn about renewable energy and its advantages," he said.

Association members Hema Kumar, Ramamohan Rao, Nagaraju, and Jayababu, alongside EPDCL SE Shyambabu, representatives from NEDCAP, CII, and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as stakeholders from banks, companies, and government agencies were present.



Rly employees seek MP's help to solve NTTPS pollution issue

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Railway employees and residents from Guntupalli have raised concerns about the severe dust pollution caused by the Nara Tatarao Thermal Power Station (NTTTS) in Kondapalli, which is affecting the local air quality and drinking water. The residents have reported serious health problems due to the pollution and have sought the intervention of MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) to address the issue. On Friday, members of the South Central Railway OBC

Employees Association and the All India SC/ST Railway Employees Association met MP Kesineni Sivanath at his office in Vijayawada. They informed the MP that the filters installed at NTTPS to control dust emissions were malfunctioning, exacerbating the pollution problem.

Residents of around 500 families from the Railway Wagon Workshop colony, along with neighbouring villagers, explained that they are facing severe difficulties due to the ongoing dust pollution.



Push crucial projects for AP in Parl: Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu directed Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MPs to prioritise critical projects for Andhra Pradesh during the upcoming winter session of Parliament. The instructions were issued during the Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party meeting held on Friday at his residence in Undavalli.

The Chief Minister emphasised the importance of advancing the '2047 Vision Document' and underscored the necessity of central government support for its successful implementation. He urged the MPs to use the parliamentary platform to address the state's challenges and ensure tangible progress on each issue.

The MPs strongly criticised former Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, accusing him of tarnishing Andhra Pradesh's reputation over the past five years. They claimed that Jagan's policies had diverted potential invest-

The Chief Minister emphasised the importance of advancing the '2047 Vision Document' and underscored the necessity of central government support for its successful implementation. He urged the MPs to use the parliamentary platform to address the state's challenges and ensure tangible progress on each issue.

ments to neighbouring states and pledged to rebuild Andhra Pradesh's image and attract new investments.

The MPs also discussed strategies to draw investments, highlighting a specific document being prepared to guide their efforts. They deliberated on the ongoing review of the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) agreement, with the government reportedly seeking legal counsel and considering an inquiry within the state's jurisdiction.

Addressing the state's

financial crisis, the MPs reiterated their earlier appeals in Parliament for additional funds.

They identified the Polavaram project as a top priority and reaffirmed their commitment to securing the necessary resources. The development of Amaravati also remained a key focus.

The alliance's 21 MPs pledged to respond promptly and effectively during the parliamentary sessions to address the state's pressing concerns and secure support for its growth initiatives.

Govt won't spare wrongdoers: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

IT Minister Nara Lokesh on Friday commended the resilience of Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers while criticising the alleged cowardice of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders. Speaking to the media on the final day of the 2024 Assembly sessions, Lokesh highlighted how TDP workers have bravely faced unjust cases over the past five years, standing firm despite challenges.

Lokesh criticised YSRCP leaders for their response to police notices over inappropriate social media posts, asserting that TDP activists had resisted such cases as they had committed no wrongdoing. He assured that the government would not spare anyone guilty of misconduct. The minister also emphasised the government's seriousness regarding inappropriate online content. He questioned whether YSRCP leaders, including Jagan Mohan Reddy, had the moral and political strength to participate in voting or elections, casting doubt on their commitment to public service.

During discussions with



MLAs, Lokesh urged them to work diligently, reminding them of the significant mandate given to TDP by the people. He provided updates on various representations received from MLAs, explaining which issues had been resolved and clarifying reasons for pending matters. He noted that the government is adopting a structured approach akin to that of central ministers to address grievances effectively.

On the proposed changes to school timings, Lokesh explained that the initiative is a pilot project, with adjustments to be made based on feedback. He also highlighted plans to enhance sports activities in schools to foster physical and mental development among students.

DC focuses on steps to improve Eluru GGH



PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has initiated measures to streamline the functioning of the Government General Hospital in Eluru. In a surprise inspection on Friday, the Collector spent nearly two hours meticulously examining every department of the hospital.

As part of the inspection, the Collector visited the outpatient (OP) centre, registered as a regular patient, and consulted an orthopaedic doctor for a mock check-up. She also visited the pharmacy to collect prescribed medicines and checked whether they were being properly recorded. The Collector enquired if staff had been assigned to guide patients at the OP centre and reviewed the procedures at the 'ABHA' health card registration desk.

The inspection covered various departments, including pathology, dental, and orthopaedics. She scrutinised facilities like toilets and running water availability, directing officials to address defi-

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ciencies. She also interacted with patients to gather feedback on the services and sought assurances from staff to avoid delays in issuing medical certificates.

Expressing concern over cleanliness, the Collector warned contractors of termination if sanitation standards were not maintained. She instructed weekly fogging to prevent mosquito-borne diseases and stressed the need for prompt ambulance maintenance, particularly for trauma care.

The Collector directed staff across all levels, from junior personnel to the superintendent, to deliver dedicated and empathetic medical care. She instructed the management to establish waiting rooms for attendants of delivery patients and to ensure stock adequacy for essential medicines.

Accompanied by Superintendent MS Raju, DMHO Dr S. Sharmista, and other senior officials, the Collector assured frequent hospital visits to monitor services and resolve public grievances.

Govt committed to 45.72 m Polavaram dam height

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Minister for Water Resources, Dr Nimmala Ramanaidu, has reiterated the TDP-led NDA government's commitment to completing the Polavaram Irrigation Project at a dam height of 45.72 metres. He clarified that there are no proposals to reduce the height to 41.15 metres, emphasising that the previous YSRCP government had sent proposals to the central government regarding such a reduction. The minister recalled that from January 10, 2022, to January 29, 2024, the YSRCP government corresponded with the central authorities to decrease the dam height. However, under the leadership of Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, the state government is determined to complete the project by 2027.

During the question hour on the final day of the budget sessions in the AP Legislative Council, TDP members BT Naidu, K Srikanth, Duvvarapu Rama Rao, and YSRCP's Thota Trimurthulu raised questions regarding the progress of the Polavaram Project and the construction of the dam.

In response, Minister Dr Ramanaidu confirmed that the state government is committed to constructing the dam at 45.72 metres, as per the revised cost approved by the Polavaram Project Committee. The estimated cost for the project is Rs 55,548.78 crore, and the Technical Advisory Committee has approved the plan. He pointed out that the YSRCP government initially proposed reducing the dam height to 41.15 metres in January 2022, and had sent similar proposals on three occasions in 2023 and once in 2024. Dr Ramanaidu stressed that he had all the relevant evidence and correspondence regarding these proposals.

He further explained that upon the NDA government's return to power, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu met with Union Jal Shakti Minister and other officials to



advocate for the completion of the Polavaram Project at its original height of 45.72 metres. Responding to doubts raised by YSRCP member Thota Trimurthulu regarding the reduction of the dam height, Minister Ramanaidu dismissed these concerns, reaffirming that the TDP government's stance remains unchanged.

Minister Ramanaidu also assured that the state government is on track to complete the Polavaram Project by November 2027. He compared the progress of the project during the two regimes, stating that under the YSRCP government, only 5% of the work was completed, while the TDP government had achieved around 70% progress between 2014 and 2019. The TDP government had spent Rs 11,762 crore, whereas the YSRCP government had allocated only Rs 4,144 crore. He also highlighted that the central government reimbursed Rs 6,764 crore during the TDP regime, compared to Rs 8,383 crore under the YSRCP government.

The minister further explained that the government will construct the Diaphragm Wall and the Project Main Dam simultaneously to prevent delays in the project. He assured that the Earth Cum Rock Fill Dam would be completed by 2026. Additionally, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is scheduled to visit the Polavaram Project next week to assess its progress.

CM's Polavaram visit slated for next week: MP Putta

PNS ■ ELURU

Eluru MP Putta Mahesh Kumar has stated that Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu will personally announce the commencement and completion timeline of the crucial Polavaram project. The MP made this announcement on Friday while launching the Telugu Desam Party's (TDP) permanent membership registration drive at the party office in Shantinagar, Eluru.

In a media interaction, the MP confirmed that CM Naidu would visit the Polavaram project next week. He added that the project's displaced persons have been consistently petitioning authorities, even during his visits. Mahesh Kumar reaffirmed that the government is fully committed to providing justice to those displaced by the Polavaram project.

He further disclosed that after the MLC elections, a meeting would be held with



the District Collector to plan the benefits and assistance for the Polavaram displaced families. The MP also promised to meet the Chief Minister in the coming week to present a report on the necessary benefits that should be provided to these families.

Regarding the proposed ammunition factory in Jeelugumilli mandal, Mahesh Kumar appealed for full cooperation from political parties and the public, urging them not to believe in the false propaganda circulating about the project.

On industrial development, the MP shared optimistic news about the establishment of a trading-related industry in Eluru. He revealed that the industry would be inaugurated by January or February, with several enthusiastic investors already coming for-

ward. Furthermore, he mentioned that his recent appeal to central ministers for support in establishing food processing industries in the district had received a positive response, and these industries would soon be set up.

Mahesh Kumar reiterated his commitment to transforming Eluru district into an industrial hub, focusing on creating employment opportunities for youth. He lauded the efforts of TDP leader Nara Lokesh in attracting investments, with Reliance stepping forward to establish industries worth Rs 65,000 crore, which would generate direct job opportunities for 2.5 lakh people across the state.

Additionally, he mentioned that investments amounting to Rs 100,000 crore are expected in the state to set up green energy plants. The MP also revealed that Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan had expressed support for allocating Rs 100 crore per

constituency for the development of rural roads, with plans for road improvement under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

In preparation for the upcoming Parliament session from November 25, the MP announced that a report would be ready to present the welfare and development needs of farmers, youth, and women in the Eluru constituency, along with necessary funds for these projects. He also assured continued efforts to resolve issues related to national highways and railways.

Concluding, Mahesh Kumar reaffirmed the state government's commitment to providing clean drinking water to every household under the Jal Shakti Mission. He also pledged to expedite the completion of pending Panchayat buildings in the Eluru constituency.

The event was attended by TDP leaders and other public representatives.

Jagan wrote 'blank cheque' to Adani: Sharmila

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a scathing attack, the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) chief YS Sharmila accused former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy of corruption and compromising State interests through deals with the Adani Group.

Addressing a press conference in Hyderabad on Friday, she alleged that the State has been turned into 'Adani Pradesh,' claiming Jagan wrote a 'blank cheque' to the industrial giant, compromising public interests for bribes.

Sharmila alleged that a Rs 1,750 crore bribe was paid in a single power deal, burdening the State's Discoms with Rs 17,000 crore in surcharge adjustments and leaving taxpayers to shoulder a Rs 1 lakh crore impact over a 25-year contract. She highlighted disparities in power purchase agreements, noting that Adani sells electricity to Gujarat at Rs 1.99 per unit while Andhra Pradesh pays Rs 2.49 per unit.

TG govt must cancel deals with Adani: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rahul Gandhi must direct the Telangana Congress leadership and the TG Chief Minister to immediately scrap all agreements with the Adani Group, BRS Working President KTR Rama Rao (KTR) said.

Addressing a press conference here at the Telangana Bhavan on Friday, KTR highlighted the contradictory stances of Congress leaders regarding the Adani Group. He accused Rahul of hypocrisy for criticising Adani's alleged corruption at the national level while remaining silent about the Telangana Congress government's close links with the group. He pointed out that the Congress Government of Telangana had entered into business agreements worth Rs 12,400 crore with the Adani Group, including investments in green energy, data centres and cement plants.

"If Rahul is honest about his corruption charges levelled against the Adani group, why hasn't he asked the Telangana Congress government to cancel these agreements? How can the Congress portray Adani as corrupt in Delhi and treat him as trustworthy in Telangana?" KTR said. He said the Telangana Congress had accepted a donation of Rs 100 crore from the Adani Group for the Telangana Skill University. He demanded that the donation should be immediately returned if the Congress leadership believes in its own rhetoric about Adani's corruption.

"Rahul and Revanth are engaging in opportunism. They must clarify their stance on Adani to the people of Telangana," KTR said. KTR called on Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to explain his meetings and business dealings with Adani. He also asked whether the TG Congress leadership supports the demand for Adani's arrest by the party's national leadership or whether it is complicit in the alleged irregularities. "Revanth must disclose his stand on Adani to the people of Telangana. How can he criticise Adani on the one hand and engage in large-scale business deals with him on the other?" KTR asked.

KTR clarified that the BRS government had rejected all proposals from the Adani Group and has consistently opposed the privatisation of public sector enterprises and resources.

He accused the Congress of 'prioritising' private corporate interests over the welfare of the Telangana people and demanded transparency in all its agreements made with the Adani Group.

Key demands
1. Immediate cancellation of all the agreements between the Telangana Congress government and the Adani Group.
2. A public explanation from Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi and Revanth Reddy, about their links with the Adani Group.
3. Return of the Rs 100 crore donation from the Adani Group for the Telangana Skill University.

KTR's appeal
KTR asked the media and the public to question the Congress and the BJP on their contradictory stances regarding the Adani Group. He also highlighted the BRS's unwavering commitment to 'protect' Telangana's resources and its stand against 'private corporate exploitation.' "Rahul must follow Kenya's example where the government cancelled all contracts with the Adani Group after allegations of corruption surfaced. If he fails to act, it exposes the Congress party's lack of integrity," KTR said.

All those linked to Adani case belong to Cong: Purandeswari

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh BJP president D Purandeswari on Friday said the allegations emanating from the US against the Adani Group raises serious questions and claimed that all those linked to these allegations are associated with the Congress party.

Business tycoon and Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani has been charged by US prosecutors over his role in an alleged years-long scheme to pay USD 250 million bribe to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts, an allegation refuted by the Indian conglomerate.

"Recent allegations from the U.S. SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) against the Adani Group have raised serious questions... this situation

poses a significant question for Rahul Gandhi since all individuals linked to these corruption allegations are associated with the Congress party and none are from the BJP," said Purandeswari in a post on X.

Referring to the DMK government in Tamil Nadu, the erstwhile YSRCP government in Andhra Pradesh, previous Congress regime in Chhattisgarh and former BJD government in Odisha, Purandeswari claimed that these political dispensations were "close to the Congress".

"They allege that between July 2021 and February 2022, power distribution companies in Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh signed Power Sale Agreements (PSAs) with the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)," she said, which are allegedly connected to these allegations.

According to the BJP leader, the SEC claimed that there were bribery incidents involving former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and other officials.



ACROSS THE STATES

FIRST MAJOR BATTLE AFTER LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

All eyes on outcome of UP bypolls today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The counting of votes for the bypolls to nine Assembly segments in Uttar Pradesh, the first major face-off between the ruling BJP and its political rivals since the Lok Sabha polls held earlier in the year, will be taken up at 8 am on Saturday amid tight security arrangements, officials said.

While the results of the bypolls will not directly impact the composition of the 403-member state Assembly, the contest is being seen as a prestige fight between the BJP and opposition parties.

The nine constituencies -- Meerapur, Kundarki, Sisamau, Katehari, Phulpur, Majhawan, Ghaziabad, Karhal and Khair -- saw intense campaigning by the BJP, Samajwadi Party (SP) and other regional parties. Political tension has been running high in the run-up to the counting, with



"The way our voters, workers, office-bearers and the media have responded to the BJP's election fraud is being appreciated everywhere," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, adding that the BJP's reliance on corruption, propaganda and manipulation is the reason why its support base is shrinking.

both the BJP and the opposition parties accusing each other of election malpractices.

On the eve of the vote counting, SP president Akhilesh Yadav accused the BJP of manipulating the election process and claimed that the tactics of the saffron party are increasingly being exposed.

In a press statement, Yadav asserted that the vigilance of the INDIA opposition bloc sup-

porters has uncovered the "BJP's efforts to manipulate the electoral process, leading to a decline in the party's support base".

"The way our voters, workers, office-bearers and the media have responded to the BJP's election fraud is being appreciated everywhere," the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister said, adding that the BJP's reliance on corruption, propa-

ganda and manipulation is the reason why its support base is shrinking.

Yadav alleged that the BJP lures officials and leaders to indulge in corrupt practices, only to abandon them when things go wrong.

"The BJP is not a party that protects people, it traps them," he claimed, urging SP supporters to remain vigilant during the vote-counting process. "We have won morally."

Maharashtra Assembly election: Counting of votes today

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Counting of votes in the Maharashtra assembly elections will begin at 8 am on Saturday, with all eyes on the outcome of the battle between the ruling BJP-led Mahayuti coalition and the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance, which is seeking to make a comeback.

The final turnout in the polls, held on November 20, was 66.05 per cent, up from 61.1 per cent in 2019, election officials said.

Counting of votes will also be held for the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll, where 67.81 per cent voting was recorded on November 20.

Kolhapur district led with 76.63 per cent polling, followed by 75.26 per cent in Gadchiroli, which has some Left Wing Extremism affected pockets, while the lowest was in Mumbai island city at 52.07 per cent. Mumbai sub-

urban district recorded 55.95 per cent polling.

A total of 288 counting centres have been set up for the counting of votes on Saturday, including one for the Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll. A total of 288 counting observers will oversee each assembly constituency, with two observers assigned to monitor counting in Nanded Lok Sabha bypoll, an official said.

The high volume of postal ballots has led to the establishment of 1,732 tables for postal ballot counting and 592 tables for Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) to ensure a smooth counting process across all assembly constituencies, the official said.

In the Mahayuti alliance, the BJP contested 149 assembly seats, Shiv Sena 81 seats, and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP fielded candidates in 59 constituencies.

Pollution: SC questions Delhi govt over allowing trucks

The Supreme Court on Friday questioned the Delhi government over the entry of trucks in the national capital, currently reeling under severe air pollution. "It is very difficult for us to assume that entry of trucks in Delhi has been stopped," observed a bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih. The bench therefore said it proposes to direct the Centre to depute police personnel at all 113 points to check the entry of trucks in Delhi. The counsel appearing for the Delhi government informed the bench there were a total of 113 entry points, including 13 for trucks. The apex court is seized of the matter related to air pollution in the Delhi-National Capital Region and the hearing is currently underway. On November 18, the apex court directed all Delhi-NCR states to immediately set up teams to strictly enforce anti-pollution GRAP 4 restrictions, making it clear that the curbs would continue till further orders.



UP: 25 people booked for attacking civic officials

Police have booked 25 people for allegedly attacking a team of Nagar Panchayat and Municipality officials for removing an encroachment in Uttar Pradesh's Jewar, an officer said on Friday. The incident occurred on November 19 when the Jewar Nagar Panchayat along with civic officials had gone to remove an encroachment in front of a shop at the main intersection, the officer said. They had made an announcement before removing the encroachment. Following this, some shopkeepers along with 15-20 other people misbehaved with the officials and beat them up. They abused the team and used casteist slurs, Inspector of Jewar Police Station Sanjay Kumar Singh said. Based on the complaint of Shiv Kumar Singh, a clerk in Nagar Panchayat, a case has been registered against 25 people. Further investigation is underway, Singh added.



Mother strangles minor son, daughter in Noida

A woman was arrested for killing her six-year-old daughter and four-year-old son, police said on Friday. The incident took place Thursday in Kheda Dharampur village under the Badalpur Police Station jurisdiction, they said. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone II) Shakti Mohan Awasthi said the woman, Sonam, first strangled her daughter and son to death and then tried to kill herself, but her neighbours stopped her and called police. "During interrogation, the woman told police that she had married a man named Sahil in 2017 against the wishes of the family members. She had two children from Sahil, whom she killed," the officer said. In 2021, Sahil was arrested in a murder case and sent to jail, after which she started living with another person, Sonu, in Kheda Dharampur village, with whom she has a son. When Sahil came out of jail three months ago, he started pressuring the woman to live with him. "That is why Sonam strangled both the children to death and wanted to commit suicide," Awasthi said.

Nitish launches rural road projects worth Rs 8,837.77 cr

PNS ■ PATNA

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Friday inaugurated and laid foundation stones of multiple road and bridge projects of the state Rural Works Department (RWD) worth Rs 8,837.77 crore.

The CM asked officials to ensure that priority is also given to the maintenance of rural roads, bridges or causeways in the state.

"With a view to improving rural connectivity, the CM on Friday virtually inaugurated and laid foundation stones of 6,199 projects of the RWD

worth Rs 8,837.77 crore", a statement issued by the Chief Minister's Office said.

"All roads and bridges of the RWD, for which foundation stones were laid, the CM directed officials to complete the projects on time and ensure that there should not be any compromise on the quality of works and materials. He also asked officials that all the roads and bridges which were inaugurated on Friday, should be inspected regularly and their continuous maintenance must be given the top priority", said the statement.

TMC to discuss organisational reshuffle, Parl strategy

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has convened a meeting of the TMC's national executive committee at her residence on Monday, in which organisational changes, strategies for the upcoming winter session of Parliament, and other key issues like the contentious Waqf Amendment Bill are likely to be discussed, party sources said.

TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, party's Leader in Lok Sabha Sudip Bandyopadhyay, Sougata Roy, Kakoli Ghosh Dasitdar, state president Subrata Bakshi, Kolkata Mayor Firhad Hakim and other senior leaders expected to attend the meeting.

The national executive committee, originally a 21-member body, now consists of around 16 members following the

arrest of several senior leaders by central agencies in various cases and the resignation of others citing health concerns.

"In the meeting, our strategy for the winter session and other organisational issues will be discussed," a senior member of the TMC's national executive committee said.

Party insiders believe that long-pending organisational reshuffles will be finalised during this meeting.

Rahul Gandhi is right, Adani must be arrested: Lalu

PNS ■ PATNA

RJD president Lalu Prasad on Friday came out strongly in support of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's demand for "immediate arrest" of leading industrialist Gautam Adani.

The former chief minister of Bihar was responding to queries from journalists here about Rahul Gandhi's statement on the previous day, in the backdrop of charges of bribery and fraud

against the Adani group in the US. "Rahul Gandhi is right. Adani should be arrested," said Prasad, who is an old ally of the Congress and a staunch opponent of the BJP, to which Adani is said to be close. The RJD president, who incidentally has been convicted in several fodder scam cases and is on bail, was also asked about prospects of the INDIA bloc, of which his party is a part in Jharkhand, where the counting of votes for assembly polls is scheduled on Saturday.

The ailing septuagenarian replied, "I would like to remain focused on my statement that Adani must be arrested. I am not worried much about a new government (in Jharkhand) where we are already in power."

Jharkhand witnessed a straight battle between the INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA, which included the JD(U) headed by Nitish Kumar, Prasad's arch-rival and the current Chief Minister of Bihar.

Karnataka bypolls: Outcome crucial for both ruling and oppn camps

PNS ■ BENGALURU

The counting of votes for the high stake bypolls to three Assembly segments in Karnataka, which witnessed a fierce fight between the ruling Congress and a combative BJP-JD(S) alliance, will take place on Saturday.

By-election to Sandur, Shiggaon and Channapatna Assembly segments were held on November 13 and the outcome is crucial for either camps.

A Congress show will be seen as an endorsement of both Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar while BJP's good show would mean the silencing of its state president BY Vijayendra's critics within the saffron organisation fold.

For JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy, it will be a battle of prestige as his son Nikhil is testing his electoral fortunes from Channapatna after tasting defeats in earlier contests. Kumaraswamy had vacated the seat after being elected to the Lok Sabha in this year's elections.

Tawde seeks apology from Rahul, Kharge; warns of defamation lawsuit

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP leader Vinod Tawde has demanded an apology from Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi for making "false and baseless" allegations against him in the cash-for-votes incident in Maharashtra, saying if they don't he would sue them for defamation.

Tawde was accused by Bahujan Vikas Aghadi, a regional party, of distributing Rs 5 crore to woo voters, with its members barging into a hotel room on November 19 in a Mumbai suburb, where the BJP leader was present.

The former Maharashtra minister and BJP national general secretary claimed innocence, saying the alleged



amount was not recovered in the probe by the Election Commission and police.

"The Congress only believes in spreading lies, and this incident is a proof of the party's low level politics to dent me and my party's image," Tawde said.

The two Congress leaders and the party spokesperson Supriya Shrinete seized on the row to accuse the BJP of using money power to influence the November 20 assembly polls in

Omar calls for probe into 'torture' of civilians by Army



PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday called for a transparent probe into allegations of torture of civilians by the Army in Kishtwar district, and demanded a court martial of the personnel involved if there is evidence against them.

"I hope the Army will not show any laxity and conduct an investigation in a transparent manner," the chief minister told reporters after a function here.

The Army said in a statement earlier that it has launched a probe into alleged ill-treatment of civilians during anti-terror operations in Kishtwar.

Allegations have been levelled against some soldiers for beating up five civilians, leaving them injured, during anti-terror operations in the Mughal Maidan area on November 20.

The chief minister said the soldiers involved in the incident should be court-martialled if there is evidence against them.

"Those responsible for the act should immediately be court-martialled if there is evidence against them and they should be punished," Abdullah said.

The Army has said that based on specific intelligence on the movement of a group of terrorists in the Kishtwar sector, an operation was launched by the Rashtriya Rifles on November 20.

The Army's White Knight Corps said that an investigation was launched to ascertain the facts after the allegations were levelled.

"Necessary follow up action will be ensured," it said in the statement.

AFTER COURT PLEA CLAIMS MOSQUE AS ANCIENT TEMPLE SITE ...

Friday prayers peaceful amid tight security in Sambhal

PNS ■ SAMBHAL

The Friday prayers were held peacefully as the police stepped up security, imposed prohibitory orders and conducted a flag march at the Jama Masjid here following claims that the Mughal-era mosque was originally the site of an ancient temple significant to the Hindu faith.

Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Vishnoi said that Friday prayers were conducted safely in Sambhal's Shahi Jama Masjid with the help of forces from seven police stations and tight security

arrangements around the mosque. The mosque was surveyed on Tuesday on the orders of a local court following a petition that claimed that a Harihar temple originally stood at the site.

The Central government, the Uttar Pradesh government, the Masjid Committee and the district magistrate of Sambhal have been made parties in the petition, said Supreme Court lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain, who is also the petitioner.

In view of the petition and subsequent survey, the police conducted a flag march in the area and



warned people of strict action against anyone creating chaos over the issue, Vishnoi said earlier in the day.

"Clerics have been told to inform everyone that they should offer Namaz in their own mosques," he said, adding that social media was

also being closely monitored. District Magistrate Rajendra Pesia said that prohibitory orders have been imposed in the area preventing the gathering of more than five people.

Jain, who had filed the petition in the court for a survey of the mosque, has claimed that Mughal emperor Babar partly demolished the temple in 1529.

"The Harihar temple in Sambhal, we all know, is a central part of our faith. This is an ASI-protected area. There can be no encroachment of any kind in the ASI-protected area. There are

many signs and symbols there which are of Hindu temple," he had said.

Vishnu Shankar Jain and his father Hari Shankar Jain have represented the Hindu side in many cases related to places of worship, including the Gyanvapi-Kashi Vishwanath dispute.

Gopal Sharma, the local lawyer of the Hindu side, told PTI that in the writ filed in the Civil Judge Senior Division, "we have also mentioned Babar Nama and Ain-e-Akbari books in which it is confirmed that we have Hari Har Mandir".



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Cars the main culprit

Delhi's residents continue to bear the brunt of the city's toxic air, which is mostly driven by cars and not stubble burning

Come November and the capital city of Delhi turns into a gas chamber with AQI shooting to severe category. Most often the farmers are blamed for burning stubble and winds taking the fumes to Delhi. But that is not the true picture. Delhi vehicles are the main culprit, as has been indicated by many studies. So nothing is done and till it is swept away by the wind, smog hangs over the city. This year is no different. Delhi's air pollution has escalated to catastrophic levels, with the Air Quality Index (AQI) frequently crossing into hazardous territory hovering in the vicinity of 500. This public health emergency has fueled political blame games between the State and Central Governments, with stubble burning by farmers in neighbouring states often cited as the primary cause. However, research and scientific studies tell a different story: the real culprit behind Delhi's toxic air is not stubble burning but the city's overwhelming vehicular emissions. Vehicular traffic is consistently identified as the leading source of pollution in Delhi. A 2019 study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water found that vehicles contributed between one-third and two-thirds of Delhi's harmful particulate matter. This alarming contribution is tied to the city's explosive growth in vehicle ownership. Between 1990 and 2018, the number of registered vehicles in the National Capital Region increased fivefold. Delhi alone accounts for over 11.8 million vehicles, 90 per cent of which are cars and two-wheelers. The volume of vehicular traffic has turned the capital into a pollution hotspot, with transport emissions driving air quality deterioration throughout the year.

In contrast, stubble burning, often portrayed as the main villain in Delhi's pollution narrative, plays a far smaller role. A 2017 study revealed that stubble burning contributed less than 3 per cent to Delhi's annual particulate matter. Even during its peak season from mid-October to early November, the share of pollution from crop residue burning is limited to 8 per cent, according to a 2023 report by the Centre for Science and Environment. Most of Delhi's pollution originates locally, with vehicular traffic contributing the largest share. This pattern becomes even more evident when air quality fails to improve after the stubble-burning season ends. Despite these findings, public discourse and policy responses disproportionately focus on stubble burning. This misplaced focus has real consequences. While interventions like subsidies for crop residue management have reduced farm fires, the overall air quality in Delhi remains dire because transport emissions and other local sources remain largely unaddressed. Addressing Delhi's air pollution crisis requires an urgent shift in priorities. Expanding and improving public transportation is crucial to reducing dependence on private vehicles. Cleaner fuels and technologies, such as electric vehicles, must be promoted alongside stringent enforcement of emission standards. Recognising this reality and acting accordingly is imperative. Until then, the capital's air will remain a health hazard.

PICTALK



A monk of Panch Dashnam Avahan Akhara during 'Nagar Pravesh' procession, in Prayagraj

Global concerns over gender bias in politics



ARCHANA DATTA

In the wake of Donald Trump's victory, a survey unveils deep concerns over the future of women's rights, reproductive autonomy and gender equality in the US

In the aftermath of Donald Trump's electoral victory for the second term, a prominent US daily conducted a survey among more than five thousand women voters for their reactions. A majority of them expressed concerns about the erosion of 'rights', and 'their reproductive future', and aired an array of emotions such as 'sadness', 'scarciness', 'disappointment', 'hurtfulness', 'betrayal' and 'heartbreaking'. Comments of some first-time voters also denoted despair, as many of them felt that their voices were 'more silenced than ever' and that they had been 'left empty-handed'. While a 36-year old woman rued that 'it is clear that men wanted to hold onto power... sexism won this election'.

While, another leading US daily attributed Harris's defeat to her greater emphasis on issues like 'abortion rights' and the 'protection of democracy', and for not paying adequate attention to the state of the economy or immigration, which many Americans viewed as the most pressing issues. Harris, on the other hand, in her concession speech urged her supporters to 'remain vigilant' and keep fighting for their values. Nevertheless, many non-profits working for reproductive freedom urged Democrats to 'developing a long-term plan to directly confront the sexism - both within their party and the nation - that hampered, both Harris and Hillary Clinton', the only women to win a major party's presidential nomination. In the US, women occupied 28 per cent of congressional seats in 2023, while Democrats had an edge over the Republicans, with 41 per cent of seats, and Republicans with only 15.4 per cent of members. Women are 32.7 per cent of all state legislators, 48 per cent of Democrats and 20 per cent of Republicans. Democratic women are at or above parity with Democratic men in 26 state legislatures. While Republican women fall short of parity with Republican men in all states, holding one-third or less of Republican seats in 47 state legislatures. Studies commented that prevailing beliefs and attitudes



about gender roles in the parties control political representation, and more traditional perceptions among conservatives persist that 'women's success is at the expense of men' (Centre for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University). However, it is not the USA alone that didn't ever elect a woman in the highest political office, but, several most socially and economically advanced countries like Sweden, despite having a good record of women's representation in most institutions, 47.5 per cent in Parliament and 54.5 per cent in the council of ministers, has never had a woman as a Prime Minister. Countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have only closed 15 per cent of a hypothetical 100 per cent gender gap in political empowerment (WEF). While India, the largest democracy, has a scant presence of women (13.62 per cent) in the current Lok Sabha.

Last year a law was passed, reserving one-third of seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women, but, its implementation stands postponed till the process of delimitation of constituencies is over. India did have a woman Prime Minister and two women Presidents. But, deep structural and systemic difficulties (Raje, 2019), created women's poor representation, resulting in 'a democratic deficit' in



LAST YEAR A LAW HAS BEEN PASSED, RESERVING ONE-THIRD OF SEATS IN LOK SABHA AND STATE ASSEMBLIES FOR WOMEN, BUT, ITS IMPLEMENTATION STANDS POSTPONED TILL THE PROCESS OF DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES IS OVER

governance and decision-making (Rahman and Rao, 2004). India ensured women's participation in the rural-urban local bodies since the early 90s, yet, several surveys found that a majority of women elected representatives reported 'gender-based discrimination', and in many places, their male relatives, especially husbands, played 'proxy' roles. While explaining reasons for this uneven power equation in politics, studies (Fox and Lawless, 2004) explicated that there is a 'gender gap in ambition', as many eligible women with the required professional and economic credentials as political candidates, often feel 'less encouraged to run for executive offices and tend to believe that they are less qualified for such offices than men'. Evidence also suggests that women's political careers are often influenced by 'family and relational considerations', and if they face higher costs for their career achievements, they shy away from pursuing such objectives. At the same time, other researchers pointed out voters' bias and discrimination which matter quantitatively in women's electoral prospects. Even political party leaders, act as gate-keepers, if they are aware of voters' bias against women, and are inclined to promote male candidates, rather than female contenders, as a votes-maximising strategy

(Esteve-Volart and Bagues (2012). Nevertheless, data from the latest wave of the World Value Survey (2017-2020), in Western Europe found that less than 20 per cent of survey respondents express agreement with the statement 'Men make better political leaders than women do'. Now, what is the way out? The introduction of gender quotas in candidate lists in different countries like Sweden (Besley et al., 2017) is more or less effective in empowering women, and improving the 'quality' of the elected politicians, particularly by regulating the composition of candidate lists (Campa and Hauser, 2020). Many also suggested that a combined politico-economic strategy that emphasises women's inclusion in the labour market, and the redistribution of economic roles within couples, could change gender-role attitudes and help women to make entry into positions of political power (Folke and Rickne, 2020 and Campa and Serafinelli, 2019). As the world remains deeply entrenched in patriarchal mindset, sexism and gendered divisions of labour, women's share as chief political executive is still outnumbered by men by more than 9 to 1. (The author is former Director General Doordarshan, All India Radio; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US COURT INDICTS ADANI

Madam — A US court indicted billionaire Gautam Adani and seven others, including his nephew Sagar and three other executives, on charges of fraud and bribery. The case pertained to a deal between Adani Green Energy and a US seller for 12 gigawatts of solar power to be sold to various states. The charges came on a day when the firm planned a green bond launch in the US. The Adani subsidiary eventually cancelled the sale. The US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has charged Adani, founder and chairman of the Adani Group, with allegedly defrauding American investors and bribing officials. The SEC alleged that the bribery scheme was orchestrated to enable renewable energy companies Adani Green and Azure Power to capitalise on a multi-billion-dollar solar energy project awarded by the Indian government. The complaint charges them with violating the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws and seeks permanent injunctions, civil penalties, and officer and director bars. But the beneficiaries of these kickbacks were Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha - all non-BJP governments at that time. But the blame goes to the BJP government. Basically, the current Biden government wants Adani to waive off Bangladesh's balance of payment of electricity and power bills.

Dorai Ramani Suresh | Ghaziabad

MONEY DOMINATES ELECTIONS

Madam — The voter turnout in urban areas of Maharashtra shows the desperation of the literate voters over the way the election campaign is carried on. Money playing a dominant role, uncertainty over the elected candidates staying with the same party without falling prey to offers of purse or posts, and the campaign being far from the issues concerning the voters must have discouraged them from taking the pain of standing in line to cast their vote and bearing with the act of getting befooled by the politicians. Even the tall leaders spoke more on hate lines than touching upon the liveli-

Manipur needs solutions



propos to 'Douse the fire' published on November 21. Manipur has been burning since May 2023, murder, abduction, rape and arson, it has seen it all. The strife-torn northeastern state has also witnessed complete apathy of the double engine of central and state government. And

the government's actions have been restricted to empty rhetoric, imposing an internet ban and issuing vague promises of dialogues. The Centre's move to bring warring communities to the negotiating table has not inspired confidence.

What is really baffling is that Prime Minister Modi has not bothered to visit the state. And surprisingly, the BJP has repudiated the trust in Biren Singh, conveniently ignoring his lapses and the growing clamour for his removal. He must be shown the door without any further delay. Confidence-building measures with affected groups should be carried out as ethnic identities have played a great role in the socio-economic life of Manipur.

Bal Govind | Noida

RAFAEL NADAL RETIRES FROM TENNIS

Madam — Rafael Nadal, a self-made glorious jewel of the tennis field, needs no introduction for his glittering career of winning 22 Grand Slams, 2 Olympic Gold medals, ATP Masters, and several French Open championships. He shares the Trinity of Tennis Gems with Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic.

Despite being in his 38th, Nadal always makes sure to be the tennis new learner, full of zeal with utmost calmness and maturity like an experienced player. In the milieu of tennis stars throwing tantrums and breaking racquets, Nadal never ever hurt the sport that pays him. Despite he had paid adieu to this sport, he will always shine in this sport's history for his incredible accolades and invincible spirit for continuing his sport for more than two decades. He is and will always remain a true inspiration for all the budding tennis aficionados across the world.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Manipur in turmoil: Unraveling the roots of violence

The State is caught in the throes of a complex conflict fueled by ethnic tensions, socio-economic disparities and narco-terrorism

Manipur, one of the seven northeastern states of India, holds strategic importance due to its geographical location. It shares borders with Nagaland to the north, Mizoram to the south, Assam to the east, and Myanmar to the west. Often referred to as the gateway to Southeast Asia, this state is home to diverse ethnic communities, including the Meiteis (approximately 53 per cent), Nagas (around 24 per cent) and Kuki-Chin-Zomi tribes (about 16 per cent). However, Manipur has recently experienced its worst violence in over a decade. More than a year of unrest has left over 226 people dead, more than 1,500 injured, and displaced over 60,000 residents. Understanding the root causes of this conflict requires examining several interconnected issues.

(a) Demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) Status
The spark for the current violence was a Manipur High Court directive urging the state government to consider granting the Meitei community Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. This decision was met with strong opposition from



the Kuki community, culminating in protests and clashes.

Understanding the ST Status Debate:

Manipur is geographically divided into two main regions: The valley (10 per cent of the total area): Predominantly occupied by the Meitei community, it is more developed and politically influential, with Meiteis holding 40 out of 60 legislative Assembly seats. The hills (90 per cent of the total area): Primarily home to tribal communities, these areas lag behind in education, employment, infrastructure, and representation. While residents from the hills can migrate to the valley for opportunities, valley residents are restricted from purchasing land in the hills due to tribal land ownership laws.

The Meiteis fear that an increasing number of hill residents settling in the valley threatens their identity and culture. ST status for Meiteis would limit land purchases in the valley, potentially safeguarding their heritage. On the other hand, the Kukis argue that Meiteis already dominate key sectors such as governance, education, and the economy. Granting them ST status, they claim, would exacerbate the marginalisation of hill tribes.

(b) Narco-Terrorism
Manipur's proximity to the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent has made it a hotspot for drug trafficking. Illegal poppy cultivation in the region is reportedly controlled by powerful drug lords, whose operations are threatened by government crackdowns. These drug lords, facing intensified enforcement efforts, have allegedly fueled violence by supplying arms and ammunition to militant groups, further destabilising the region.

(c) Eviction of Encroachers
Approximately 32 per cent of Manipur's forests are classified as protected under the Indian Forest Act and Wildlife

Protection Act. Encroachments by hill tribes and illegal immigrants for farming and settlements have led to significant deforestation. Recent government-led eviction drives have targeted these encroachments, prompting accusations of anti-tribal bias and deepening tensions between the valley and hill communities.

A Way Forward for Peace
over half of the insurgencies in northeastern India are concentrated in Manipur, making its stability crucial. Fostering dialogue among all stakeholders, addressing grievances equitably, and ensuring inclusive development are essential steps toward lasting peace in the region. (The writer is Independent Research Scholar; views are personal)



YOGESH CHAUHAN



FIRST COLUMN

G20: COPING WITH NEW REALITIES

G20 Summit's toned-down declarations on Ukraine, climate finance and West Asia



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

The recently concluded G20 summit in Brazil, could well serve as an early preview in what could be the realignment of global forces in the next year and beyond with the new incoming President of the USA. First, some major optics moments, such as the family picture for G20 leaders, which didn't have US President (of course some others were missing too). Second, winding down of several commitments from the Delhi declaration to just passing mention regarding the situation in Ukraine and climate finance. Third, the entire G20 summit is being riddled with speculation on whether the multilateral platform would survive a Trump presidency, and if so, with what effectiveness. The view in Washington DC is similar, especially in the government circles. Every government official, some of whom may have served under Trump's first presidency, is well aware of his working ways. The incoming administration has an additional extra non government supervisor, the world's richest person Elon Musk, who has his own unique style of functioning. Many in DC, understand that their managers have one foot out of the door, and things would change, at least for the next four years post the inauguration on January 20. Trump's foreign policy outlook, if the past presidency is any reference, is likely to be transactional. Trump can parallel have public shouting matches and back door negotiations with friends and foes. He has already talked about ensuring long lasting peace in Ukraine, at a time, when under President Biden's patronage, US missiles are landing in Russian territory. Similarly, the proposal to impose higher tariffs on Chinese products, may sound sweet to



many, but knowing the sharp businessman Trump is, he may well cut a sweet deal with President Xi Jinping, which could potentially be of benefit to both nations. On India, Trump has called it out to be the tariff king and likely to make a case for imposing tariffs in reciprocal approach, for sectors where he thinks, US exports are getting impacted. India's chief economic advisor has already sounded out a cautionary note on incoming Trump presidency. He has been quoted as saying that with Trump administration's views on trade and tariffs, plus a slowing global economy, India may have to look beyond exports as the primary drivers of growth. India has taken several steps such as providing incentives for manufacturing in various sectors, but except for mobile phones, the growth has been slow. It would not be hard to assume that the sluggish uptake for India for manufacturing in sectors it has recently provided incentives, may well be on the slow lane for some years. What can however, change the game would be the transactional style Mr Trump has, which is well known not just to senior India ministers and bureaucrats but the PM Modi himself (who is known to share a warm relationship with trump).

Coming back to G20, while Delhi declarations had significant paragraphs on India promoted "not an era of war for Ukraine, the Rio De Janeiro declaration just mentioned, " Specifically concerning the war in Ukraine, while recalling our discussions in New Delhi, we highlight the human suffering and negative added impacts of the war with regard to global food and energy security, supply chains, macro-financial stability, inflation and growth." Clearly the world leaders didn't want to come out with any peace formulas, in face of President Trump assuming office next year. Similarly, the paragraph on West Asia focused on humanitarian aid, instead of taking either party's side. It read " While expressing our deep concern about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the escalation in Lebanon, we emphasize the urgent need to expand the flow of humanitarian assistance and to reinforce the protection of civilians and demand the lifting of all barriers to the provision of humanitarian assistance at scale."

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

Hope floats for Sri Lanka in Dissanayake



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Dissanayake's unprecedented mandate in Sri Lanka's newly elected parliament presents a mix of hope and immense challenges in the quest to rebuild the nation

Anura Kumara Disanayake, Sri Lanka's newly elected President, has emerged victorious in the November 14, 2024 parliamentary elections, securing an unprecedented landslide victory that will undoubtedly reshape the nation's political landscape. Known for his Marxist leanings, Disanayake and his National People's Power (NPP) coalition have shocked the political establishment by gaining significant traction in minority-dominated regions-undermining the caste-driven politics that have long dominated the North, East and Central provinces. This triumph, achieved through a focused, strategic campaign, signals a bold rejection of the entrenched political elites and offers a forceful critique of Sri Lanka's frail democratic institutions. The magnitude of this victory speaks to a populace disillusioned by years of political stagnation and corruption.

After casting his vote, Disanayake attended the 35th-anniversary commemoration of JVP founder Rohana Wijeweera, paying homage to the movement's resilience in the face of relentless oppression. Recounting its history of brutal suppression and bans, Disanayake framed the JVP's struggle as an enduring fight for democracy, justice, and equality, despite decades of violence and persecution. "The history of our movement is one of unyielding resilience," he stated, honouring the sacrifices of fallen comrades. His rhetoric was one of defiance, and he emphasised that the JVP's ability to withstand adversity has kept its ideals intact.

Looking to the future, Disanayake invoked the symbolism of "donning new garments," suggesting that the time has come to shed the old and embrace transformative change. The message was clear: Sri Lanka's political and economic systems are overdue for an overhaul, and his leadership intends to deliver just that. This moment represents more than a simple electoral win; it marks the dawn of a new political order, one rooted in the principles of progressive change and democratic service to the people.

The economic crisis that has ravaged the nation since its 2022 bankruptcy and subsequent default on foreign debt, looms large over this electoral victory. While Disanayake's rise reflects a demand for systemic change, it also places him at the epicenter of an economic storm, where recovery will require deep structural reforms. Yet, his victory cannot be divorced from the grim reality: Can a country reeling from financial collapse truly embark on the path to transformative change? The pressure to reform and recover is intense, both from within Sri Lanka and from international actors, and failure to meet these expectations could spell disaster.

Sri Lanka's long and tumultuous democratic journey provides critical context to this election. Since gaining independence in 1948, the country's democracy has been a paradox: simultaneously resilient and fragile, moving between progress and decline. Nationalist policies have repeatedly sidelined minority communities, with discriminatory measures like the Sinhala-Only Act of 1956 deepening ethnic divides. Successive governments,



THIS ELECTION IS NOT JUST A TRIUMPH OF THE NPP; IT IS A BELLWETHER FOR SRI LANKA'S FUTURE. REVEALING WIDESPREAD DISILLUSIONMENT WITH TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES

often manipulated for political gain, have left a trail of unresolved grievances, and this fractured political landscape has stymied meaningful progress. Despite civil wars, uprisings, and systemic inequality, Sri Lanka's democracy has endured, offering fleeting moments of hope-only to be followed by setbacks and challenges that have hindered its progress. This backdrop of violence and division underscores the difficulty in achieving a truly inclusive democracy.

In this historical context, Sri Lanka managed to hold another parliamentary election, notable not for its violence but for the absence of it.

The Election Commission confirmed that the election was conducted freely and fairly-a rare glimmer of progress in a nation accustomed to electoral turmoil. The results, released on November 15, 2024, were nothing short of historic. Disanayake's NPP secured 159 out of 225 seats, gaining a two-thirds majority, a feat unprecedented under Sri Lanka's proportional representation system. The NPP's 61.56 per cent share of the vote shattered records, surpassing the United People's Freedom Alliance's (UPFA) 2010 high. In a remarkable surge, the NPP secured 152 constituencies and 21

districts-again, setting new benchmarks. With 6.86 million votes, their victory represents a stunning political realignment, shifting from a meager 3 per cent in the previous election to an electoral force capable of rewriting the country's political script. In stark contrast, the main opposition party, the Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), led by Sajith Premadasa, secured just 40 seats, a distant second.

While the SJB's defeat is a blow to the opposition, Premadasa's ability to hold the opposition leadership could provide an awkward but necessary check on the NPP's power, particularly given the inexperience of most of its members. Disanayake's administration, already facing an inexperienced and fragmented legislative body, will have to navigate internal rifts while ensuring political stability. The introduction of anti-defection laws will likely be one of the first challenges on the horizon.

This election is not just a triumph of the NPP; it is a bellwether for Sri Lanka's future, revealing widespread disillusionment with traditional political parties, which are increasingly seen as inept and corrupt.

yet, the mandate for change is not without its contradictions. Voter turnout plummeted to just 68.93

per cent, with over 5 million people abstaining from the vote. This decline in electoral participation is a sobering reminder of the disconnect between the electorate and the political system-a symptom of the deep distrust that persists in Sri Lanka's democratic framework. For the NPP, this poses both an opportunity and a challenge: Can it unite a fractured nation while addressing the systemic inequities that continue to stifle its potential?

Disanayake's sweeping victory provides him with the political leverage to pursue bold reforms, including the drafting of a new constitution, a task made possible by his overwhelming mandate. But his agenda is audacious: economic self-reliance, social equity, and fiscal discipline, all while addressing the deep-seated ethnic divides that have long plagued Sri Lanka. The NPP's ambition is to overhaul the nation's political and economic systems, but entrenched political factions will not surrender their power easily. Disanayake's rise is a rejection of the old order-but whether he can truly dismantle it, or merely become another cog in its machinery, remains to be seen.

(The writer is a journalist and author; Views are personal)

Trump's re-election sparks climate policy shift: US at a crossroads amid global action

As the world shifts toward renewables, the US faces mounting pressure to balance its growth with environmental responsibility

With the re-election of Donald Trump, the United States is poised to enter a critical period of climate policy retrenchment. Trump's policies promise increased fossil fuel production and the reversal of major clean energy investments, threatening global efforts to combat climate change.



SOURYABRATA MOHAPATRA

Trump's proposed energy policies suggest a substantial setback for climate action. His administration aims to roll back the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which has allocated billions of dollars in tax credits for renewable energy projects and EV incentives, spurring substantial private sector investment. In 2024 alone, global clean energy spending hit \$2 trillion, dou-

ble the amount invested in fossil fuels. Yet, Trump's proposed policies could throttle US participation in this growth, reinforcing dependency on fossil fuels rather than joining the global trend toward clean energy, where renewables now constitute the most economical choice in many regions. The implications of a second US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement-a prospect Trump

has not ruled out-are profound. When Trump first exited the Agreement in 2017, it allowed other nations to delay action under the guise of US non-participation. If Trump follows through again, it could stymie global climate funding negotiations, particularly for developing countries. Although the US has committed to contributing to a \$100 billion global fund for climate adaptation and mitigation, the administration's climate skepticism puts these financial obligations at risk. Without US leadership, experts fear slower progress on international agreements crucial to keeping global warming within the 1.5°C target. Domestically, Trump's policies would deepen the US dependency on fossil fuels. His

administration's strategy emphasises maximising domestic oil and gas production, particularly from reserves Trump calls "liquid gold." However, the fossil fuel industry's employment numbers tell a different story: the US green economy supports over 10 million jobs compared to 300,000 in fossil fuel industries. The economic case for green energy is clear, yet Trump's vision includes reestablishing subsidies for oil, coal, and natural gas, effectively sidelining the renewable sector. In 2023, electric vehicles comprised 18 per cent of global car sales, a significant jump from just 2 per cent five years prior. Yet, Trump has criticised electric vehicles and promised to impose tariffs on imported Chinese EVs, potentially rais-



ing prices and diminishing EV adoption in the US market. These policies might inhibit US competitiveness in EV manufacturing and battery technology, where other nations-especially China-have taken the lead. Another concerning proposal from Trump's allies involves dismantling federal programs that support climate research and environmental regulation. Plans under "Project 2025" advocate for

defunding key agencies like the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and scaling back the Environmental Protection Agency's greenhouse gas monitoring. Without federal support for climate research and mitigation, the US could lose critical insight into atmospheric changes. In a geopolitical context, Trump's re-election could weaken the US influence in global climate governance.

Given the US role in controlling financial institutions that facilitate climate finance, its withdrawal or failure to meet commitments could reduce climate funding, a key agenda item at the COP29 summit in Baku. As the world's largest historical emitter, the US has a responsibility to lead by

example. Yet, with US emissions having only fallen 5 per cent since 1990-compared to the EU's 35 per cent reduction-the country's role as a climate leader is increasingly tenuous under Trump's leadership. Despite federal opposition, analysts believe that state governments, corporations, and financial markets will continue advancing climate action, albeit at a potentially slower pace.

Over the past decade, bipartisan support for renewable energy has increased, driven by job creation and energy independence rather than environmental motives alone. With or without federal backing, the economic engine for clean energy remains robust, with new manufacturing plants and energy storage facilities rapid-

ly coming online, particularly in states that benefit from IRA-funded projects. Given that federal policy directly influences emissions standards, environmental regulations, and international commitments, the pace of progress could indeed slow, with repercussions for both the US economy and global climate goals. If Trump's policies take effect, it is likely that the US will fall even further behind on international climate standards? What risks will US industries face if they resist the global shift to cleaner energy, only to find themselves competing in a marketplace that increasingly penalises high-emission practices?

(The author is a faculty member at NCAER in New Delhi; Views are personal)

IN BRIEF



India's forex reserves plunge \$17.76 bn to USD 657.89 bn

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 17.76 billion to USD 657.89 billion for the week ended November 15, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week ended November 8, the overall reserves dropped by USD 6.477 billion to USD 674.653 billion. The kitty, which had hit an all-time high of USD 704.885 billion in end-September, has been declining for multiple weeks now, at a time when the rupee has also been under pressure. For the week ended November 15, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 15.548 billion to USD 569.835 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased by USD 2.068 billion to USD 65.746 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by USD 94 million to USD 18.064 billion, the apex bank said.

Six Adani stocks recover; Adani Green, Adani Energy, 2 others still under pressure

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of six Adani group firms bounced back on Friday from the previous day's sharp drubbing, in tandem with a bull rally in the equity market wherein the BSE benchmark Sensex zoomed 1,961 points.

The stock of Ambuja Cements jumped 3.50 per cent, ACC climbed 3.17 per cent, the group's flagship firm Adani Enterprises advanced 2.16 per cent, Adani Ports rose 2.05 per cent, Adani Total Gas shot up by 1.18 per cent, and NDTV edged up 0.65 per cent on the BSE.

In contrast, shares of Adani Green Energy tanked 8.20 per cent, Adani Energy Solutions slumped 6.92 per cent, Adani Power declined 3.23 per cent, and Adani Wilmar slipped 0.73 per cent. Most of the group stock fell during the morning trade after billionaire

Gautam Adani was charged by US prosecutors for allegedly being part of a scheme to pay USD 265 million (about Rs 2,200 crore) bribe to Indian officials in exchange for favourable terms for solar power contracts.

In the equity market, the benchmark indices staged a sharp recovery. The BSE Sensex jumped 1,961.32 points or 2.54 per cent to settle at 79,117.11, and the NSE Nifty surged 557.35 points or 2.39 per cent to 23,907.25.

Shares of Adani group firms fell sharply on Thursday. The stock of Adani Enterprises had plunged 22.61 per cent, Adani Energy Solutions tanked 20 per cent, Adani Green Energy plummeted 18.80 per cent, Adani Ports dived 13.53 per cent, Ambuja Cements cracked 11.98 per cent, and Adani Total Gas tumbled 10.40 per cent on the BSE.

NGT slaps Rs 5 cr fine on Punjab pharma unit for flouting norms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has imposed an interim fine of Rs 5 crore on a pharmaceutical unit in Punjab for "violation of environmental norms".

While denouncing the conduct of the Punjab State Pollution Control Board (PSPCB) for failing to discharge its statutory functions effectively, the NGT directed the board to initiate criminal proceedings against the bulk drug manufacturing unit, besides determining the final compensation amount.

The green body was hearing a plea on Nector Life Sciences Limited, located at Haibatpur village in Sahibzada Ajit Singh Nagar district, reportedly discharging highly-polluted chemical effluent in the agricultural fields, causing damage to crops and land.

In an order passed on Thursday, an NGT bench comprising its chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava said,



"Considering the entire record, we are clearly of the view that the industry has failed to comply with the provisions of environmental laws, particularly the Water Act, and has consistently violated its provisions while its zero liquid discharge (ZLD) status has not been achieved till date."

The bench also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member Afroz Ahmad said the PSPCB "failed to discharge its statutory functions adequately and effectively".

The PSPCB did not take

examine the effluent or waste water generated by an industrial unit to see the whether treated water contains the residue of the above antibiotic medicine or not," the tribunal said.

Regarding environmental compensation, the tribunal said, "Since in the present financial year, the amount of environmental compensation at 0.5 per cent of turnover (Rs 1,698.66 crore) comes to about Rs 8.5 crore, we find it appropriate to impose an interim environmental compensation of Rs 5 crore which shall be paid or deposited by the unit with the PSPCB within two months." "We also direct the PSPCB to determine the final amount of environmental compensation after collecting information with regard to the turnover from the proponent of the respective year when the violations were found and to impose compensation for such period separately after due opportunity of hearing to the proponent," it added.

stringent action by imposing adequate environmental compensation, nor did it initiate criminal action for prosecution of the violator, the bench noted.

The tribunal also said the reports before it merely examined the effluent discharged by the unit to assess water quality and pollution levels.

The unit mainly manufactured antibiotics and waste water containing antibiotics, such as cephalosporins antibiotics, could be highly toxic and difficult to degrade.

"It is thus necessary to



Divine Power Energy inks pact to acquire Vimlesh

Divine Power Energy Limited (DPEL) on Friday said it has entered into a share purchase agreement with Vimlesh Industries to acquire a 100 per cent stake in the company for Rs 70 crore. On the objectives behind the move, DPEL said the acquisition will allow the company to expand its presence in the domestic electrical industry. Post-acquisition, Vimlesh Industries will become its wholly-owned subsidiary, it added. DPEL has entered into a share purchase agreement to acquire a 100 per cent stake in Vimlesh Industries for a cash consideration of Rs 70 crore, the company said in a statement. The acquisition shall be completed within 60 days from the date of execution of the shareholders' purchase agreement. Rajesh Giri, MD, DPEL, said, "Vimlesh Industries is a reputed player in the electrical industry, and this acquisition will offer perfect synergies and help expand our footprint in the existing line of business". Divine Power Energy is a leading industrial electrical wires manufacturer in India.



Revised PLI scheme undermines autonomy of banks: AIBOC

Banks' officers union AIBOC on Friday said the recently announced revised Performance Linked Incentives (PLI) for Whole Time Directors and senior executives infringes upon autonomy of boards of public sector banks. Earlier this week, the Department of Financial Services announced a revised PLI scheme for Whole Time Directors. The revised scheme also included officers from Scale IV to Scale VIII of public sector banks. However, the PLI for officers up to Scale VII has already been determined through bilateral agreements between the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) and officers' associations at the industry level. These agreements, based on mandates provided by member banks' boards, also encompass officers in Scale VIII, All India Bank Officers' Confederation (AIBOC) said in a letter written to the Financial Services Secretary. The Department of Financial Services (DFS) directive undermines this well-established framework, violating the sanctity of collective bargaining and the essence of bilateral settlements.

Marksans gets USFDA nod for generic rhinitis treatment tablets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Marksans Pharma Ltd on Friday said it has received final approval from the US health regulator for its generic version of Loratadine tablets indicated in the treatment of allergic rhinitis.

The approval by the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) is for the company's abbreviated new drug application (ANDA) for Loratadine tablets of strength 10 mg, Marksans Pharma said in a regulatory filing.

Loratadine tablets are indicated for the treatment of allergic rhinitis caused by pollen and upper respiratory tract allergy for over-the-counter (OTC) use.

This product is a generic version of Claritin tablet in the same strength as Bayer Healthcare, the company added.

Loratadine is an antihistamine that treats symptoms such as itching, runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing from "hay fever" and other allergies, it added.

Central Bank of India gets RBI nod to enter insurance biz



PNS ■ MUMBAI

Central Bank of India on Friday said it has got approval from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to enter the insurance business through a joint venture with Generali Group under FGIICL and FGLIICL.

In a filing to stock exchanges, the state-owned bank said the RBI accorded the approval vide a letter dated November 21, 2024.

"...we would like to inform that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) vide its letter dated 21st November 2024 has approved the bank's entry in the insurance business through a joint venture with Generali Group under FGIICL and FGLIICL, subject to continuous compliance of conditions stipulated by it and approval of IRDAI, the sectoral regulator," the filing said.

In October, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) had cleared the Central Bank of India's proposed acquisition of stakes in Future Generali India Insurance Company Ltd (FGIICL) and Future Generali India Life Insurance Company Ltd (FGLIICL).

Gold surges Rs 1,100 to Rs 80,400 per 10 gm; silver climbs Rs 300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices surged Rs 1,100 to hit a two-week high of Rs 80,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday due to persistent buying by jewellers and retailers during the ongoing wedding season, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Thursday, the precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity finished at Rs 79,300 per 10 grams.

Silver also climbed Rs 300 to Rs 93,300 per kg. It had closed at Rs 93,000 per kg in the previous session.

Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity soared Rs 1,100, extending the gains for the second consecutive day to Rs 80,000 per 10 grams. The yellow metal had finished at Rs 78,900 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery climbed Rs 906, or 1.18 per cent, to trade at Rs 77,599 per 10 grams.

"Rising global unease pushed gold higher on Comex, and by Rs 900 on MCX, reaching Rs 77,600. This sharp



recovery highlights gold's resilience and its role in balancing portfolios during uncertain times.

"With gold regaining lost ground, a bullish sentiment remains intact," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Silver contracts for December delivery jumped Rs 996, or 1.11 per cent, to Rs 90,921 per kg. During the day, the metal bounced Rs 1,288, or 1.43 per cent, to Rs 91,213 per kg on the MCX.

Globally, Comex gold futures rose USD 36 per ounce, or 1.33 per cent, to USD 2,735.30 per ounce.

Gold traders ignored US dollar strength amid increas-

ing tensions between Russia and Ukraine that continues to fuel safe haven flows towards bullion, Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Silver quoted 1.42 per cent higher at USD 31.83 per ounce in the Asian market hours.

"Investors focus now shifts on the upcoming US macro-economic data, such as the preliminary GDP and core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) due next week, while the recent US jobless claims data and a sharp jump in Bitcoin prices remains a headwind for gold price," Maneesh Sharma, AVP, Commodities & Currencies, Anand Rathi Shares and Stock Brokers, said.

Call for collaborative efforts to combat Antimicrobial Resistance

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Thursday called for greater coordination and collaboration between the government, academia, big pharma, and startups to combat Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR).

He stressed that data-driven and technology solutions would strengthen the government's efforts in fighting AMR.

Speaking to startups and researchers at the Bangalore Bioincubation Centre, Rao highlighted new opportunities, encouraging them to think outside the box and "act now," in line with this year's World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week theme, "Educate, Advocate, Act Now." Rao explained that AMR is



only grown in recent years. We are on the brink of a world where even routine infections could become deadly, and where diseases we thought were under control—like tuberculosis, pneumonia, and urinary tract infections—are becoming harder to treat," Rao added.

Rao stressed early education on AMR, along with in-depth training for future healthcare professionals, would help drive behavioral changes and improve attitudes towards antimicrobial drug use, thereby supporting efforts to curb AMR.

Citing a report from the UK, he noted, "It is estimated that by 2050, AMR could cause 10 million deaths annually—more than cancer and diabetes combined."

Bitcoin ticks closer to \$100,000

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bitcoin extended its streak of record highs after ticking above USD 99,000 for the first time overnight. The cryptocurrency has rocketed more than 40 per cent in just two weeks.

Now, bitcoin is at the doorstep of USD 100,000, just two years after dropping below USD 17,000 following the collapse of crypto exchange FTX.

The dramatic rally arrives as industry players expect the incoming Trump administration to bring a more "crypto-friendly" approach toward regulating the digital currency.

Sony Pictures Networks India bags ACC media rights for 8 years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Sony Pictures Networks India on Friday said it has bagged the exclusive media rights for all Asian Cricket Council tournaments from 2024 to 2031.

This will make the company's cricket calendar even more robust over the next eight years adding to the existing rights for England, Sri Lanka and New Zealand, Sony Pictures Networks India (SPNI) MD & CEO, Gaurav Banerjee told PTI.

In a statement, Asian Cricket Council (ACC) said the deal with SPNI "marks more than a 70 per cent increase from the previous media rights cycle, highlighting the growing global stature and appetite for ACC Asia Cup tournaments".

According to industry estimates, the previous media rights cycle rights for 2016-2024 period was valued at USD 62 million.

Both SPNI and ACC did not disclose the value of the new cycle.

ACC said the deal with SPNI encompasses all editions of the men's and women's Asia Cups, men's and women's Under-19 Asia Cups, and the men's and women's emerging teams Asia Cups.

"This partnership ensures comprehensive and innovative coverage of Asian cricket's

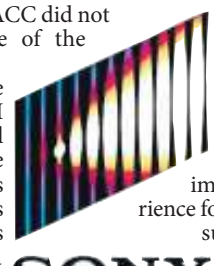
marquee tournaments across television, digital, and audio platforms," ACC said.

Banerjee said the media rights for ACC is a compelling proposition considering the India-Pakistan rivalry along with the fierce competition between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh that has developed over the recent years.

ACC said the "significant partnership with SPNI not only secures high-quality coverage for the ACC's flagship tournaments but also provides the financial resources necessary to drive development programs across all member nations."

"This media rights deal is a significant milestone for the Asian Cricket Council and cricket across the region. The Asia Cup continues to be a cornerstone of cricketing excellence, bringing together the best of the region's talent," ACC President Jay Shah said in the statement.

With SPNI as the new media partner, he said, "We are confident in their ability to deliver world-class coverage and an immersive viewing experience for fans worldwide...The substantial increase in rights value will enable the ACC to channel significant resources into grassroots programs, infrastructure development, and talent pathways, especially for associate nations."



Over 83 pc stock brokers plan to boost IT budgets: Survey

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The broking industry is experiencing a shift towards technology, with 83.6 per cent of stock brokers planning to shore-up their IT budgets in 2024-25 to focus on artificial intelligence and algorithmic trading to boost efficiency and customer experience, as per the survey conducted by ANMI among its 900 members. Of these, 42 per cent brokers are looking to increase the

budget by 20 per cent, according to the StockTech survey 2024-25 released on Friday.

Moreover, the emphasis on technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), algorithmic trading and blockchain is driving brokers to recruit skilled professionals in these fields with 66 per cent of broking firms surveyed intending to increase their IT manpower or recruit new talent.

The Association of National Exchanges Members of India



(ANMI) carried out the survey to delve deeper into the role of financial technology in the stock broking sector.

The survey found that 34.3 per cent of respondents prioritise AI and machine learning (ML) to drive predictive ana-

lytics and personalised trading strategies, while 32.9 per cent focus on algorithmic trading, emphasising precision and automation and the remaining 7.1 per cent embrace blockchain for secure and transparent operations.

"As stockbrokers increasingly prioritise investments in AI, blockchain, and algorithmic trading, Sebi remains committed to fostering an environment of innovation, transparency, and investor protection. By embracing emerg-

ing technologies alongside robust risk management frameworks, the industry can achieve sustainable growth while safeguarding the interests of market participants," Sebi Executive Director V Sundaresan said.

Over 60 per cent of stock brokers surveyed have digitised more than 50 per cent of their business processes, reflecting a strong push toward operational modernisation.

SHEHNAAZ GILL BEGINS HER 'NEW JOURNEY' WITH 'DREAM TEAM'

Actress and social media sensation Shehnaaz Gill has announced that she has commenced shooting for her Punjabi film and tagged it as a "new journey."

Shehnaaz took to her Instagram, where she shared a picture of herself holding on to the clapboard of the film, which is directed by Amarjit Saron. In one image, her "dream team" along with the actress are seen doing puja on the sets ahead of the shoot. She wrote: "Starting a new journey today and immensely proud and happy to announce that today we commence the shooting of my Punjabi film with my dream team."

The director of the yet-untitled

film is known for making movies such as *Honsla Rakh*, *Saunkan Saunkne*, *Kala Shah Kala*, *Jhalle*, *Babe Bhangra Paunde Ne*. Shehnaaz recently featured in the new version of the track *Sajna Ve Sajna* from the film *Vicky Vidya Ka Woh Wala Video*. It was in 2015, when Shehnaaz began her modelling career with a music video titled *Shiv Di Kitaab*.



what's brewing?

Angelina Jolie reflects on 'therapeutic' opera training for *Maria*

Angelina Jolie is diving deep into her emotional and vocal preparation for her role as legendary opera singer Maria Callas in the upcoming biographical drama *Maria*, directed by Pablo Larrain. In a candid interview with Good Morning America, Jolie opened up about the intense opera training she underwent to authentically portray the iconic soprano. She shared that her opera lessons turned into a form of personal therapy, helping her confront deeply held emotions.

Jolie recalled her first lesson, which was an emotionally overwhelming experience. "I took a deep breath and just cried... and then left!" she said. She explained that through the process of singing, she unlocked feelings and memories that had been buried. "We all don't realise that different things that happen to us in our life... we hold them in our body. Everything is just locked somewhere for help us keep going. And so to really sing, and sing very fully, you have to unlock all of that," she added. This emotional release was a key part of her transformation into Callas, as the character is known for her emotional depth and passion in both her personal life and career.

In *Maria*, Jolie lends her own vocals to portray the famous opera singer. Over the course of seven months, she rigorously

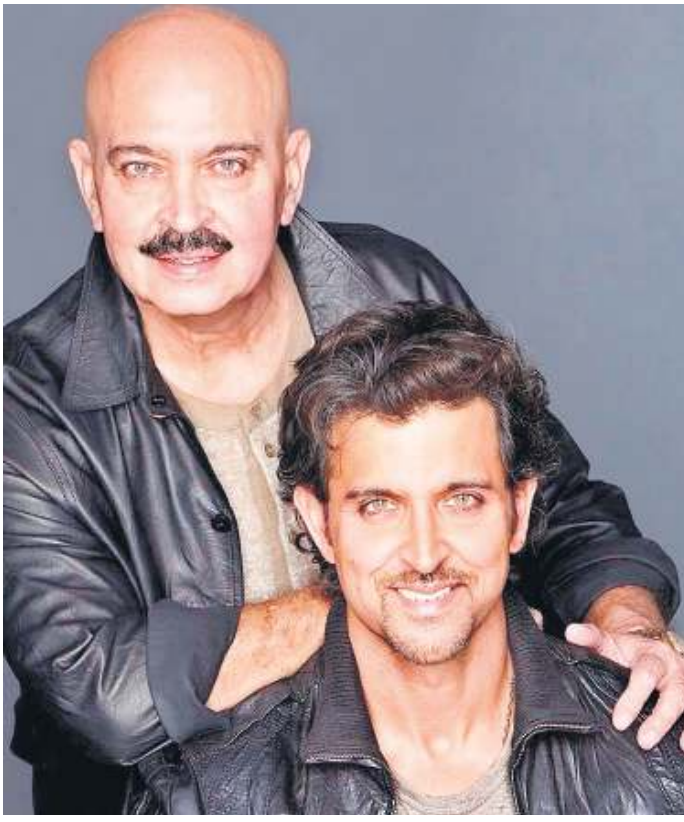
trained and memorised six tragic arias closely associated with Callas. This involved intense vocal practice, which prepared her for a challenging yet rewarding portrayal of the iconic figure, who passed away from a heart attack in 1977.

The film has already received significant praise, having premiered to an eight-minute standing ovation at the Venice Film Festival and it has since been featured at major film festivals, including Toronto, Telluride and New York. Critics are particularly lauding Jolie's performance, with strong Oscar buzz already surrounding her role. This could mark her second Academy Award nomination, after winning Best Supporting Actress for *Girl, Interrupted*.

Maria depicts the final years of Callas' life as she retreats to Paris after years of public scrutiny. The film also stars Pierfrancesco Favino, Alba Rohrwacher, Haluk Bilginer and Kodi Smit-McPhee and will be available for streaming on Netflix starting December 11.



RAKESH ROSHAN STEPS DOWN AS DIRECTOR, BUT REMAINS COMMITTED TO *KRRISH 4*



Rakesh Roshan, the legendary producer-director behind iconic films such as *Karan Arjun*, *Koyla*, *Koi... Mil Gaya* and *Krrish*, has made a major announcement that has left both fans and industry insiders talking. After years of shaping the Bollywood landscape with his powerful storytelling and creative vision, Roshan has decided that he will no longer direct any films, including the much-awaited *Krrish 4*. The news marks the end of an era for the director, whose work has been celebrated for its unique style and innovative approach to filmmaking.

In a latest interview, Roshan reflected on his illustrious career and shared insights into his decision to step away from directing. Despite his departure from the director's chair, he reassured fans that his involvement in *Krrish 4* would remain strong. "I won't be directing it, but I'll still be involved in the project, especially with the screenplay. The movie will be made the way I would have made it. So fans don't have to worry," he said, offering comfort to those anxious about the future of the beloved superhero franchise.

Roshan also shared his thoughts on the importance of collaboration in filmmaking, emphasising that cinema is built on the combined efforts of five key pillars: the producer, director, actor, heroine and the audience. "We are a family of creative minds and that's a big boon for me," Roshan explained, highlighting the close-knit nature of his filmmaking process. He went on to say, "We're the five pillars in any movie. The producer, director, actor, heroine... and the rest, well, *hum hi hai*," humorously reflecting on the roles played by his own family in his cinematic journey.

As fans expressed disappointment over his decision not to direct *Krrish 4*, especially given his track record of presenting his son, Hrithik Roshan, in the most powerful and engaging way on screen, Roshan was quick to ease their concerns. "I know Hrithik better than anyone. As a father and director, I can tell him openly when something isn't right. I can say, 'Duggu, this is not working' and he'll listen. He can also tell me, 'Papa, if you place the camera like this, I can give a better expression.' That's the unique bond we share, and I don't think he could do that with any other director," he shared with warmth and pride.

When asked about Hrithik's performances outside of his directorial projects, Roshan praised his son's versatility and growth as an actor. "He has done an amazing job in films like *Guzaarish*, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, *Fighter* and *War*. His work speaks for itself and I'm proud of how far he's come. The only difference is, I know him inside and out and we communicate openly. That's something special that no one else has."

As *Krrish 4* gears up for production under a different director, Roshan's legacy will continue to influence the film, ensuring that his distinctive style and commitment to storytelling remain at its core. The director's exit from the helm is bittersweet, but his influence will undoubtedly shape the future of the *Krrish* franchise, making it a seamless continuation of the world he so meticulously crafted. Fans may be sad about not seeing Roshan direct the next chapter in his son's superhero saga, but the reassurance that his vision is still alive in the project provides a sense of continuity and excitement for what's to come.

When Kajol was supposed to play SRK's sister in *Josh!*



Filmmaker Mansoor Khan, renowned for his successful collaborations with cousin Aamir Khan in films like *Qayamat Se Qayamat Tak* and *Jo Jeeta Wohi Sikandar*, opened up about the casting process for the 2000 film *Josh!* starring Shah Rukh Khan. Khan revealed that he initially considered Kajol for the role of Shah Rukh's sister, despite their iconic romantic pairing in *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*. However, after Kajol declined the offer, Khan turned to Aishwarya Rai, praising her professionalism.

In an interview, Khan shared an interesting anecdote from the casting process. "I narrated the film to Kajol because I wanted her to play the sister. After hearing the story, she got up and said, 'I want to play Max.' Then she walked out," Khan recalled. Despite the setback, Aishwarya Rai agreed to take on the role of the sister, impressing Khan with her commitment and work ethic. "She was a thorough professional, never complained or asked for changes," he added. "Personally, I think *Josh* was her best film."

The casting process also saw confusion surrounding the roles of Shah Rukh Khan and Aamir Khan. Khan revealed, "I always had Shah Rukh in mind for Max, but when I shared the story with Aamir, he assumed he was playing the lead role." Shah Rukh Khan, too, initially turned down the role, under the impression that Aamir was cast as Max.

After stepping away from filmmaking in 2003 to become a farmer, Mansoor Khan briefly returned to the industry for Imran Khan's debut film *Jaane Tu Ya Jaane Na*. He is now working on the second film of Aamir Khan's son, Junaid Khan.

FUN

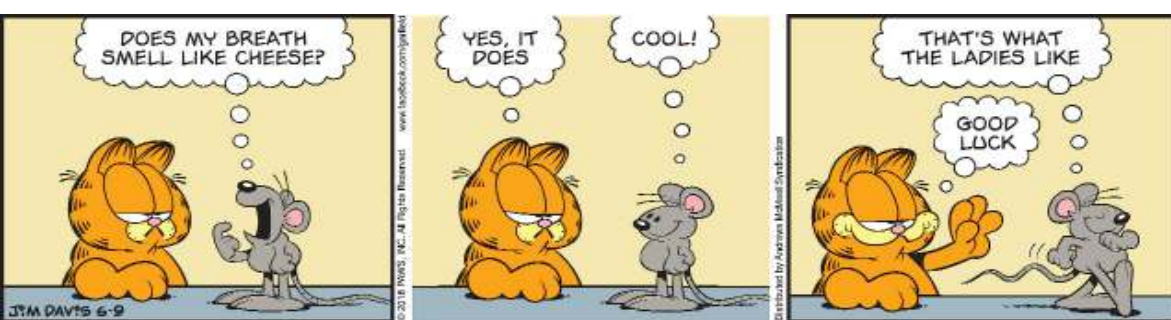
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CALVIN AND HOBBS



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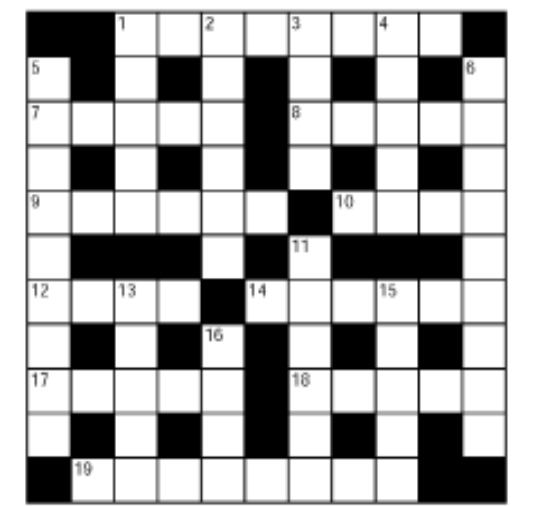
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

8			17					
	7		8					1
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Yesterday's solution

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

- Strong hairs sticking out from a cat's face
- A sour citrus fruit
- Strike with the foot
- A red-breasted bird
- A light metal
- Immediately
- A room on a ship
- People who get coal or metal ore from underground
- A joint between two ropes
- Middy
- Cardboard box
- The brother of your father or mother
- A soldier's bravery award
- Things that belong to someone

DOWN

- Adult females
- Take no notice of



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Saturday
November 23, 2024

MAKING THE CITY DANCE THROUGH HIS RHYTHMS

AARTI SREENATH
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Subrath Sarkar isn't just another name on a corporate roster, he's a force of passion and rhythm. Hailing from the steel city of Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, he decided to trade the quiet charm of his hometown for the fast-paced life of Hyderabad in 2014. Fast forward nine years and today, he is making his mark as a senior loan document specialist at Wells Fargo. But don't let the spreadsheets fool you—when he's not sorting documents, he's dancing through life, still staying true to his Kathak roots. Who says you can't be a corporate pro and a Kathak Luminary?

His love for Kathak has always been a driving force in his life. In addition to his thriving corporate career, the Kathak Maestro has made a lasting impact in Hyderabad's cultural scene. He founded Tarangini Kathak Kendra over five years ago, a dance school where students not only learn the intricate steps of Kathak but also grow as individuals. His journey in Hyderabad has been a fulfilling one, marked by a seamless transition from student to professional. Having moved to the city with a clear purpose—to study and build a future—he finds himself reflecting on how smoothly the years have unfolded. "It's been great," he says, with a sense of contentment. The early days, balancing academic life with weekend dance classes, were challenging yet rewarding. Fortunately, the city's infrastructure has made his daily routine manageable, with his office timings allowing for less stressful commutes, avoiding the usual rush of the city's traffic.

One of the things he appreciates most about Hyderabad is its climate. Coming from Chhattisgarh, where the weather can

be extreme, Hyderabad's moderate temperatures offer a refreshing change. "It's neither too hot nor too cold," he says, describing the city's year-round pleasantness. This balance of weather, combined with the city's laid-back vibe, has made Hyderabad feel like home. Yet, it's not just the weekdays that Subrath enjoys; he looks forward to the weekends with enthusiasm. Every Friday, he eagerly anticipates the next two days—Saturday and Sunday—when he can dedicate time to his true passion, Kathak. Those days become a personal retreat where he reconnects with his dance and his students, finding joy in both his art and career.

When he first considered moving to Hyderabad, he had his share of concerns, like anyone else venturing into a new city. However, his apprehensions were quickly put to rest once he settled in. "Transport-wise, it's very good," he says, emphasizing the city's well-developed infrastructure. The introduction of the metro system, he notes, has made commuting across the city much easier. Additionally, local buses are readily available, making travel convenient for everyone.

For those who are more concerned about safety, especially women, he points out that Hyderabad offers reliable cab services for employees working in multinational companies. The added benefit of home pick-up and drop facilities ensures peace of mind for many.

What stood out to him, though, was the warmth and support of the people. "I have lots of local friends here," he shares, reflecting on the kindness he's received from the city's residents. "They are always there for me and if I'm in any trou-



ble, they would be ready to help me at any time." The sense of community, he says, is one of the city's greatest assets, making his transition into Hyderabad not only smooth but genuinely welcoming.

He describes a stark contrast between his hometown, Bhilai and Hyderabad, especially when it comes to the city's infrastructure. In Bhilai, he notes, the tallest buildings are only three stories high, with much of the city still made up of ground-floor homes. These homes often come with backyards or courtyards, offering ample space for gardens and a more laid-back lifestyle. Hyderabad, on the other hand, is a bustling metropolis with tall buildings and a much faster-paced life.

He also shares a personal anecdote about the differences in daily life, particularly when his mother visits Hyderabad. "She always struggles to find fresh vegetables here," he says. The supply of vegetables in Hyderabad, according to Subrath, is often dependent on imports from far-flung areas or other states, making it more difficult to find the same freshness he would back home in Bhilai. This, for him, is a small yet noticeable difference in the rhythm of life between his two cities.

When asked about what comes to his mind when he thinks of Hyderabad, he mentions the iconic biryani, a dish synonymous with the city. However, he quickly adds, "For your kind information, it's been two years since I have become vegetarian," showing how his perspective on Hyderabad's food scene has shifted.

Yet, his most poignant memory of the city isn't the famous cuisine but the community he's built. He reflects on the time during the pandemic when he was away from Hyderabad for nearly a year and a half, back in his hometown. "I was missing one thing, which is my class," he says with a touch of emotion. For him, his dance

FROM THE STEEL CITY OF BHILAI TO THE BUSTLING METROPOLIS OF HYDERABAD, SUBRATH SARKAR, KATHAK MAESTRO FROM THE CITY, DISCUSSES HIS ALLURE AND TRIUMPHS IN THE 'CITY OF PEARLS'

class is more than just a place to practice; it's a second home where he connects with people, shares laughter and sometimes even tears. "We dance, we cry, everything together, all at one place," he adds, emphasizing the deep bonds he has formed there.

His vulnerability comes through as he admits, "I was very much afraid about the communication," since English was the primary medium of instruction at his new college, and he was not yet proficient in Telugu. Despite these initial fears, he acknowledges how his peers helped him navigate this linguistic barrier. "They made me very comfortable with what I knew and what they knew. Through collaboration, we managed to understand each other's feelings," he recalls. He believes that sometimes, small gestures can have a big impact. "Not a lot of help is required; small things can make big changes." For him, it was the little things—patience, understanding and support—that made all the difference in adapting to the city and its culture.

When asked about his favourite places to visit in Hyderabad, he shares how his schedule is quite structured. "Monday to Friday, it's office; Saturday to Sunday, it's class time," he explains. His weekends are particularly special, though, as Sunday evenings are reserved for his devotion to Krishna Consciousness. "I am a devotee of ISKCON," he adds with a sense of calm, noting that no matter what, Sunday evenings are spent at the temple, where he dedicates 3-4 hours to chanting and prayer. This spiritual practice has also led him to make a significant lifestyle change. "After joining ISKCON, I have left eating non-veg," he says, highlighting the profound impact it has had on his life.

Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar: Love lost in execution

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The latest web series, *Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar*, starring Dhaval Thakur and Sanchita Basu, promises a romantic drama filled with twists and turns. Disney+ Hotstar's *Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar* is an epic saga of unreciprocated love and yearning, mixed with deceit and vengeance. This series is now available on the streaming platform. The series showcases a tangled network of intricate characters and a poignant narrative, where the outcomes of Kuldeep (played by Dhaval Thakur) and Shanvika (played by Sanchita Basu) are ultimately determined by fate. Taking place in Uttar Pradesh, the story depicts two adolescents in a strong romantic relationship as they face obstacles related to caste and class.

ANALYSIS

The storyline, revolving around Avinash and Jiya's complicated relationship, had potential but is marred by poor execution. The plot was as expected as a hyperactive wasp, a common narrative found in the realm of clichés. Maybe they possess a mystical time device that allowed them to travel back in time to alter the clichéd storyline of a wealthy girl falling in love with a poor boy, but the essence of caste and class, which was the main selling point of the series, was completely absent. Dhaval Thakur makes his acting debut in the film *Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar*, directed by Shraddha Pasi Jairath, starring opposite actress Sanchita Basu from Bihar.

HIGHLIGHTS

Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar boasts several highlights that make it an engaging watch. The series has an engaging storyline that explores themes of love, heartbreak and self-discovery. The cast delivers impressive performances, bringing depth and nuance to their respective characters. Furthermore, the characters in the series are well-developed and relatable, making it easy for viewers to invest in their journeys.

The series also features stunning cinematography and a memorable soundtrack, adding to its overall appeal. The show's highlights also include Dhaval Thakur and Sanchita Basu's individual performances, which are noteworthy despite the show's overall shortcomings. Additionally, the show's potential storyline, exploring themes of love, heartbreak, and redemption, is an interesting concept that, unfortunately, falls flat due to poor execution.

DRAWBACKS

One of the major issues is that the plot twists and turns can be predictable, reducing the series' overall impact. Additionally, some episodes may feel slow-paced, which could test viewers' patience and engagement. The series also suffers from limited character development, with some supporting characters feeling one-dimensional or underutilised. The plot twists are predictable, making it difficult to stay invested in the characters' journeys. The show's attempt to explore themes of love, heartbreak, and redemption falls flat due to lackluster writing and execution.

Some characters do feel underdeveloped. A few scenes also lack chemistry between leads.

PERFORMANCES

Although the plot may not have been impressive, the actors are the ones who prevent *Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar* from being a complete failure. Sanchita completely loses herself in the game while playing Shanvika. She's thoroughly enjoying being herself and it's a real delight to see someone as carefree as her. Sanchita demonstrates her promise as an actress with this show. If only she had been given some extra screen time at the end, it might have spiced up the plot.

Dhaval Thakur debuts in the series with professionalism. You will not recognise him as the tired, suffering boy. The creators successfully handled Dhaval's character by having him make unexpected decisions and justifying every scene he is in. He fits in seamlessly as a rickshaw puller and his passion as a lover knows no bounds. When he witnesses his family being attacked and his sister being mistreated, his tears will cause your heart to ache. Dhaval still has a lot to achieve in the industry.

Govind Pandey, Aniruddha Dave, Sushil Pandey, and Kapil Kanpuriya also impress us with their acting skills. Sushil deserves 10 extra points for the composure he shows when he finds out his daughter has hanged herself and his house is gone. He consistently keeps it low-key, conveying his emotions just right.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Technically, the show is average. The cinematography is passable, but the editing is choppy, and the background score is overly dramatic. The show's production values are lacking, with noticeable flaws in sound design and visual effects. The show's soundtrack is unimpressive, with forgettable songs that fail to leave a lasting impact. The background score is overly dramatic, often feeling like a poor attempt to elevate the show's emotional moments.

VERDICT

Thukra Ke Mera Pyaar is a missed opportunity in romantic drama. With better writing, execution and production values, this could have been a compelling and engaging show. As it stands, it's a skippable show that wastes its potential. Even die-hard fans of the lead actors may find themselves disappointed by the show's overall quality.

Don't let Keratoconus blur your vision

Eye-related diseases are often neglected. Especially when it comes to eye health, compared to other health-related issues, it is often overlooked until it worsens. Timely interventions can prevent most of the eye-related disease from becoming severe. It is equally important to create awareness of the various eye diseases that could affect mankind. Usually, general information one has on eye-related issues is cataract affects the aged, glaucoma affects the middle-aged and Keratoconus, the teens. Technically, Keratoconus is a progressive eye disorder where the cornea, the clear, dome-shaped front surface of the eye, thins out and begins to bulge into a cone-like shape. This abnormal shape prevents light from focusing correctly on the retina, causing blurred vision, and in more advanced cases, severe visual distortion.

Studies say that keratoconus was diagnosed in approximately 2.3% of patients compared to a prevalence rate between 0.05-0.23% as reported in western countries. The rate is much higher in India compared to

other countries, attributable to environmental factors of increased sun exposure and high prevalence of eye rubbing due to allergies.

Keratoconus, unlike other eye disorders, is not intrinsically "dreadful," but its progressive nature can lead to substantial disability if left untreated. Keratoconus treatment is more complicated than using corrective lenses for nearsightedness or having cataract surgery. It frequently necessitates a mix of treatments to be effective, particularly if identified in advanced stages.

Common causes and risk factors of Keratoconus

Keratoconus, a progressive eye condition, is primarily caused by a weakening of the collagen fibers in the cornea. There are several factors that contribute to its development. While the exact causes are not known, the most common factors are chronic eye rubbing, eye irritations and allergies. Other factors that contribute are genetics, hormonal changes, especially during puberty and environmental factors like UV light exposure.

Early diagnosis is the key

Early diagnosis of keratoconus is critical for reducing its course and avoiding serious visual impairment. Specialised diagnostic methods, such as corneal topography, can identify minor changes in the cornea's curvature, allowing for early intervention. If keratoconus is not detected, the problem can proceed to severe stages in which the cornea becomes too thin, resulting in corneal scarring and considerable vision loss with corneal transplant as the last resort to restore vision. Early diagnosis and appropriate treatment is crucial. Delay in treatments will make the recovery process tougher as it would require consistent medical care to man-

age and slow down its progression. If left untreated, advanced cases can result in considerable vision impairment and perhaps total vision loss.

(The author, Dr. Girish Budhrami, is the Chief Medical Officer, at Sankara Eye Hospital, Panvel.)

TREATMENTS FOR KERATOCONUS

Basically non-surgical keratoconus treatments are in the form of glasses and soft-corn lenses which can only mild treat it if found at its early stages. A more aggressive option for advanced cases, however, includes the larger scleral and hybrid contact lenses that vault completely over the cornea. RGP Contact Lenses -Rigid gas permeable (RGP) provide better vision correction by essentially putting a new refractive surface on top of irregular corneas. The only surgical options available are corneal cross-linking (CXL), a minimally invasive procedure that uses ultraviolet light and riboflavin (Vitamin B2) to strengthen collagen fibers in the cornea, slowing or stopping disease progression. Seldom, an implantable ring segments (Intacs), can be placed in cornea to flatten it and reduce irregular astigmatism that results vision enhancement; while simple severe cases might demand for a corneal transplant procedure known as keratoplasty.



DOCTOR'S ADVICE ON PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

Doctors recommend treatments and preventive measures based on the condition of the patient.

Subjective symptoms: Some early signs of keratoconus, notably astigmatism and positional issues in the spectacle correction of myopia or hyperopia may not manifest symptoms but can be

uncovered by an experienced eye care practitioner during a routine examination.

No eye rubbing: Doctors advise not to rub eyes as it is a bad thing related with counter progression of the disease.

UV-protective sunglasses: Wearing UV-blocking sunglasses can decrease the chance of sun-related risks.

Balanced diet:

Maintaining a balanced diet and drinking plenty of water can help your cornea stay healthy. To sum it up, it's important to diagnose keratoconus early and manage it with prompt treatment. Timely treatment is crucial to preserve vision and manage keratoconus effectively.



IPL 2025 Schedule: BCCI shares schedule for next three seasons

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Next year's Indian Premier League will be held from March 14 to May 25, the BCCI has told the IPL franchises while also setting aside similar widows for the event's 2026 and 2027 editions in an uncharacteristically elaborate plan. The BCCI has also decided to include injury-prone England pacer Jofra Archer, Indian-born American pacer Saurabh Netravalkar and uncapped Mumbai-wicketkeeper-batter Hardik Tamore in the two-day mega players' auction to be held in Jeddah from Sunday. In its communication to the franchises, the Board has stated that the dates for the next three seasons are being shared at once to "assist the franchises in planning for the players' auction." The 2026 edition of the tournament will start on March 15 and the grand finale



The 2027 edition will once again start on March 14 with the final on May 30. All three seasons will be held on Sundays. The BCCI had plans to increase the number of

matches in the IPL to ensure that it runs for 10 and half weeks and looking at the windows set aside, it looks imminent that the league's game count will increase. Archer did not feature in the IPL this year and his run in the 2023 edition was cut short by an elbow injury. Netravalkar was one of the breakout stars of the T20 World Cup in the USA earlier this year with impressive performances that were crucial to his side advancing to the Super 8s. The former India Under-19 player, who also turned up for Mumbai in Ranji Trophy, migrated to the USA to pursue computer engineering and is currently employed with Oracle. His omission from the pruned auction list at the expense of another India-turned-US player Unmukt Chand had raised eyebrows as the latter was not a part of the American team in the T20 World Cup.



Jannik Sinner leads Italy back to the Davis Cup semifinals

AP ■ MALAGA

No. 1-ranked Jannik Sinner won matches in singles and doubles to lead defending champion Italy to a 2-1 comeback victory over Argentina, earning a return trip to the Davis Cup semifinals. "I'm here trying to do the best I can in the singles," Sinner said on Thursday. "If they put me on the court in doubles, I'll also try my best." On Saturday, Italy will face Australia in a rematch of last year's final, but this time it will only be for a chance to play for the championship. Australia eliminated the U.S. 2-1 earlier Thursday to reach the final four at the team competition for the third consecutive year. The other semifinal, to be contested Friday, is the Netherlands against Germany. The Dutch got past Rafael Nadal and Spain in the quarterfinals earlier in the week, sending the 22-time Grand Slam champion into retirement. Italy fell behind 1-0 in the quarterfinals when Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo defeated Lorenzo Musetti 6-4, 6-1 on an indoor hard court at the Palacio de Deportes Jose Maria Martina Carpena in southern Spain. But then in stepped Sinner, whose season already includes two Grand Slam trophies — at the Australian Open and U.S. Open — plus the title at the ATP Finals last weekend in Turin, Italy. First he overwhelmed Sebastián Báez 6-2, 6-1. Then Sinner teamed with 2021 Wimbledon runner-up Matteo Berrettini in the deciding doubles match to win 6-4, 7-5 against Andres Molteni and Maximo Gonzalez. "He carried me today," Sinner said about Berrettini. After arriving late to Malaga from Turin, Sinner did not get a

chance to practice on the Davis Cup competition court before taking on Báez and stretching his streak to 22 sets won in a row. "In three minutes, he was perfectly comfortable on court," Italy captain Filippo Volandri said. "He's a special one." Volandri swapped out his original doubles team, Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori, for Sinner and Berrettini, and the change paid dividends. Australia, the Davis Cup runner-up the last two years, advanced when Matt Ebden and Jordan Thompson beat the surprise, last-minute American pairing of Ben Shelton and Tommy Paul 6-4, 6-4 in that quarterfinal's deciding doubles match. The Shelton-Paul substitution for Paris Olympics silver medalists Austin Krajicek and Rajeev Ram was announced about 15 minutes before the doubles match began. Ebden and John Peers beat Krajicek and Ram in the Summer Games final in August. The Australians broke once in each set of the doubles. In the second, they stole one of Shelton's service games on the fourth break opportunity when Ebden's overhead smash made it 5-4. Thompson then served out the victory, closing it with a service winner before chest-bumping Ebden. The 21st-ranked Shelton made his Davis Cup debut earlier Thursday in singles against 77th-ranked Thanasi Kokkinakis, who emerged from a tight-as-can-be tiebreaker by saving four match points and eventually converting his seventh to win 6-1, 4-6, 7-6 (14). No. 4 Taylor Fritz, the U.S. Open runner-up, then pulled the Americans even with a far more straightforward victory over No. 9 Alex de Minaur, 6-3, 6-4.



Cricket Australia to pay tribute to late Phillip Hughes on 10th death anniversary

PTI ■ PERTH

Cricket Australia has planned a series of initiatives to mark the 10th anniversary of the tragic death of Phillip Hughes including a tribute before the start of the second Test between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval scheduled from December 6-10. CA will also honour the late Australian cricketer during the upcoming three Sheffield Shield games, as players will wear black armbands and flags will fly at half-mast. A promising left-hander who played 26 Tests, Hughes lost his life just days before his 26th birthday in 2014 after being struck by a bouncer during a domestic match. Representing South Australia, Hughes was hit on an unprotected area below his left ear while attempting a hook shot against Sean Abbott at the SCG. Despite wearing a helmet, the impact proved fatal. "We understand this will be a time of reflection for the many people who knew and admired Phillip Hughes," Cricket Australia (CA) CEO Nick Hockley said on Friday. "We wanted to ensure that the Hughes family, particularly,

comfortable with any commemorations and that we celebrate Phillip's life and incredible achievements appropriately," he added. The home association, which has produced a special documentary on him, will broadcast it ahead of the second Test, as part of a two-week commemoration programme. A moment's silence will also be observed before play on day four of all matches. Batting on 63, Hughes collapsed before receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and was subsequently taken to St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, where he underwent surgery and was placed in an induced coma. Hughes, however, could not recover from the blow and died on November 27. The left-hander was viewed as one of the promising Australian cricketers as the team went through a transitional phase. In the Australia-India Adelaide Test that followed his death a decade ago, the southpaw was named as the home team's 13th player with 63 (the score he was batting at in his last match) seconds of applause observed ahead of the game.

Arsenal, Manchester City and Bayern advance to Women's Champions League quarterfinals

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal, Manchester City and Bayern Munich all advanced to the Women's Champions League quarterfinals with two games to spare. Late substitute Lina Hurtig scored the winner in Arsenal's 1-0 victory over Juventus in London on Thursday. Khadija Shaw scored twice for City in a 2-1 win at Swedish club Hammarby. City stayed perfect in Group D with four victories and reached the last eight for the first time since 2021. Bayern Munich was held 1-1 at Vålerenga in Norway and still earned a quarterfinal berth after Juventus' loss. Arsenal, Bayern and City join Chelsea, Lyon and Real Madrid in the quarterfinals. Two-time defending champion Barcelona routed Austrian champion St. Pölten 4-1. The Catalan club trails City by three points in their group and is in a strong position to advance. Bayern tops Group C with 10 points, Arsenal has nine followed by Juventus (3) and Vålerenga (1). Back to winning Man City responded to its first



loss of the season, 2-0 at Chelsea in the Women's Super League on Saturday. Still without injured star Vivianne Miedema, Shaw took charge, proving her scoring instincts after half an hour. The forward scored from inside the penalty area with a deflected shot that flew over goalkeeper Anna Tamminen to frustrate more than 20,000 noisy fans at the Stockholm arena in the Swedish capital. Ellen Wangerheim equalized soon after the interval from close range to rejuvenate the crowd but Shaw struck again to restore the lead just minutes later. This time, she delivered a powerful right-footed finish from the edge of the area. Bayern and Harder contained Bayern dominated possession but could not translate it into goals until the 75th minute. It had to rely on substitute Jovana Damjanovic, who gave the visitors a late lead after connecting on a pass from Giulia Gwinn. The Norwegians, who have retained their domestic title, equalized in the 88th on Elise Thorsnes' header following a corner. Pernille Harder, who found the back of the net five times for Bayern in the previous three games, could not do it again on Thursday and was substituted. Hurtig's night

Sreejesh-coached Indian colts depart for Oman to defend Junior Asia Cup title

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Fresh from winning the bronze medal in the Sultan of Johor Cup, PR Sreejesh-coached Indian colts on Friday departed for Muscat to defend the Junior Asia Cup title. India, who defeated arch-rivals Pakistan 2-1 to lift the title last year for a record fourth time, will open their campaign against Thailand on November 27 in their Pool A fixture. They will next face Japan on November 28 and Chinese Taipei on November 30.

Their last group stage match is against Korea on December 1. India need a top-two finish to secure a semifinal berth. Malaysia, Bangladesh, Oman, and China constitute Pool B. Confident of a positive start, captain Amir Ali said they have prepared well and are determined to reach the final. "We have been preparing rigorously and are ready to face the challenges ahead," Ali stated in a Hockey India release. "We all understand the



importance of this tournament and the opportunity to showcase our skills on the big stage. Our focus is on giving our best from the very first match and

securing a strong position to make it to the final." Vice-captain Rohit said the whole team is motivated ahead of the campaign. "The energy in the camp is fantastic, and there is a strong sense of unity among the players. Our recent performance at the Sultan of Johor Cup has given us confidence, and we're focused on building on that momentum. "We are determined to work hard, stay disciplined, and perform to our full potential in every match," Rohit said. "We are all feeling very

motivated and eager to start our campaign at the Men's Junior Asia Cup. The energy in the camp is fantastic, and there is a strong sense of unity among the players." India have so far won the title in 2004, 2008 and 2015, making them the most successful side in the tournament. For legendary Indian goalkeeper Sreejesh, this will be his second assignment as the coach. He began his stint with a bronze medal victory at the Sultan of Johor Cup, beating New Zealand 2-2 (3-2) in a thrilling shootout.

I thought it was just a regulation wicket: Starc on KL Rahul dismissal

PTI ■ PERTH

Australia's senior pacer Mitchell Starc on Friday played down the chatter around India batter KL Rahul's contentious caught behind dismissal on the first day of the opening Test here, saying it was a "regulation wicket". Rahul's dismissal kicked up a controversy with former players from both the countries questioning the third umpire's decision to overturn the on-field official's not out call. After on-field umpire Richard Kettleborough ruled in Rahul's favour following Australia's appeal, the home team used DRS to challenge the decision. Third umpire Richard Illingworth, however, overturned the call despite not having the benefit of a split-screen view which would have

given him a clearer picture of whether the Starc delivery actually grazed the bat or the snicko responded to a hit on the pads. "It got overturned obviously, but I thought it was regulation, the sound it made, the timing of it, I thought it was just a regulation wicket," Starc said at a press conference. Starc (2/14), who bagged the opening wicket of the series when he removed Yashasvi Jaiswal, will resume on six not out alongside wicketkeeper Alex Carey, who is unbeaten on 19, on Saturday, with Australia at 67/7 after India made 150 in their first innings. A staggering 17 wickets fell on the opening day, a record on Australian soil, but the leading pacer believed batting is going to get easier in the second innings and they just need to survive the new Kookaburra

ball. "I think there was a fair bit of good bowling today. Obviously there was enough in the wicket and it probably felt like it was a hardball wicket," Starc said. "When the ball started to get a little bit softer towards the back end of that Indian innings, it probably didn't do as much. (There was) still enough there, but it didn't do as much as the brand new hardball. "So I guess that's something for teams to take in the second innings. "If you can get through the testing period, it does get slightly easier. That being said, the outfield is quite slow, so that probably made runs a bit hard to come by. That's probably the slowest outfield we've seen over in the west for a long time."



While Starc gave the first breakthrough, his pace-bowling colleague Josh Hazlewood proved to be more successful on the day, returning with excellent figures of 4/29 in 13 overs before the peerless Jasprit Bumrah (4/17 in 10 overs) yet

again displayed his extraordinary skills. Starc is also not of the view that batting conditions were becoming harder across Australia. "How many ways can you skin a cat? Bowlers are allowed to bowl good balls," he said. "When there's a lot of runs, it's like, 'Oh, the bowlers bowled badly. When there's wickets, the wickets are tough.' (But) you are allowed to bowl good balls and maybe credit should go to both teams and bowlers. "Sure, there's plenty in the wicket when you put it in the right area and it was hard work for batting, but as I said, you're allowed to bowl good balls and there were plenty of those today." At stumps, Australia trailed by 83 runs thanks to the incredible comeback by the

Bumrah-led Indian team, something that seemed improbable after they were all out for an under-par score and weeks after their unprecedented 0-3 drubbing to New Zealand at home. Starc said he was not surprised by India's comeback. "That was a completely different series, different conditions, different teams, so, yeah, that was entertaining to watch, that series. But we know how good a team India are and they have shown that today. "I thought we bowled quite well and perhaps an under par score and they have come out and matched us with the ball, so, no, I wouldn't say I was surprised as we know the skill they have got in that team with bat and ball, and they showed that with the ball today," Starc pointed out.

MECHANIC ROCKY RUNS OUT OF FUEL!

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Vishwak Sen, the up-and-coming actor, is gradually expanding his reach with each new movie he does. His films *Gaami* and *Gangs of Godavari* came out this year, and his third film *Mechanic Rocky* is being released today. The director of the movie is Ravi Teja Mullapudi, with Meenakshi Chaudhary and Shraddha Srinath starring as the female leads. This is the tale and its progression.

Story:

Rakesh, alias Rocky (played by Vishwak Sen), runs a mechanic garage and driving school that he inherited from his father (played by VK Naresh). In college, Rocky was in love with his classmate Priya (played by Meenakshi Chaudhary), but she hated him due to a misunderstanding. Later, Priya joins Rocky's driving school to learn driving, and Rocky learns that her brother (played by Rachakonda Vishwadev) has passed away. To help her, Rocky starts dating Priya again and falls in love.

However, a local don, Ranki Reddy (played by Sunil), wants to seize the garage, as it is a prime property. He gives Rocky an ultimatum to vacate the garage. Meanwhile, Maya (played by Shraddha Srinath), an insurance agent,

joins Rocky's driving school to learn driving. After Rocky's father passes away, he is supposed to pay Rs 50 lakhs to Ranki Reddy within 10 days. At this critical juncture, Maya offers to help Rocky. To uncover the reasons behind Maya's willingness to help Rocky, Priya's death and the mystery surrounding Rocky's father's demise, watch *Mechanic Rocky*.

Analysis:

After exploring fantasy, supernatural and mythological themes, Tollywood is now shifting its focus to cybercrime stories. Director Ravi Teja Mullapudi has also chosen to tackle cyber-crime in his film *Mechanic Rocky*, starring Vishwak Sen. While the concept is intriguing, the director takes a long time to develop his point, resulting in a routine and boring first half, except for a few scattered jokes. The director's intention was to craft a thriller, but the film ultimately falls flat, despite numerous twists and turns in the second half. In fact, the story only begins to unfold in the second half, where the

REVIEW

director has woven in some interesting scenes. However, the climax is a major letdown, ending on a routine and silly note. Furthermore, the film lacks strong emotions, which is another significant drawback.

The director aimed to convey a serious message in the second half, but the first half is marred by silly jokes and unnecessary scenes. Many scenes feel dragged out, with characters forced into the narrative. Upon examining the film as a whole, it's clear that the first and second halves feel disjointed. When the director reveals key points, the audience can anticipate what will happen next. The film's non-linear storytelling, featuring multiple flashbacks, is an unconventional approach. The romance between Vishwak Sen and Meenakshi fail to impress and the songs are a major disappointment. Jakes Bejoy's music falls short of expectations.

Overall, while the director raises a relevant and serious issue, he fails to

execute it effectively.

Performance:

When it comes to performances, Vishwak Sen plays Mechanic Rocky in his usual style, but nothing stands out in this role. His character could have been stronger. Meenakshi Chaudhary, who has appeared in several recent films, delivers a better performance in this one. However, the highlight of the film is undoubtedly Shraddha Srinath, who steals the show with her impressive performance. In fact, she and Vishwak Sen are the saviours of the film.

Naresh plays the role of Rocky's father, which is a routine one for him. In the climax, he goes overboard in a scene with Aadi. Sunil has only three scenes in the film. Harshavardhan, Viva Harsha, Rachakonda Vishwadev and Raghuram all play their parts well. Unfortunately, Aadi's character is under-utilised. The dialogues are just okay and the music is average. On the other hand, the cinematography is good.

Cast: Vishwak Sen, Meenakshi Chaudhary, Shraddha Srinath, VK Naresh, Sunil, Rachakonda Vishwadev, Harshavardhan, Viva Harsha, Hyper Aadi and others

Director and writer: Ravi Teja Mullapudi

Producers: Rajani Talluri

Music: Jakes Bejoy

Cinematographer: Manojh Reddy

Katapani

Rating: 2/5



VERDICT
Mechanic Rocky fails to live up to its pre-release hype. Although the main plot is revealed only in the second half, it tackles a serious issue. Unfortunately, the director falters, as the first half is a tedious bore. While the twists and turns in the second half offer some interesting moments, the climax ultimately falls short of expectations.

Zebra: A misstep despite high hopes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Satya Dev, a talented actor known for his relentless efforts in the film industry, has yet to secure a major box-office success. With *Zebra*, directed by Eashvar Karthic, he pinned all his hopes on delivering a breakthrough. Co-starring Daali Dhananjay and Priya Bhavani Shankar, the film revolves around a banking scam and its far-reaching consequences. Let's dive into the story and see how it unfolds.

Story

Surya (played by Satya Dev) works at the Bank of Trust, while his fiancée, Swathi (played by Priya Bhavani Shankar), is employed at another bank. Swathi commits a major mistake at work and seeks Surya's help to rectify it. Using his deep understanding of banking loopholes, Surya, with the assistance of his friend (played by Satya), successfully covers up Swathi's error. However, this inadvertently draws the attention of Aadi (played by Daali Dhananjay), a notorious don, who loses money because of Surya's actions.

Aadi gives Surya an ultimatum: pay him Rs. 5 crores within ten days or face severe consequences. Left with no choice, Surya decides to use his knowl-

Cast: Satya Dev, Daali Dhananjay, Priya Bhavani Shankar, Satya Raj, Satya, Jennifer Piccinato and others

Story and Director: Eashvar Karthic

Producers: Bala Sundaram, SN Reddy, Dinesh Sundaram

Music: Ravi Basrur

Cinematographer: Sathya Ponmar

Rating: 1/5

edge of banking loopholes to gather the money. The story then explores how Surya navigates this challenge. Who is Aadi, and what led him to become a ruthless don? How does Sunil's character fit into the equation? And what role does Satya Raj play in this cybercrime-ridden tale? To uncover these answers, you'll need to watch *Zebra* on the big screen.

Analysis

Director Eashvar Karthic, who previously worked in banking, aimed to expose the sector's vulnerabilities. While the concept of uncovering fraud within the banking system sounds compelling on paper, its execution falls short. The narrative is

bogged down by excessive technical jargon and banking terminology, which alienates the common audience. Terms like ledger, deactivate accounts, activate accounts and credit and debit flows dominate the dialogue, making the plot difficult to follow.

The pacing is uneven, with a fast-paced first half that leaves viewers confused and a second half that drags. Despite a few engaging moments, the film largely fails to hold attention. Furthermore, multiple subplots and excessive cinematic liberties dilute the main story. Comedic elements, especially those involving Satya, often feel forced and fail to land.

The lack of emotional depth and well-written characters is another drawback. Even promising characters like Satya Raj and Sunil are underutilized, contributing little to the overall narrative. Films with similar themes, such as *Lucky Bhaskar* and *Mechanic Rocky*, have succeeded in blending technical details with relatable emotions, but *Zebra* struggles to achieve this balance.

REVIEW

Verdict

Zebra tests the audience's patience with its overly technical approach, lack of emotional connection and poorly executed narrative. While there are a few moments of intrigue, they are too sparse to salvage the film. Satya Dev, still searching for a much-deserved hit, will have to wait a little longer as *Zebra* adds another flop to his filmography.

Performances

Satya Dev, though he suits the role of a bank employee, this film does not showcase his acting prowess as effectively as his earlier works. Daali Dhananjay's character is flat and lacks emotional depth, leaving little room for him to shine. Priya Bhavani Shankar delivers a charming perfor-

mance and stands out in her role. Sunil and Satya Raj, both characters are poorly written and feel like wasted opportunities.

Cinematography and Music: The visuals are commendable, and Ravi Basrur's background score adds some energy, but the songs are underwhelming.

RC16 shooting in Mysore; Janhvi, Ram Charan to join soon

Buchi Babu Sana's much-awaited sports drama *RC 16*, starring Ram Charan and Janhvi Kapoor, officially began filming in Mysore. The director, known for his blockbuster debut *Uppena*, sought blessings at the Chamundeswari Matha temple before commencing the shoot. Sharing his excitement on social media, Buchi wrote, "It's a BIG DAY... Started with the blessings of Chamundeswari Matha, Mysore. Blessings needed. #RC16," along with a photo of himself holding the script.



Adding to the excitement, veteran actor Jagapathi Babu has joined the cast to play a pivotal role. Mythri Movie Makers, the production house, welcomed him, stating, "Team #RC16 welcomes the incredibly talented @lamjagguBhai on board for a commanding character that will impress one and all." This marks Jagapathi's second collaboration with Ram Charan after *Rangashalim*. The lead stars are expected to begin filming key scenes on Monday. Vijay Sethupathi, who previously collaborated with Buchi Babu, has already hailed the project as a "sure shot blockbuster."

Mohan babu's powerful look as Mahadeva Shastri revealed

A legendary actor Mohan Babu celebrates an extraordinary 50-year career in the film industry, the team behind his upcoming project *Kannappa* has unveiled a striking first-look poster of his character, Mahadeva Shastri, marking the milestone of his Golden Jubilee year.

In the intense and captivating poster, Mohan Babu stands in a powerful pose, dressed in traditional Brahmin attire, with Rudraksha malas adorning his neck and wrists. Holding a weapon, his solemn gaze reflects a deep sense of strength and reverence. The background features a congregation of devoted Lord Shiva followers, adding a spiritual essence to the visual.

The quote "Shaivism - When arrogance intertwines with faith, it births a force like no other: Mahadeva Shastri" offers a glimpse into the character's compelling role in the film.

Kannappa holds a special place for the Manchu family, as it unites three generations of stars, Mohan Babu, Vishnu Manchu and Avram Manchu. Alongside them, the film also



stars Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, Mohan Lal, Sharath Kumar and Kajal Aggarwal and is set for a pan-India release.

Devaki Nandana Vasudeva: A predictable action-packed ride

Ashok Galla, nephew of Superstar Mahesh Babu and son of businessman-politician Jayadev Galla, returns with his second film, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva*. Directed by Arjun Jandhyala, the film marks the debut of Miss India Manasa Varanasi as the lead actress and Devadatta Nage, known for his role as Bajrang in *Adipurush*, as the antagonist. With a story penned by Hanuman fame director Prashanth Varma, the film raised some expectations. Let's see how it fares.

Story

Kamsaraju (played by Devadatta Nage) is a ruthless landlord who eliminates anyone who dares oppose him. During a visit to Kashi, a Shiva sage warns him that his death will be caused by his sister's third child. Alarmed, Kamsaraju returns to his village and murders his brother-in-law. His sister (played by Devayani) gives birth to a girl, Satya Bham (played by Manasa Varanasi). Years later, Krishna (played by Ashok Galla), the son of Devaki (played by Jhansi), meets Satya Bham at a wedding and falls in love with her. Meanwhile, after spending 21 years in jail, Kamsaraju seeks vengeance on those who turned against him. Krishna inadvertently becomes close to Kamsaraju after saving him. The film unfolds as the prophecy takes center stage: how Krishna and Satya Bham are linked, and whether the sage's warning proves true, forms the crux of the story.

Cast: Ashok Galla, Manasa Varanasi, Devadatta Nage, Devayani, Jhansi, Sanjay Swaroop, and others

Story: Prashanth Varma

Director: Arjun Jandhyala

Producers: Balakrishna S

Music: Bheems Ceciroleo

Cinematographer: Prasad Murella

Rating: 2/5

Analysis

In recent years, Tollywood has embraced films with mythological and supernatural themes, as seen in hits like *Virupaksha*, *Hanuman*, and *Karthikeya*. Similarly, *Devaki Nandana Vasudeva* blends mythology with commercial elements. Prashanth Varma's influence is evident in the supernatural touches, while Arjun Jandhyala's association with Boyapati Sreenu brings intense action sequences into the mix.

The story incorporates mythological names—Kamsaraju, Devaki, Krishna and Satya Bham—but lacks depth. A slight twist in Satya Bham's character offers some intrigue, but the overall narrative is predictable. The protagonist, Krishna, portrayed by Ashok Galla, lacks the commanding screen presence

required for the action-heavy sequences. His lean physique and lower-boy demeanor make the fight scenes unrealistic. The romantic and comedic segments fail to engage, and the film struggles to maintain momentum until its final moments, which are somewhat gripping.

Performances

Ashok Galla delivers a marginally better performance compared to his debut, but he lacks the intensity needed for an action hero. Manasa Varanasi, in her debut role, offers a decent but unremarkable performance. Devadatta Nage, as the villain, delivers a bland portrayal. The dubbing adds volume to his lines, but his expressions lack conviction. Devayani and Jhansi provide adequate support. Satru performs well in his role. The dialogues are good and the cinematography is good. Music by Bheems music is average.

Verdict

Devaki Nandana Vasudeva is a routine commercial entertainer with mythological undertones. While the story shows

promise, the execution falters due to a predictable narrative and a lackluster protagonist. The film offers little novelty apart from its mythological references, with only the last ten minutes managing to pique interest. A formulaic attempt that fails to leave a lasting impact.

