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Speculations gain momentum in K'taka

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'INDIA NEEDS QUANTUM LEAP IN SCALE, SIZE OF FISCAL BODIES'

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Gold medalist-turned-director, Suku Purvaj taking Telugu cinema BY STORM

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The students in Telangana Government schools are still eating poison from their plates. Whether it is the BRS or the Congress, food poisoning remains a bitter reality. The Congress has inherited the incompetence of the BRS. Is it too much when we demand that governments should ensure safe meals for our kids?



- Bandi Sanjay, Minister of State for Home Affairs

P3

DON'T MISS...

9 stranded fishermen rescued from sea

The officials with the help of coast guard officials have rescued 9 stranded fishermen from the sea. Revenue Chief Secretary RP Sisodia told the media here on Wednesday that nine fishermen ventured into the sea for fishing. However their mechanized fishing boat broke down in the sea due to engine failure. The boat stranded in the sea 35 KMs away from Tirupati and 14 KMs from Vakadu. Revenue special chief secretary said that steps were taken on war footing to rescue the nine fishermen from the sea, keeping in view the impending...

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Replace Rahul, not EVM: BJP

The BJP on Wednesday said the Congress suffered a crushing defeat in Maharashtra assembly polls not because of the EVMs but poor management by its leadership, and asked the opposition party's president Mallikarjun Kharge to consider "replacing" Rahul Gandhi instead of the voting machines. Taking a swipe at the Congress president over his latest remarks on the EVMs, BJP Lok Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra also said Kharge can go to "planet Mars" taking...

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Debt on major telcos hits Rs 4.09 lakh cr

The total debt on four major telecom operators in the country stood at Rs 4,09,905 crore in the financial year 2024, with state-owned BSNL recording the lowest debt among competitors at Rs 23,297 cr, Parliament was informed on Wednesday. According to data shared by Minister of State for Communications Pemasani Chandra Sekhar in a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Vodafone Idea registered a debt of Rs 2.07 lakh crore, Bharti Airtel Rs 1.25 lakh crore and Jio...

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Gavaskar credits Kohli's adjustment

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar feels a subtle adjustment to his batting stance in the second innings of the Perth Test helped Virat Kohli neutralise the Australian attack and rediscover his vintage form. Kohli arrived in Australia after a lean run of form across formats in recent months. His struggles against spin on turning tracks raised doubts about his spot in the team. However, he silenced his detractors by scoring his 30th Test ton in the first Test at Perth. It was his first hundred...

-SPORTS

EAGLE eye on drug menace

Stringent action against cultivation and supply of ganja: HM

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Vangapudi Anitha has announced the formation of an Anti-Narcotics Task Force, named 'EAGLE', to combat the use and trafficking of drugs like ganja (cannabis). She said that the name 'EAGLE' was chosen by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu to represent the task force, as it signifies vigilance and strength against unlawful and anti-social elements.

During a meeting of the Ministers' Sub-Committee held at the Amaravati Secretariat on Wednesday, Anitha shared the government's plans to take stringent action against the cultivation and supply of ganja. She announced that Narcotic Control Cells and Narcotic Police Stations will be set up in every district. The government is also focused on raising public awareness and ensuring a complete ban on drug use across the State.

The Minister stressed that under the initiative 'Maha Sankalpam', large-scale awareness programmes will be organised. Plans are in place to conduct these programmes at the State, district, mandal, and village levels using slogans and pledges. Schools, colleges, universities, and local administrative bodies will engage the youth in extensive campaigns. In association with the Information and Public Relations (I&PR) Department and the Andhra Pradesh Drone Corporation, the



Anitha announced that Narcotic Control Cells and Narcotic Police Stations will be set up in every district. The government is also focused on raising public awareness and ensuring a complete ban on drug use across the State.

government will intensify public outreach to tackle the drug menace. The Home Minister confirmed that the Chief Minister will soon launch the 'Eagle 1972' toll-free helpline number to encourage the public to report information related to ganja and drugs. A strong system will be set up to take immediate action upon receiving complaints.

The task force aims to eradicate drugs and ganja through the use of modern technology. This includes the deployment of GPS tracking, RFID systems, AI-based CCTV surveillance, facial recognition, profiling, social media monitoring,

digital forensics, cyber intelligence, and IT technologies. Coordination between the police, General Administration, Medical, Forest departments, and district officials will ensure effective action on the ground. The Home Minister added that in the next six months, the government will make significant strides toward eliminating ganja and drugs from the State.

The Minister's Sub-committee meeting was attended by IT Minister Nara Lokesh, Medical and Health Minister Satya Kumar, Women and Child Welfare Minister Sandhya Rani, Excise and Mining Minister Kollu Ravindra and key officials.

MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

'Will interlink party with governance'

Chandrababu lauds MLAs, party leaders 52.45L members have enrolled themselves

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The membership enrolment programme was launched on October 26 and 52.45 lakh members have enrolled themselves till now, the TDP chief said and termed it as historic. Rajampet, Kuppam, Kalyanadurgam, Palakol, Atmakur, Mangalagiri, Kanigiri, Kodu, Vinukonda and Kavali stood on top 10 in membership enrolment, he said and appreciated the efforts of the local leaders in achieving this.

"Party activists worked very hard in the recent elections," the TDP chief said. "Some activists lost their properties and even lives during the previous government's rule. We lost those 11 seats by a slender margin," Chandrababu remarked during a teleconference with TDP MPs, MLAs, MLCs and village-level activists.

Maintaining that a political governance system has been introduced now, the Chief Minister said that the party will be interlinked with the government to take the welfare programmes ahead. Informing the party leaders that elections to irrigation societies and cooperative bodies will be held very soon, Chandrababu said that the party activists should work for the success of the NDA candidates.

"I also appreciate the efforts of IT Minister Nara Lokesh for evincing special interest in successfully taking the membership enrolment much forward to reach the goal," Chandrababu Naidu said. He said that the enrolment process has picked up very fast in Telangana, too.

It is the TDP that introduced the system of permanent membership with Rs 1 lakh which is getting tremendous response, he said and added that the membership fee will be utilised for the welfare of the needy party activists.

Continued on Page 2



'French aircraft, defence industries should look at India to set up base': P8

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to bolster the railway infrastructure and services in Visakhapatnam and its surrounding regions, MP Sriharat met with Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav on Wednesday. The meeting focused on a series of critical proposals aimed at preserving historical legacy, enhancing connectivity, and improving passenger services.

One of the key concerns raised by Sriharat was the proposed division of the historic Waltair Division within the newly-formed South

Website planned to track progress of Polavaram works

MINISTER REVIEWS PROGRESS OF IRRIGATION WORKS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Water Resources Minister Nimmala Ramanaidu has proposed that a website be created to track daily progress of the works at Polavaram. He stressed that the website should include detailed updates on the work completed each day. The Minister also confirmed that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu will visit the Polavaram Project during the first week of December to release the work schedule for the

construction of the diaphragm wall and the ECRF dam.

During a meeting with senior officials of the Irrigation Department at the Secretariat on Wednesday, the Minister reviewed the work schedules prepared by project officials and the contract agency for the construction of the diaphragm wall and ECRF.

Discussions were held on the necessary preparations to begin the work on the diaphragm wall. Additionally, the Minister instructed

the officials to immediately begin the remaining excavation and lining work for the tunnels that will connect the right and left canals of the project and complete them within the set timelines.

The Minister also highlighted that the tenders for the remaining works on the left canal had already been completed and directed that work should commence without delay. He enquired about the progress of land acquisition, rehabilitation, and compensation for displaced families.

Continued on Page 2

'Reconsider division of Waltair Division'

MP Sriharat urges Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Coast Railway (SCoR) Zone. Emphasising its crucial role in freight revenue generation and its significance as an administrative hub, the MP urged the Ministry to reconsider this decision.

While commending the Ministry for initiating the tender process for the SCoR Zone headquarters, Sriharat called for its expedited operationalisation. Suggesting the utilisation of existing resources, he urged the Ministry to implement temporary arrangements to ensure a smooth transition. "With the groundwork already laid, the SCoR Zone's

launch can be accelerated, catalysing growth and fulfilling the aspirations of the people," he noted.

Sriharat also proposed the introduction of a daily direct train service between Visakhapatnam and Bengaluru, citing the growing demand and the success of special trains on this route. Additionally, he advocated for the launch of a Vande Bharat Express service between Visakhapatnam and Tirupati, highlighting its potential to boost pilgrimage tourism and regional economic development.

Continued on Page 2



DGP inaugurates HMV Simulator Centre

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director General of Police (DGP) Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao inaugurated the Modern Heavy Vehicle Driving Training Simulator Centre on the Police Transport Organisation (PTO) premises at the Sixth Andhra Pradesh Police Battalion (APSP) at Mangalagiri in the Guntur district on Wednesday. The HMV is an indoor training

institution and it will improve heavy vehicle driving skills. After inaugurating the Modern Heavy Vehicle Driving Training Simulator, DGP Tirumala Rao enquired the officials concerned about its working.

Inspector General of Police (Law & Order) Srikanth, IGs P Venkatarami Reddy, M Ravi Prakash, KV Mohana Rao, PTO SP KSSV Subba Reddy and others were present.

SALE AND EXPORT OF SEIZED RED SANDERS WOOD

Pawan proposes single window system

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan emphasized that a single window system be adopted for the sale and export of seized red sander wood.

Pawan Kalyan met Union Minister for Forest and Environment Bhupendra in New Delhi on Wednesday. He explained the necessity of setting up a single window system to sell the seized red sander wood announcing that the AP forest Department would be custodian to the single window system.

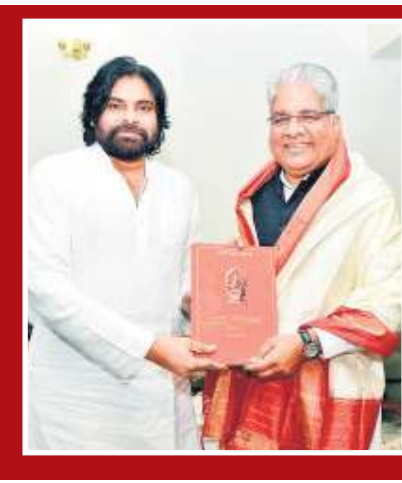
The Deputy Chief Minister informed the Union Minister that the process of selling and exporting red sander wood should be changed to a single window system, which would lead to better results in the 'e-auction'

conducted at the international level.

He explained to the Union Minister stating: "As recently proposed by the Botanical Survey of India, it will be good to have a single window system for the sale and export of red sandalwood. The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department will act as the custodian for this policy. The A P Forest Department will also conduct grading, auction and export of red sandalwood. Thus, revenue will increase through e-auction."

If the red sander wood is seized in any State, the red sander wood should be sold through the single window of AP. If the single window system is implemented, the respective States can not sell the red sander wood on their own because they should do the same through the single window, he told the Union Minister.

Meets Union Minister for Forest Bhupendra



"As recently proposed by the Botanical Survey of India, it will be good to have a single window system for the sale and export of red sandalwood. The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department will act as the custodian for this policy. The A P Forest Department will also conduct grading, auction and export of red sandalwood. Thus, revenue will increase through e-auction."

Opposition protests rock Parliament on 2nd day of winter session

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament failed to transact any significant business on the second day of the winter session as protests by opposition members who were pressing for discussions on allegations of irregularities against the Adani Group, Sambhal violence and other issues rocked both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The two Houses were adjourned once in the morning and later for the day amid continuing uproar by opposition members.

Soon after the Lok Sabha met, Speaker Om Birla took up the Question Hour, but adjourned the House proceedings following sloganeering by the opposition members.

Continued on Page 2

Adani scam: How political nexus lets the guilty evade justice

The United States' legal action against the Adani Group has sent shockwaves through global financial and political circles, unveiling allegations of financial and ethical misconduct. At the heart of this unfolding controversy lies a contentious solar power agreement between the erstwhile YS Jagan Mohan Reddy-led Andhra Pradesh government and the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). This deal is now mired in suspicion, with explosive claims that Adani either paid or pledged a staggering Rs 1,750 crore as an 'incentive' to the then Andhra Pradesh regime. These allegations spotlight larger issues of corruption, accountability, and the opaque nexus between politics and big business.

The alleged kickbacks and the solar power deal
The Andhra Pradesh govern-

ment signed a 7-megawatt solar power agreement with SECI, involving the Adani Group as a key stakeholder. Allegations suggest that this deal came with a hefty price: Rs 1,750 crore, purportedly offered as a 'kickback' to facilitate the agreement. Such a figure is unprecedented and mind-boggling, shedding light on how large-scale corruption may have influenced a vital public sector project.

For a state like Andhra Pradesh, already grappling with financial constraints, entering into such a costly agreement without due diligence has profound implications. The real burden, however, will ultimately fall on the people of Andhra Pradesh, who are likely to face steep power tariffs in the years to come as a result of this questionable deal. The very purpose of solar energy as a cost-effective and sustainable solu-

The Andhra Pradesh government signed a 7-megawatt solar power agreement with SECI, involving the Adani Group as a key stakeholder. Allegations suggest that this deal came with a hefty price: Rs 1,750 crore, purportedly offered as a 'kickback' to facilitate the agreement

tion is undermined when such allegations of corruption surface.

While national and international media have zeroed in on Adani, portraying the company as the bribe giver, the question of accountability for the bribe takers remains conspicuously unanswered. Among them, the spotlight inevitably falls on the Andhra Pradesh government and key officials who may have facilitated this deal. The identity of 'AP

Official #1'—a term used to hint at the highest echelons of the state administration—is yet to be disclosed, but suspicions naturally circle around YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's administration.

The lack of inquiry into the state government's role is perplexing. It highlights a troubling asymmetry in the focus of investigations, with the bribe takers facing scrutiny while the bribe givers remain largely unscathed.



RAMESH KANDULA
Chief Editor Swatantra TV and author

The Modi government's ambivalence

A striking element of this saga is the apparent reluctance of the Modi government to push Indian investigative agencies into action. Adani's alleged proximity to Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been a subject of considerable debate. Critics

argue that this relationship is the primary reason why central agencies have not been instructed to probe the allegations thoroughly.

The inaction speaks volumes about the selective application of justice in cases involving influential individuals or entities. The Modi government's silence, despite the gravity of the allegations, raises questions about its commitment to transparency and anti-corruption.

Andhra Pradesh's peculiar political silence

Interestingly, the alliance government in Andhra Pradesh, comprising the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and Jana Sena, appears equally uninterested in addressing the issue. Neither the TDP nor the Jana Sena has shown any inclination to initiate an inquiry, fearing repercussions

from the central government. Their reluctance stems from a desire not to ruffle feathers in Delhi, especially given Adani's perceived clout with the Modi administration.

YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, who is viewed as the most likely recipient of the alleged Adani kickbacks, remains nonchalant. His confidence seemingly stems from the belief that he will not be held accountable, given Adani's role as a 'shield' against legal consequences. Such a scenario creates a dangerous precedent where political leaders feel emboldened to act without fear of retribution.

The people pay the price

The most disheartening aspect of this issue is its impact on the people of Andhra Pradesh. The state's residents are set to bear the financial brunt of this flawed agreement through inflated power tariffs. Solar energy, touted as a solu-

tion to reduce costs and dependency on fossil fuels, has become an economic burden due to alleged corruption.

Ideally, the state government should take immediate action to investigate the matter and ensure that public interest is safeguarded. However, the peculiar political situation, where no party wants to antagonize the central government or the Adani Group, has left the issue in limbo. This abdication of responsibility by both the ruling and opposition parties is a betrayal of public trust.

The Adani case and its ramifications on Andhra Pradesh's solar power agreement reveal a troubling nexus of politics, business, and corruption. The silence of both state and central governments on this issue is a stark reminder of the challenges India faces in ensuring accountability in public life.

'Expedite works on additional sand reaches in all districts'

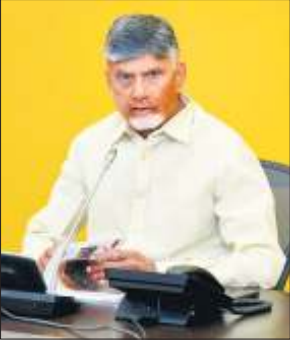
PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To address the public concerns and improve the efficiency of sand operations across the State, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu held a review meeting on Wednesday. The meeting focused on ensuring adequate sand supply, promoting transparency, and curbing illegal sand activities.

The CM gave key directions to officials to expedite the operationalisation of additional sand reaches in all districts. The District Level Sand Committees (DLSCs) and the Mines & Geology Department have been tasked with identifying viable sand reaches, securing necessary permissions, and ensuring both manual and semi-mechanised reaches operate at full capacity to meet consumer needs efficiently.

The CM, emphasising convenience of the citizens, reiterated that consumers requiring sand

CM reviews sand operation, issues key directions on transparency and supply



for personal use should be allowed access without unnecessary delays or restrictions. He stressed that no individual should face undue obstacles in procuring sand for personal construction or other requirements, in line with the Government Order. The Chief Minister directed

that consumers should be charged only for excavation costs at the sand reaches, and strictly warned against any form of overcharging. He stressed the need for officials to ensure compliance with this directive, reinforcing transparency in pricing.

In an effort to reduce sand costs for consumers, the Chief Minister instructed officials to review and revise the district-wise cost structure. The review should focus on identifying nearby sand reaches to minimise transportation costs, with a detailed proposal to be presented at the next review meeting.

A robust consumer feedback system was also a key focus of the review. The Chief Minister directed the integration of an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) with the Real-

Time Governance System (RTGS) to capture daily consumer feedback. The system will be operational starting on Thursday, with close monitoring to ensure prompt action on grievances.

To combat illegal sand transportation, the Chief Minister instructed the establishment of interstate check-posts equipped with advanced surveillance cameras and adequate personnel.

He also directed district police forces to closely monitor sand transportation activities and take strict action against violators.

The Chief Minister stressed his commitment to ensuring transparency, efficiency, and accessibility in sand operations, while addressing the concerns of consumers and stakeholders. He called for collaborative efforts between departments to ensure that sand is made available to all sections of society at affordable costs.

Negligence of previous Govt led to water supply issues: Minister

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Municipal Administration Minister P Narayana has stated that the drinking water problems in certain parts of Vijayawada are a result of negligence by the previous government. He made this comment while reviewing the pending works and development projects within the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) limits, along with VMC officials, public representatives, and others.

The MLAs brought to the Minister's attention that some areas in the city are facing inadequate drinking water supply. Officials suggested the construction of new water tanks in certain locations to address this problem. The Minister immediately directed the authorities to take action and allocate necessary funds from the VMC's general funds for these projects.

Dinakar highlights key developmental projects during Delhi visit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Lanka Dinakar, Chairman of the Twenty Points Programme implementation, has outlined significant strides towards the development of Andhra Pradesh. He expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the approval of substantial funding from the Central government, including ₹15,000 crore for the construction of Amaravati and ₹12,000 crore for the completion of the Polavaram project.

Dinakar also acknowledged the Central government's decision to invest heavily in the State's power sector through NTPC and the petrochemical complex through BPCL. He highlighted the ongoing discussions with NITI Aayog advisors regarding the long-term development of Andhra Pradesh, focusing on seven Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the discussion with



water via the Jal Jeevan Mission and Amrut schemes, financial support needed for projects like the Veligonda project to combat poverty in backward regions, promotion of green energy and transparency in Production Linked Incentives (PLI), and job creation and fostering a conducive environment for investment.

Dinakar also met with Minister for Civil Aviation Rammoan Naidu to discuss the aviation infrastructure and the proposed airport in Ongole. He praised the efforts of CM Chandrababu Naidu and DCM Pawan Kalyan for driving development in the State, including the Skill Census initiative launched by Nara Lokesh, which could potentially become a nationwide programme. Dinakar reiterated achieving the goal of "Swarnandhra" (Golden Andhra) and ensured that the State plays a key role in India's overall development.

Website planned...

Continued from Page 1

On December 8, elections for the Agricultural Water Users Associations will be held. The Minister has directed the officials to make arrangements to ensure that the elections are conducted peacefully. He urged the Revenue and Irrigation departments to coordinate effectively for the elections. The Minister explained that these elections will provide farmers with a platform for involvement and representation in irrigation projects like canals and drains.

The review meeting covered urgent irrigation works, including the Handri-Neeva, Velugonda, Chintalapudi, Godavari-Penna River Link, Budameru, and IDCs repairs. The officials also reported the DPRs (Detailed Project Reports) for the Godavari Delta.

Special Chief Secretary, Water Resources Department, G Sai Prasad, KAD Commissioner Ramasundara Reddy, ENC M Venkateswara Rao, Polavaram CE Narasimha Murthy, and other Chief Engineers, Superintending Engineers, and representatives from the contract agencies were present.

Govt restores Mobilisation Advance in all depts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government, led by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, has made an important decision to restore the Mobilisation Advance provision in all government departments. This initiative aims to expedite various project works across the State.

Water Resources Department Special Chief Secretary G Sai Prasad, on Wednesday, issued the G.O.Ms.No.57 to restore the Mobilisation Advance provision which prevailed before the cancellation of the G.O.Ms.No.83 on December 12, 2019. The previous YSRCP government cancelled the provision of mobilisation advances in

Previous Govt had cancelled the provision

the State.

A meeting of the Board of Chief Engineers (BoCEs), held on October 25, was chaired by the Engineer-in-Chief, who also serves as the chairman of the BoCEs. He recommended that the government reinstate the Mobilisation Advance within the department. After a thorough review, the State government decided to restore the provision across all government departments, particularly in the Water Resources Department.

According to the Government Order (G.O.), contractors whose projects have an estimated cost exceeding Rs. 1 crore may receive a Mobilisation Advance of up to 10 per cent of the contract value. This advance requires an unconditional and irrevocable bank guarantee. The advance will incur interest at a rate aligned with the government borrowing rate and will be deducted in appropriate instalments from the contractors' bills.

The government has established several conditions for accessing Mobilisation Advances. According to the regulations, an unconditional bank guarantee must remain valid until the entire mobilisation advance is recovered from the contractor or agency. Additionally, a time frame may be set for encashing the bank guarantee if the contractor or agency fails to initiate work without valid reasons. A specific interest rate will be applied to the outstanding mobilisation advance, based on the prevailing one-year marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR) of the State Bank of India, which is currently nine per cent effective from November 15.

'Will interlink party with...

Continued from Page 1

The insurance amount, too, has been increased to Rs 5 lakh, the Chief Minister said and promised to take all possible measures for promoting the party activists both financially and politically.

He also announced that heads for all the organisations in the party will soon be appointed. Stating that Rs 1,400 crore has been sanctioned for roads repair, the Chief Minister said that the State Government will ensure that no road in the State will have pits by Sankranthi. "We are marching ahead with the aim of providing employment to the youth. This is a government that gives highest priority for welfare. Also, we are giving importance to good governance and laying stone for development," the CM said.

'Reconsider division of...

Continued from Page 1

The strategic importance of Duvvada Railway Station, currently being upgraded under the Amrit Bharat scheme, was also highlighted. Sriharat proposed an additional stop for the Vande Bharat Express trains at the station, recognising its key role in serving fast-growing areas such as Gajuwaka, Lankeleppalem, and Steel Plant Town.

Ashwini Vaishnav responded positively to the proposals, assuring Sriharat that the Ministry will carefully examine all suggestions. He reiterated the Ministry's commitment to addressing the railway needs of Visakhapatnam and supporting the region's long-term development.

AP will turn maritime hub...

Continued from Page 1

To transform the State as a maritime hub, the CM gave a few directions that include adopting the Hub and Spoke model to focus on the development of high-capacity ports: Integrate Port Proximal areas with industries, the Roads and Buildings (R&B) Department, and the Tourism Department; link the State's three industrial corridors for future development; encourage public-private partnerships for the creation of essential infrastructure; promote the P4 model for the development of fishing harbours and ports; attract global companies to establish ship-building and ship repair industries in the State; implement a hybrid model for inland waterways, including RO-RO (Roll-on/Roll-off) and RO-PAX services; integrate tourism and green energy initiatives into the maritime sector. Collaborate with the Indian Maritime University (IMU), CEMS, and IITs for skill development, research, and other necessary aspects for establishing a Maritime University in the State; and introduce best practices for arbitration and dispute resolution mechanisms in the sector through reforms.

The CM further ordered the strengthening of the AP Maritime Board and stressed the importance of developing maritime tourism, including cruise terminals and floating hotels. He also advocated for building clean energy-powered ports to promote self-sufficiency. The CM highlighted that

the State has secured the second position in the country in exim cargo handling under the non-major port category, with a growth rate of 16 per cent. He also projected that the State's GDP would reach ₹15.89 lakh crore in the current financial year. AP has emerged as the leading state in marine food product exports, with a 32 per cent growth in the last fiscal year. Furthermore, the State contributes 4.84 per cent to the national GDP in the 2023-24 period.

Currently, AP has a major port at Visakhapatnam, along with five non-major ports and four greenfield ports under construction. The State also has seven notified ports. In the fishing harbour sector, the construction of Phase-1 harbours in Juvvaladinne, Uppada, Nizampatnam, and Machilipatnam is underway, while Phase-2 harbours at Budagalapalem (Srikakulam), Pudumadaka (Anakapalli), Kothapatnam (Prakasam), Odalarevu (Bapatla), Biyyapatthip (West Godavari), and Manchinnellapet (Srikakulam) are in the proposal stage.

The State has implemented the AP Port Policy-2015, which emphasises port development, cargo transportation to North and Central India, encouraging the private sector, fostering a competitive environment, and ensuring transparency.

Now, officials are working on finalising the Maritime Policy-2024, which will further boost the sector.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Trayodashi: Nov 28 06:24 AM to Nov 29 08:40 AM
Nakshatram: Chitra: Nov 27 04:34 AM to Nov 28 07:36 AM
Swati: Nov 28 07:36 AM to Nov 29 10:18 AM
Rahukalam: 1:27 PM to 2:50 PM
Yamagandam: 6:32 AM to 7:55 AM
Varjyam: 01:49 PM to 03:36 PM
Gulika: 9:18 AM to 10:41 AM
Amritakalam: 12:30 AM to 02:17 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:42 AM to 12:26 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly Cloudy
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 49%
Sunrise: 6:18 AM
Sunset: 5:33 PM
Updated: November 27, 2024 5:00 PM

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
ROADS AND BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
S/NIT No. 06/MDR/EN/MDR/2024 Date: 25-11-2024
Online tenders are invited for 5 No. of works for an amount of Rs. 11.64 Crores in Eluru District, 2 No. of works for Rs. 7.80 Crores in Aluri Sitarasanjou District & 1 No. of work for Rs. 2.37 Crores in NTR District under State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF). Tenderers can download the tender schedules and have further details from www.apspcmprocurement.gov.in from 3.00 PM on 29.11.2024 onwards.
Sd/- Engineer-in-Chief (R&B), Major District Roads.
S.D.No: 14693/CLAD/NIT/11/2024-25, Dt: 27.11.2024

'Focus on promoting natural farming'

Officials also told to encourage farmers to get high-earning alternative crops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmi instructed the Agriculture, Horticulture and Micro-Irrigation officials to pay special attention to promoting natural farming and creating awareness among farmers about nature farming practices. The natural farming produces are useful for the people to be healthy, he said. During the meeting, the Collector set a target to expand the oil palm crops by 2,000 hectares in the district. After assuming the position, Dr Lakshmi is conducting a series of meetings with all departmental officials to put the district in the first place in the State. He conducted a meeting with agriculture, horticulture and micro-irrigation officials at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday.



NTR District Collector Dr Lakshmi addressing a meeting with agriculture, horticulture and micro-irrigation department officials at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Wednesday

The officials explained their activities. The Collector discussed the total irrigation extent, availability of fertilisers, seeds, quality tests, distribution of the Crop Cultivator Rights Cards (CCRC), crop loans, crop insurance and

other issues.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that the district should be in first place in natural farming and for that officials concerned should strive to increase the extent of cultivation by creating awareness among the farmers. Also,

officials should encourage farmers to get high-earning alternative crops. There is a chance to earn more income by cultivating internal crops in cotton, he added.

Further, he directed the officials to create awareness among farmers on Ind GAP

Certification to enhance the market value for agriculture products. He said that officials should organise the 'Polam Pilustondi' programme regularly every Tuesday and Wednesday to overcome problems that are faced in cultivation. Also, he suggested that

Rythu Seva Kendras (RSKL) and Village Agriculture Assistants (VAA) can play a key role in this regard.

Meanwhile, he pointed out the paddy procurement at the RSKs and asked for the coordination between officials and staff needed. The officials explained that mango is the main horticulture crop in G Konduru, Mylavaram, Reddigudem, Tiruvuru, A Konduru, Vissannapeta and Vijayawada Rural. Also, mirchi is the next important crop in Jaggayyapeta, Penugachiprolu, Vatsavai, Nandigama, Chandrapadu, Veerulapadu and Gampalagudem mandals, they said.

The State and Central governments are implementing many schemes for the development of agriculture, horticulture and allied sectors besides the welfare of the farmers, he added.

NTR District in-charge Agriculture Officer (DAO) DMF Vijaya Kumar, Horticulture Officer P Balaji Kumar, ApMIP PD M Subani and others attended the meeting.



Minister: Govt aims to promote entrepreneurship

Minister Savitha unveils plan to bolster MSMEs

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for BC Welfare, EWS, Handloom and Textiles S Savitha said that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu aim is to nurture entrepreneurship with every household. Addressing at the swearing-in ceremony of KK Choudhary as Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Khadi and Village Industries Board in Vijayawada on Wednesday, Minister Savitha unveiled the government's plan to bolster Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and promote the Khadi Board's initiatives. These will be supported through a range of incentives and subsidized loans aimed at creating job opportunities and sustainable livelihoods.

"We aim to generate employment for 2 million youth over the next five years," said Savitha, stressing that the vision is being actively pursued by Chief Minister and Minister Nara Lokesh. She

added that the government intends to set up units for aspiring entrepreneurs, ranging from eighth-grade school leavers to post-graduate individuals. These entrepreneurs will be provided with necessary financial support, including loans and incentives, to help create opportunities across districts and constituencies.

In line with the government's vision, awareness programs will be held to educate the public about the benefits of the subsidized loans and how to apply for them. "The goal is to turn individuals into industrialists, enabling them to become job creators and not just job seekers," the Minister stated.

Minister Savitha also noted the government's focus on uplifting youth through self-employment schemes, further acknowledging the tireless efforts of CM Chandrababu and Minister Nara Lokesh to implement this vision.

Reflecting on the political challenges of the past five years, Savitha recalled the oppressive governance faced by party members under the previous YSR Congress-led government. She highlighted the leadership role of Nara Lokesh in the 'Yuva Galam' movement, which opposed the harsh policies of the then government, and praised the unwavering support from the youth during those turbulent times.

Savitha said that the party leadership recognises and rewards loyalists by offering them positions in various government corporations, as a token of appreciation for their commitment during difficult periods.

The event also saw the felicitations of KK Choudhary by Ministers Kollu Ravindra and BC Janardhan Reddy, with the participation of prominent figures, including AP Seed Corporation Chairman Subba Reddy.

Durga Temple nets Rs. 3.80 crore in Hundi



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada earned Rs.3,80,77,021 hundi income. After the Dasara Sarannavaratri festivities, the temple authorities opened Hundis for the fourth time and conducted the counting process on Wednesday. During the counting, the temple earned Rs.3,80,77,021 besides 559 grams of gold and 7.020 kgs of silver ornaments.

Also, devotees offered the follow-

ing currencies to the goddess Sri Kanaka Durga: 615 USA Dollars, 55 Australian dollars, 8 Dinars Kuwait, 110 UAE Dirhams, 10 Singapore Dollars, 25 Canadian dollars, 0.5 Omani Riyals, 25 Canada Dollars, 30 British Pounds (England), 19 Saudi Riyals, 33 Malaysian Ringets, and 77 Kathar Riyals.

Durga Temple EO KS Rama Rao, Deputy EO Ratna Raju supervised the hundi counting process. Also, Police, Endowment, Special Protection Force and One Town police officials participated in the counting process.

Govt ignored farmers' plight: YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party Central Constituency Coordinator and former MLA Malladi Vishnu has demanded that the government immediately address the issues faced by farmers during the current Kharif paddy procurement season. He strongly reacted to the difficulties faced by farmers in the Krishna district's Kankipadu mandal, particularly in the villages of Punadipadu and Kolavenna.

Vishnu criticised the government for its failure to provide even basic facilities like gunny bags and transportation for farmers.

He accused millers and traders of colluding and reducing the price of paddy.

KGH launches 'Emicizumab' treatment for haemophilia patients

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Children's Department of King George Hospital (KGH) has rolled out the revolutionary drug Emicizumab to treat haemophilia patients with inhibitors. The initiative, part of a pilot project, was inaugurated on Wednesday by Dr P. Sivananda, the hospital's Superintendent Medical Officer.

"This is not just a treatment; it's a lifeline for patients who no longer respond to traditional therapies. Emicizumab brings hope and a new lease on life to those battling the challenges of haemophilia with inhibitors," said Dr Sivananda during the launch.

For haemophilia patients, the current options—Factor 8, Factor 7, and APCP—fail to work once inhibitors develop, making it impossible for their blood to clot.

This condition leads to



severe bleeding, which can be fatal. Emicizumab, however, is a game-changer.

"This medicine, administered every 15 days, not only prevents excessive bleeding but also protects patients from severe complications like intracranial haemorrhage, arthropathy, joint fibrosis, and lifelong disabilities," Dr. Sivananda explained.

The drug comes at a high cost of Rs 43,000 for 30 milligrams, translating to Rs 26 lakh per year per patient. Under the pilot initiative, the government has committed Rs 52 lakh to provide the treatment for two patients.

Drug trafficking: Delivery networks under scrutiny

Police hold meeting of parcel, courier, and e-commerce company representatives

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a pivotal initiative to combat the escalating menace of drug trafficking, a high-level coordination meeting convened on Wednesday, bringing together representatives from parcel, courier, and e-commerce companies alongside senior police officials and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). The meeting aimed to fortify measures against the alarming exploitation of delivery networks for the transportation of illegal narcotics.

The meeting delved into the pressing issue of traffickers misusing delivery services and outlined strategic countermeasures to address the problem. Presentations during the session underscored the growing risks associated with unchecked parcel movements and established protocols for enhanced operational security.



City Police Commissioner Dr. Shankharathra Bagchi emphasised the pivotal role played by public vigilance in the fight against drug trafficking. "If you notice anything unusual, such as questionable parcels or suspicious behaviour, please inform us immediately on 7995095799," he urged attendees and the public alike. "Your vigilance is crucial in eradicating this menace." He added, reinforcing the importance of community engagement in supporting law enforcement efforts.

Officials from the NCB and city police further elaborated on identifying suspicious activities, highlighting critical indicators such as parcels originating from dubious locations, incomplete addresses, and discrepancies in identification. "Look for frequent bookings by the same individuals, mismatched shipping costs, and unusual packaging," they advised delivery companies. "These red flags should alert you to potential illegal activities."

To bolster security within

the delivery networks, authorities proposed a comprehensive set of measures. Recommendations included stringent ID verification, maintaining detailed shipment records, implementing real-time tracking systems, conducting regular package screenings, and providing training for delivery personnel. "We need complete cooperation from delivery companies to strengthen our checks," stated Sachin Gorpade, Zonal Director of the NCB. "By working together, we can prevent

the misuse of these networks for illegal activities."

The meeting concluded with a strong commitment among senior officials to tackle this urgent challenge proactively. In a collective pledge, they vowed to respond swiftly to reported suspicions, leveraging the expertise of narcotics teams and sniffer dogs. As the community gears up to unite against drug trafficking, Visakhapatnam aims to disrupt harmful networks and safeguard its future from the pervasive threat of narcotics.

Acid leak at Tagore Pharma Lab claims one life

Two persons critical

PNS ■ ANAKAPALLI

One person lost their life, and eight others experienced uneasiness following a hydrochloric acid leak at Tagore Laboratory in Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City in Parwada mandal. The affected individuals are currently receiving treatment in the critical care unit at KIMS Hospital, where their condition is under close observation.

Around 4.30 pm on November 26, 400 liters of liquid hydrochloric acid leaked from a reactor-cum-receiver tank (GLR-325) at the pharmaceutical plant. The spill, which occurred on the factory grounds, initially caused no immediate health concerns, but nine workers who were nearby soon began to show symptoms of severe respiratory distress, including coughing and difficulty breathing.

"The workers were quickly transferred to Pawan Sai Hospital in Gajuwaka for initial treatment," said District Collector Vijaya Krishnan.

"Three of them were then moved to KIMS Hospital in Sheelanagar for further care. Tragically, 23-year-old Amit, a helper from Odisha, passed away while undergoing treatment at 12:30 pm on Wednesday." The two remaining workers are on ventilators and remain in critical condition. "We are closely monitoring their health, and our medical team is doing everything possible to provide care," added Krishnan. Six other workers are reportedly in stable condition and under medical observation.

Authorities have launched an investigation to ascertain the cause of the leak. "An inspection will be conducted at the accident site in coordination with the Inspector of Factories. CCTV footage is also being reviewed to identify any lapses," Krishnan said. The family of Amit has filed a formal complaint seeking legal action against the company. "We are committed to ensuring justice for the victims and will take strict action against those found responsible," assured Krishnan.

Young environmentalists discuss sustainable solutions

Visakhapatnam generates 1,200 tonnes waste daily, Rs. 2,400 per tonne needed to treat

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GVMC Commissioner P. Sampath Kumar highlighted the city's growing environmental challenges, particularly the issue of solid waste management. "Visakhapatnam generates a staggering 1,200 tonnes of solid waste daily, which costs a hefty Rs. 2,400 per tonne to treat," he said, emphasising the unsustainable financial burden. He also expressed concern over rising air pollution levels, which pose a serious threat to public health. To address these issues, the GVMC is implementing various initiatives, including the establishment of sewage treatment plants and increasing power generation from waste.

However, Commissioner Kumar stressed the importance of individual action: "We need to adopt the principles of reduce, reuse, and recycle to ensure a clean-



er, healthier environment for future generations."

Prof. Sadhan K. Ghosh, president of ISWMAW, praised the potential of young people in driving environmental change. He highlighted the success of waste management initiatives in northeastern States, where thousands of students are actively involved in recycling and reuse. "Children have shown that they are willing to lead by

example," he said, announcing plans to extend similar projects to Visakhapatnam.

GITAM in-charge Vice-Chancellor Prof. Y. Gowtham Rao emphasised the urgent need for India to prioritise environmental sustainability. He called for the widespread adoption of sustainable practices, including the reduction of waste, the reuse of materials, and the transition to renewable energy sources.

FOOD SAFETY IN TELANGANA

Congress govt continuing BRS' negligence: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, has strongly criticised the Congress Government in Telangana for its handling of food safety in government schools, alleging that the negligence of the BRS admin continues unabated.

Posting on X, Sanjay pointed out that food poisoning incidents remain a recurring issue under the Congress government, betraying the trust of students and their families.

"Telangana government school students are still eating poison," he

stated and accused both the BRS and Congress governments of incompetence.

Sanjay argued that while the Congress claimed to bring change, the only change witnessed was the change in power, with the plight of schoolchildren remaining unchanged. He emphasised the repeated failures of governments in ensuring the safety of mid-day meals for children, stating, "This is not just a failure but a betrayal of trust."

Sanjay also raised questions about the Congress government's ability to govern effectively, citing its inability to address even basic responsibilities like providing safe food for children.

our children destined to suffer because both the BRS and Congress governments lack the basic competence to provide safe food? Power changed hands, but negligence stayed the same," he remarked.

The BJP leader also called on the Congress government to take immediate action to address the issue of food poisoning in schools. He urged them to prioritize the safety and well-being of children, stating that the negligence reflects poorly on the administration's capability to lead the state.

Sanjay's comments come in the context of the recent food poisoning incidents in government schools, which have sparked outrage among parents and opposition parties alike.

The BJP has demanded stricter measures to ensure food safety in schools and prevent harm to students.



EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION OF JAL JEEVAN MISSION

Pawan Kalyan seeks PM Modi's cooperation

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Deputy Chief Minister and Minister for Panchayat Raj K Pawan Kalyan has sought the cooperation of the Central government to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission programme in AP efficiently.

Pawan Kalyan met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday. On the occasion, he explained to the Prime Minister that the erstwhile YSRCP regime neglected the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission programme efficiently.

"We are committed to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission project in order to provide purified drinking water to every household in the rural areas," he told the Prime Minister. Pawan Kalyan explained to the Prime Minister the plans of the AP Government to implement the Jal Jeevan Mission efficiently and successfully in AP.

"Despite the Centre allocated Rs 23,000 crore for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission programme during



"Despite the Centre allocated Rs 23,000 crore for the implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission programme during the previous YSRCP regime, the YSRCP Government utilized only Rs 2000 crore for the implementation of the programme. Moreover the works carried out during the previous government under the Jal Jeevan Mission were of no use since the works were poor in quality," he told the Prime Minister.

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Pawan Kalyan informed him that the AP Government is committed to provide purified drinking water to the people of rural areas round the clock and

the DPR in this regard is being prepared. Pawan Kalyan appealed to the Prime Minister to sanction additional funds under the Jal Jeevan Mission to do away with drinking water scarcity in the rural areas.



Collector underlines need for creating awareness against child marriages

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector Chadalavada Nagarani has underlined the need of creating awareness against child marriages and she released a wall poster 'Bal Vivaha Mukh Bharat'.

Union Women and Child Welfare Minister Annappurna Devi in New Delhi on Wednesday launched a national campaign against child marriages. State Women and Child Welfare department officials organised a programme virtually in which the district Collector and other officials participated here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said that the objective is to make the country child marriage-free through the 'Bal Vivaha Mukh Bharat' campaign. She said that child

Speaking on the occasion, Collector Nagarani said that the objective is to make the country child marriage-free through the "Bal Vivaha Mukh Bharat" campaign. She said that child marriage is a social evil and that child marriage has a serious impact on the education, protection, health and development of girls, adding that child marriage deprives them of the opportunity to achieve their dreams and contribute

safety of children adding that everyone's support is needed to realize a child marriage-free Andhra Pradesh. The Collector warned that it is against the law to marry girls under the age of 18 or boys under the age of 21, and that anyone who encourages this will have to go to jail. She also warned that offenders would be punished with two years in prison and a fine of Rs 1 lakh.

The District Collector appealed to the people to dial 100 and 112 to provide information to the police on child marriages. District Women and Child Welfare officer B Sujatarani, DMHO Dr.D Maheswara Rao and Education department AD K Sandya and ICDS Nodal officer Vijaylakshmi were among those who were present.

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one to make every possible effort to prevent child marriages. She directed the panchayat and government officials to bring to the notice of the government about any attempt to facilitate child marriages.

The Collector advised every-

steps for the education and

Heavy to very heavy rain in south coastal AP, Rayalaseema



PNS ■ GUNTUR

The Deep Depression over Southwest Bay of Bengal is very likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by tonight. Heavy to very heavy rainfall at a few places with isolated extremely heavy rainfall likely over Coastal Andhra Pradesh during November 28th -30th.

A weather report of IMD said here on Wednesday that heavy rain is likely to occur in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 24 hours and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh on November 29 and 30.

Strong winds with speed reaching 55-65 kmph gusting 75 kmph is likely to occur in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema from November 28 to 30. Strong winds speed reaching 44-55 kmph gusting 65 kmph is likely to prevail in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 24 hours.

Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema during the next four days and in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the next 48 hours.

Light to moderate rain is most likely to occur at most places or many places or at a few places or at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. Rainfall occurred at one or two places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and at a few places in Rayalaseema during the last 24 hours, the report added.

The Deep Depression over Southwest Bay of Bengal moved north-northwestwards with a speed of 10 kmph during past 6 hours and lay centred at 1130 hours IST on Wednesday over the same region near latitude 8.7°N and longitude 82.2°E, about 110 km east of Trincomalee, 350 km south-east of Nagapattinam, 450 km southeast of Puducherry and 530 km south-southeast of Chennai.

It is very likely to continue to move north-northwestwards and intensify further into a cyclonic storm during the next 06 hours.

All set for Tiruchanoor temple Brahmotsavam: TTD EO

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Executive Officer J Shyama Rao has said TTD has made all elaborate arrangements for the successful conduct of the nine-day annual Brahmotsavam of Padmavati Ammavari temple in Tiruchanoor from Thursday.

Talking to the media here on Wednesday the EO said TTD has geared up coordinated efforts of all departments to ensure a smooth and comfortable spiritual environment for devotees.

He explained the illumination, Queue lines, and barricades were erected at Ammavari

temple and Mada streets at Tiruchanoor. He stated that a total of 20 LED screens have been set up in the surrounding areas of Tiruchanur and on the four sides of the Padma Pushkarini to enable the devotees to witness the Brahmotsavam fete.

The EO said that gates have been installed to enable the devotees to enter and return to Pushkarini, temporary toilets, signboards, and radio and broadcasting are in place, adding that for the Panchami Theertham Snamam fete, four holding points have been set up at ZP High School, Pudi Road, Navajeevan and Tiruchanur Gate for the devotees to wait

from the evening of 5th December onwards.

TTD has made arrangements for supply of drinking water, badam milk, bisi bele bath, curd rice, vegetable upma and sweet Pongal to more than 50,000 devotees through a total of 120 counters. The EO said that as part of Anna Prasadam, rice, dal, sambar, rasam, sweet and curry will be distributed to 10,000 devotees on a daily basis.

He said that 1000 artists will participate in the Sri Padmavathi Ammavari Sare Shobhayatra organized from Alipiri to Tiruchanoor in Ammavari Vahana Seva, stating that that 300 sanitation workers have

been appointed daily and 600 sanitation workers additionally on Panchmi Theertham day.

He said that tight security arrangements were made with 460 TTD security personnel and district police during Brahmotsavam and 1500 police and 600 vigilance personnel especially on Panchami Theertham day.

Daily, 500 Srivari Sevaks, 1000 sevaks and 200 scouts and guides will serve the devotees on Panchmi Theertham day. On the last day on December 6, it is customary to present a saree to the goddess from the Tirumala Srivari temple to celebrate the Panchmi Theertham festival.

Officials told to implement Kishori Vikasam 2.0 efficiently



PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi directed the officials concerned to take steps to implement the second phase of Kishori Vikasam programme efficiently to protect the girl child in the district.

The second phase of Kishori Vikasam will cover 22 lakh girls across Andhra Pradesh. The objective of Kishori Vikasam is to educate and create awareness among adolescent girls in areas of gender awareness, menstrual health and hygiene, nutrition and other social issues. Collector Vetri Selvi here on Wednesday launched the training programme for the volunteers to implement the Kishori Vikasam 2.0.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that awareness should be created and laws should be strictly implemented through the Kishori

Vikasam-2.0. The training classes would be conducted to the volunteers from the district level to the mandal to implement the Kishore Vikasam 2.0 programme.

Collector Vetri Selvi said that the team members appointed by the Women Development and Child Welfare Department officials in the district to provide district-level training through the Kishori Vikasam Trainers Training Programme and they should utilize the training programme to gain full understanding and thus train the mandal and village level members and make the Kishore Vikasam program a success.

The Collector said that special attention should be paid to the protection of girls and awareness should also be created about the ways in which girls can cope with the abuses that are happening against them. Special measures should

be taken to prevent child marriages and awareness should be created about the problems that girls face due to child marriages, Vetri Selvi told the officials.

"The anganwadi workers, supervisors and school teachers in villages should report child marriages to the relevant authorities and toll-free number 1098. Everyone in the training will be made aware of issues such as education for girls, nutrition, iron deficiency, health, good touch, bad touch, yoga and fitness," the Collector said to the officials.

Earlier, the Collector released a wall poster creating awareness of Kishori Vikasam 2.0. Additional SP Suryachandra Rao, AP Child rights commission member Rajendra Prasad, DEO Venkatalakshamma and DRDA PD R Vijaya Raju were among those who attended the programme.

9 stranded fishermen rescued from sea

PNS ■ NELLORE

The officials with the help of coast guard officials have rescued 9 stranded fishermen from the sea.

Revenue Chief Secretary RP Sisodia told the media here on Wednesday that nine fishermen ventured into the sea for fishing. However their mechanized fishing boat broke down in the sea due to engine failure. The boat stranded in the sea 35 KMs away from Tirupati and 14 KMs from Vakadu.

Revenue special chief secretary said that steps were taken on war footing to rescue the nine fishermen from the sea, keeping in view the impending cyclone threat. The officials informed the coast guard and the Krishnapatnam sea port



officials about the nine fishermen struck in the sea.

Tirupati district Collector Dr. Venkateswar spoke to Krishnapatnam Marine head captain Rajit and asked him to

initiate an operation to rescue the stranded fishermen.

Despite inclement weather conditions, the officials went into the sea on a heavy vessel, located the stranded fishing

boat and rescued the nine fishermen. They were brought to the shore safely. The fishermen thanked the officials for the swift action to rescue them.

Class 7 students ends life at hostel

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

In a tragic incident, Praveen, a Class 7 student from the Scheduled Castes Residential School in Madanapur mandal in Telangana, was found dead in his dormitory on Wednesday. The 13-year-old, hailed from Ponnuru village in Madanapur, was discovered hanging in his room. The cause of his death is currently under investigation.

Praveen's parents live in Hyderabad to eke out a living. On Tuesday, Praveen reportedly suffered an injury while playing kabaddi. The school staff informed his relatives of the injury on Wednesday. Upon arriving at the hostel, they were directed to dormitory. Upon arriving at the dormitory, the boy's relatives were shocked to find Praveen hanging from ceiling fan.

Vijay Paul sent to 14 days' judicial remand

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Retired Additional SP of AP CID R Vijay Paul was sent to 14 days judicial remand by the court on Wednesday.

The Ongole police arrested Vijay Paul on the night of Tuesday in connection with the custodial torture of the then YSRCP MP and the incumbent deputy Speaker of Legislative Assembly K Raghurama Krishna Raju.

After arresting Vijay Paul, the Prakasm police produced him before the court in Guntur and the court sent him to 14 days judicial remand till December 10. The police presented a 11 page remand report before the judge. Vijay Paul was sent to Guntur district prison.

On behalf of the State Government, Prosecution Joint Director V Rajendra Prasad presented arguments before the court stating that there was a conspiracy behind the custodial torture of Raghurama Krishna Raju and urged the court for the police custody of



Vijaya Paul for further questioning.

The court ordered the police to file a petition in the court seeking the custody of Vijay Paul. Rajendra Prasad told the court that Raghurama Krishna

Raju was so severely tortured that he was unable to walk out of the CID office on the day.

As per the medical report of military hospital, Raghurama Krishna Raju suffered injuries and based on the medical

report, Vijay Paul was arrested, the police explained to the court. The police also told the court that they questioned 27 persons in connection with the custodial torture case and then arrested Vijay Paul.



Leader of transgenders murdered by miscreants

PNS ■ NELLORE

A leader of transgenders was hacked to death at Tapatapu in Kodavaluru mandal on Wednesday.

Police said a transgender Hasini was the leader of transgender people. Hasini went to a temple in the morning. Some miscreants waylaid and attacked her on the out-

skirts of the village and hacked her indiscriminately. She was taken to Apollo hospital in an ambulance where she was declared brought dead.

Hasini had a large number of followers in Nellore, Nandyala and Anantapur district. The police registered a case and shifted the body to the GGH for postmortem.

ACROSS THE STATES



Centre willing to support Mizoram to promote tourism

Union Minister Gajendra Singh said the Centre is always ready to assist Mizoram in promoting tourism, the BJP said in a statement on Wednesday. During a meeting with BJP Mizoram unit general secretary Lalthangmawii in New Delhi on Tuesday, Singh noted that the northeastern states, including Mizoram, are rich in tourist destinations and have the potential to boost tourism, the statement added. He added that the Centre is making efforts to promote tourism for sustainable growth and employment generation in the region. "The Centre is willing and is ever ready to assist the northeastern states, including Mizoram, if the state governments submit proposals for good tourism projects," Singh was quoted as saying in the statement. The Union Tourism Minister also said there is much to be done in Mizoram in terms of tourism promotion, even though many projects have been executed with the Centre's assistance.



Two EPFO officials held in Rs 10 lakh bribery case

The CBI has arrested two EPFO officers in Himachal Pradesh's Solan for allegedly taking a Rs 10 lakh bribe from a businessman to favourably settle a provident fund demand matter, officials said on Wednesday. Regional Provident Fund Commissioner Ravi Anand and Enforcement Officer Madan Lal Bhatti of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) were arrested after a consultant and middleman -- Sanjay Kumar Yadav -- was arrested while taking Rs 5 lakh in cash and a self-cheque for Rs 5 lakh on their behalf during a trap operation, the officials said. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had received a complaint from a businessman that Bhatti had allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs 10 lakh through Yadav for himself and other senior EPFO officers to favourably settle the matter of provident fund demand of the complainant's firm that was pending with the EPFO office at Baddi in Solan, an agency spokesperson said.



UP: Three doctors among 5 killed in accident

A road accident on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway early Wednesday claimed the lives of three doctors and two hospital staff, all affiliated with the Uttar Pradesh University of Medical Sciences in Saifai, police said. The incident took place around 3 am in Tirwa area of Kannauj district when a speeding SUV in which the victims were travelling lost control and ramed into a divider, and a truck then hit the vehicle, they said. Police said the doctors and the hospital staff were returning to Saifai after attending a wedding in Lucknow. "The SUV first crashed into the median divider. It subsequently crossed over to the oncoming lane, where it collided with a truck. As a result, the three doctors, one lab technician and a store manager died on the spot. Another person, a PG student, suffered serious injuries and was rushed to Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar Medical College in Tirwa," Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar Anand said.

SAMBHAL VIOLENCE Protesters to pay for damage to property

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will make protesters involved in the Sambhal violence pay for damage to public property while posters of 'stone pelters' will be displayed at public places, an official said on Wednesday.

Sambhal police has released several pictures of those involved in violence.

In these photographs, nine persons were identified and help is sought from people to identify those who have masks on their faces.

Four people died and several others, including police personnel, were injured in Sambhal on Sunday after a confrontation erupted over a court-ordered survey of the city's Shahi Jama Masjid in Kot Garvi area, following a petition claiming that a Harihar temple once stood at the site.

"The Uttar Pradesh government is adopting a firm stance against the individuals

Posters of 'stone pelters' to be put up



involved in the Sambhal violence. Posters of the stone pelters and miscreants will be displayed publicly, and recovery of damages will be sought. A reward may also be announced for information

"The Uttar Pradesh government is adopting a firm stance against the individuals involved in the Sambhal violence. Posters of the stone pelters and miscreants will be displayed publicly, and recovery of damages will be sought. A reward may also be announced for information leading to their arrest," an official spokesperson said.

leading to their arrest," an official spokesperson said.

Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar said an estimate of losses to public property is being prepared.

"Stones were pelted on mosque also. Police vehicles, transformer, electric wires were damaged. Department concerned will prepare the estimates," the SP said.

Uttar Pradesh ministers Dharmaveer Prajapati and Narendra Khasiyap both reiterated that loss of public property will be realised from rioters and strict action will be taken against them.

In a similar initiative, the government had previously put up posters of individuals linked with vandalism during the anti-CAA protests in

2020. These posters were displayed across several locations, including the state capital, but were later removed following a court order.

So far, police have arrested 25 individuals and registered seven FIRs, which include charges against Zia-ur-Rehman Barq, the Samajwadi Party MP from Sambhal, Sohail Iqbal, son of the party's local MLA Iqbal Mehmood, and over 2,750 unidentified suspects.

A magisterial probe is underway, and Superintendent of Police Krishna Kumar Vishnoi stated on Monday that the situation was now under control. He assured that "strict action will be taken against those responsible for the unrest."

58,929 waqf properties facing encroachment: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday said 58,929 waqf properties were facing encroachment, of which 869 were in Karnataka.

In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha by BJP MP Basavaraj Bommai, Union Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said the ministry and the Central Waqf Council (CWC) received complaints regarding various issues relating to waqf properties from time to time and the same were forwarded to the state waqf boards and governments concerned for appropriate action.

"As per the details available on WAMSI (Waqf Assets Management System of India),

58,929 waqf properties are facing encroachment, out of which Karnataka has 869 such waqf properties," he said.

According to sections 54 and 55 of the Waqf Act, the chief executive officer of state waqf boards has the power to take legal action against unauthorised occupation and encroachment of waqf properties, Rijiju pointed out.

Further, Section 51(A) of the law provides any sale, gift, exchange, mortgage or transfer of the waqf property shall be void ab initio, he said.

The central government has framed the Waqf Properties Lease Rules, 2014, under Section 56 of the Act, empowering the state waqf boards to give waqf properties on lease, Rijiju said.

CABINET EXPANSION

Speculations gain momentum in K'taka

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Speculations regarding the expansion of the Siddaramaiah-led Cabinet in the days ahead gained momentum in Karnataka with senior Minister Satish Jarkiholi on Wednesday stating that there are talks about such an exercise, but don't know when it will take place.

His statement came a day after Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress president, indicated the possibility of a Cabinet reshuffle, noting that few ministers have been given a "message" about their term.

"There are talks that it will be done. Don't know when it will be done, but there is news that some people will be changed, to change some portfolios. Such discussions



are on, but I don't know when...I have not asked for anything. It is left for the high command, whom they will give and how..." Jarkiholi, who is the PWD Minister said.

To a question about whether the reshuffle will be based on performance, he said, "Maybe... it

may be they (leadership) are not satisfied with some, or they may continue with the existing ministers and not do the Cabinet rejig. Can't say...there are also several seniors in our party."

Asked about whether ministers will be ready to give up the post in case of a reshuffle,

Jarkiholi said, "What the high command says is final...if the list comes from Delhi (leadership of Congress), then ends the story. One should vacate the house and go...Delhi is final."

Speculations are rife about Cabinet reshuffle and evaluation of the performance of the ministers, ever since the Lok Sabha poll results. There has also been a demand from a section of MLAs, who are ministerial aspirants, to be inducted into the Cabinet. Some have openly expressed their wish to become ministers.

CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy Shivakumar's Delhi visit is also adding to the speculations.

While Siddaramaiah is leaving for the national capital tomorrow evening, Shivakumar is already there.

Two Bangladeshi infiltrators arrested in Assam

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Two infiltrators from Bangladesh have been apprehended by Assam police and handed over to authorities of the neighbouring country, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Wednesday.

"Displaying alertness along the Indo-Bangladesh border, @assampolice apprehended two Bangladeshi nationals who were illegally entering Indian territory," he posted on X.

The apprehended have been identified as Nur Mohammad and Muhammad Khaleeda Begum, he said.

The chief minister, however, did not mention from which area the duo were caught. Around 152 people have been so far apprehended for illegally entering the country and pushed back to Bangladesh since the turmoil broke out in the neighbouring country in August this year.

'Mahayuti' leaders to meet BJP brass

Two Dy CMs formula likely to continue



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra NDA leaders are likely to meet the top BJP brass here on Thursday, sources said, indicating that the formula of one chief minister and two deputy CMs representing the three major 'Mahayuti' constituents will be followed in the new government in the state.

While the BJP is tipped to get the chief ministerial post, its two allies -- Shiv Sena Nationalist Congress Party --

are expected to be given the post of two deputies.

Shiv Sena leader and outgoing Chief Minister Eknath Shinde had earlier in the day all but cleared the decks for a BJP leader to succeed him, with outgoing Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis seen as the clear favourite for the top job.

Shinde said he will "fully support" the BJP leadership's choice for the next CM, adding that he won't be a hurdle in the process.

Replace Rahul, not EVM: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday said the Congress suffered a crushing defeat in Maharashtra assembly polls not because of the EVMs but poor management by its leadership, and asked the opposition party's president Mallikarjun Kharge to consider "replacing" Rahul Gandhi instead of the voting machines.

Taking a swipe at the Congress president over his latest remarks on the EVMs, BJP Lok Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sambit Patra also said Kharge can go to "planet Mars" taking Gandhi with him and "live there happily" if he doesn't want electronic voting machines, Election Commission, Enforcement Directorate, Central Bureau of



Investigation, judiciary and the Modi government.

The ruling party's reaction came a day after Kharge demanded a return to the use of ballot paper in elections and called for a concerted campaign on the scale of Bharat Jodo Yatra to create awareness about it.

"Let them keep EVMs with them. We don't want EVMs, we want voting on ballot paper. Then they will know what

their position is and where they stand," the Congress president had said while speaking at the 'Samvidhan Rakshak Abhiyaan' function at Talkatora stadium on Tuesday.

Hitting back, Patra said that the Congress leaders are venting out their frustration over the defeat in the Maharashtra assembly polls by raising questions on the credibility of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

"The problem is not in the machine (EVM). The problem is with the (Congress) leadership. The EVM is fine, Rahul is faulty. Replace Rahul, not EVM," he said at a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

"You have lost the election due to RBM, which means Rahul's 'bekar (poor)' management," Patra added.

Bihar: Rabri seeks statehood for Mithila region

PNS ■ PATNA

Former Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi on Wednesday demanded statehood for Mithila region, in a bid to checkmate the BJP-led NDA's attempts to cash in on the translation of the Constitution in Maithili language.

The RJD leader, who is the leader of the opposition in the state legislative council, raised the demand on the floor of the House where leaders of the ruling coalition were thanking the Centre for according the honour to the language.

When journalists approached her with queries later, she said, "Yes, I did say Mithila should be made a separate state. They (members of treasury bench) were busy lauding the Centre and the Prime Minister for translation of Constitution, which is fine. But we need something more concrete".

FOR 18,799 ASSISTANT LOCO PILOTS Rlys screening 22.5 lakh applicants

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Railways has taken up the mammoth task of screening 22.5 lakh applicants at 346 centres across the country to recruit 18,799 assistant loco pilots.

The examination began last Monday and will continue till Friday. It is being held in 15 shifts and 18 languages.

"Of the total candidates, 13.5 lakh have already appeared for the exam. In the next two days, nine lakh candidates are expected to appear for the exam," said a senior official from the Railway Board.

The Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) holds examinations for recruitment for various posts in the Indian Railways.

The board has set up a control centre in Rail Bhawan here to monitor all centres through CCTV cameras. "Dozens of officials have been keeping a regular watch on the conduct of examinations," the officer said.

He also said that for the

first time, an annual recruitment calendar was announced in February and examinations were being conducted as per the schedule.

The Railway Recruitment Board issues notification for the recruitment of assistant loco pilots between January and March every year, while April, May and June are earmarked for recruitment to technical posts.

From July to September, aspirants who wish to join the railways as junior engineers, paramedics and non-technical posts are considered. Recruitment for Level 1 and ministerial and isolated categories have been slotted in for October to December.

According to officials, the RRB will issue employment notifications four times a year so that more and more candidates can participate. Earlier, when recruitment drives used to be held after a gap of three to four years, many candidates missed that opportunity due to the age bar.

DELHI POLLUTION

Massive protests near Parl for clean air

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A group of students and their parents held a protest near Parliament, urging political leaders to address the problem of Delhi's deteriorating air quality.

The protesters gathered under a "Saanson Ke Liye Sansad Chalao" banner.

"We are deeply worried about how we will provide clean air to our children and the next generation if the situation continues to worsen," one of the parents at the protest said.

Among the protesters was nine-year-old Meera Purnima Vutts.

She said, "My father and I cough constantly due to the pollution. Some of my other family members are also experiencing health issues because of it."

Bhavreen Kandhari, an environmentalist present at the protest, stressed the severity of the issue.

She said, "This is both a request and a reminder to the MPs that the city is choking. Every child is suffering. A recent survey showed that every third customer at chemist shops is a parent seeking medicines for their child."

"Many children are dependent on nebulisers and antibiotics. The polluted air is robbing 12 years of their lives. We urge the government to bring clean air into the national conversation, take decisive action, and demonstrate the political will to protect us. After all, we elected our representatives to speak for us," she added.

The protesters raised placards with messages of "Save Our



Children's Lungs", "My Right to Breathe", and "Act on Air Pollution Now" to emphasise the urgency of the situation. Atul Kumar, a member of the environment group Earth Warriors, wore an oxygen mask and carried an oxygen cylinder to symbolise the future he fears for future generations.

"The air we grew up breathing was clean. Will we be able to provide the same to our children?" he asked.

Kumar also called for collective responsibility. "While the government must act, we also need to take initiatives to reduce pollution."

Devalina Kohli, speaking on

behalf of the parents, said, "We gathered peacefully, as citizens and parents, to demand clean air -- our fundamental right. Yet, instead of support, we were forced to return home. It is heartbreaking that, even as our children struggle to breathe, meaningful action remains absent."



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PAPER WITH PASSION

A glimmer of hope

While the ceasefire offers a reprieve from conflict, its durability is not guaranteed, a lasting resolution still remains elusive

In a significant development for West Asia, Israel and Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militant group operating in Lebanon, have agreed to a ceasefire after months of intense conflict. The agreement, brokered with the intervention of the United States and France, comes into effect at midnight Israeli time on November 27. It is being hailed as a potential step toward de-escalation in the region, but its success and long-term implications remain uncertain. The ceasefire agreement aims to restore calm along the volatile Israel-Lebanon border. It mandates that Hezbollah and other armed groups in Lebanon halt all offensive operations against Israel. In return, Israel will refrain from military actions targeting Lebanon. A key aspect of the deal is the acknowledgement of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701, which calls for the disarmament of militias and the exclusive authority of Lebanese state forces in the southern region. Israel has also agreed to withdraw its forces from positions south of the Blue Line within 60 days, provided the terms are upheld.



This ceasefire does not mean that Israeli forces are back to barracks. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has emphasised the need to focus on Iran. Israel agreed to truce as there were logistical challenges, including delays in weapons and munitions deliveries, which necessitated a pause to replenish stocks and prepare for future operations. The ceasefire comes amid a broader context of regional instability. The war between Israel and Hamas, which erupted in October 2023 after a brutal terrorist attack on Israeli civilians, has already

claimed tens of thousands of lives. There is no let up in Israel's attacks on Gaza where the human crisis is getting worse. The fighting extended to Israel's northern border when Hezbollah escalated its attacks, prompting Israel to retaliate. While the ceasefire offers a glimmer of hope, challenges loom large. The success of the agreement depends on its strict implementation, particularly the disarmament of militias in Lebanon. The Lebanese government, already struggling with economic and political crises, will face immense pressure to assert its authority over Hezbollah, a deeply entrenched and well-armed organisation. Whatever the reasons for this truce but it definitely gives peace a chance. The agreement's implications for regional peace are profound. If upheld, it could reduce tensions along Israel's northern border, allowing displaced civilians to return home and facilitating humanitarian relief in affected areas. For Lebanon, the deal could bolster its sovereignty by curbing the influence of armed non-state actors, potentially paving the way for greater stability. However, unresolved issues, including the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict and tensions with Iran, continue to pose risks to lasting peace. The role of the US, France, and UNIFIL will be critical to ensuring compliance and rebuilding trust.

PICTALK



A flock of whistling ducks fly at the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, in Morigaon

Why band-aid solutions fail to fix Delhi pollution



KALYANI SHANKAR

Despite court orders, government promises, and short-term measures like vehicle restrictions and artificial rain, Delhi's air quality remains perilously poor

Why do the residents of Delhi experience pollution every year while the ruling class blames it on stubble burning in the neighbouring states of Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh? Can't they find a permanent solution instead of debating who will pay for the burning machines and other related expenses? The air pollution levels in Delhi are eight times higher than the WHO's prescribed limits. It has reached a level where the judiciary, executive, and parliament blame each other, and the severe pollution level continues. Returning from a month-long holiday in the US, I was immediately struck by the urgency of the pollution crisis as I landed in Delhi, past midnight this week.

The dark skies, sheets of dust, heat, and difficulty in breathing welcomed me as a stark reminder and a pressing call to action. The pollution levels in Delhi have soared to their highest this week. It has reached hazardous levels, causing state officials to limit movement and revive plans to stimulate artificial rain to clear toxins. This forced the schools and offices to close due to cloaking the city in thick brown smog and demanded immediate action. The number of respiratory diseases in children and older adults is rising, along with other health issues. In cold winters in the north, smog covers the area every year and traps harmful pollutants from fires, construction, and factories. This issue worsens when farmers burn their fields after harvesting rice to prepare for new crops. The same or even worse scenario unfolds yearly, reaching alarming levels over time. Citizens feel helpless while politicians engage in a blame game. As a result, the public endures poor air quality, which seriously threatens their health. Affluent individuals often escape to warmer destinations during winter, but children and older people suffer the most. Many schools have closed, and residents have been advised to



stay indoors. Construction work has been halted, and the government is considering implementing an odd-even vehicle use policy to control pollution. While this is a step in the right direction, the severity of the crisis requires effective solutions without further delays. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, the World Health Organization, and other monitoring agencies, Delhi's air quality index (AQI) ranges between 1,200 and 1,500. India's AQI is classified as poor when it exceeds 200, very poor when it exceeds 300, and severe or hazardous when it exceeds 400. The recommended AQI limit is between 0 and 100. This alarming situation discourages international travellers and members of the Indian diaspora from planning their annual visits. The government and politicians are well aware of the root cause of the problem but play the blame game. The Supreme Court has ordered the government to address pollution. In the past, it has even led efforts to improve air quality in Delhi. It has set rules about which vehicles can operate in the city, ordered the relocation of many factories that pollute the air, and closed businesses to reduce emissions. The court also



IN COLD WINTERS IN THE NORTH, SMOG COVERS THE AREA EVERY YEAR AND TRAPS HARMFUL POLLUTANTS FROM FIRES, CONSTRUCTION, AND FACTORIES. THIS ISSUE WORSENS WHEN FARMERS BURN THEIR FIELDS AFTER HARVESTING RICE TO PREPARE FOR NEW CROPS

pushed the government to take action. The fault lies in the implementation. Last month, the Supreme Court ruled that clean air is a fundamental human right. It ordered both the central government and state authorities to take immediate action. However, most measures, such as vehicle restrictions, industrial regulations, and public awareness campaigns, must be more effective in preventing deteriorating air quality. Critics question how effective the court's decisions are and accuse the judiciary of interfering in executive matters. In its 2024 manifesto, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Delhi did not include promises to reduce pollution, unlike previous ones. Instead, the manifesto focused on the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) and ways to cut pollution. APP highlighted the need for citizen involvement and plans to use electric buses to control pollution. Now that it has reached an alarming stage, the Centre and the state governments must take a balanced approach concerning Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, which are the real culprits. Every winter, smoke from farm fires engulfs Delhi and covers the Delhi skies.

Farmers resort to burning as it is the cheapest method of clearing their fields. The state governments demand that the Centre provide funds to assist farmers in reducing smoke emissions, but the issue persists yearly. Meanwhile, politics also plays its role. The BJP governs the Centre, while AAP rules Delhi and Punjab. The Congress remains an onlooker. This attitude does not help implement an effective plan. The experts say it's high time half-measures were shunned, and comprehensive solutions are implemented. For instance, GRAP-III must be upgraded to GRAP-IV, facilitating the enforcement of the odd-even rule. The election to the Delhi Assembly is around the corner. People must make it an election issue. In the meantime, residents of Delhi should consider quick solutions to combat pollution, such as wearing masks, indoor air-purifying plants, and the affluent using air purifiers, taking steam baths, eating healthy foods, and ensuring proper ventilation in their homes. The citizens must also assist authorities in any efforts to help control pollution. (The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

UNITY OVER DIVISION

Madam — Some political parties that do not have any people oriented policies or programmes in their agenda are using the communal platform to whip the religious sentiments to gain votes and capture power. The campaign during the last general election has seen an open spread of communal hate, which was not the predominant issue in the minds of the people. Nowhere were the people's issues, like employment, livelihood plights, or healthcare concerns, discussed or debated. That is why the people also had reacted vehemently by not giving a brutal majority to any party.

The message that people are not interested in communal concerns is given repeatedly and still some forces are bent upon thriving in politics only with the help of programmes of spreading hate among communities and keeping the flame of communal hate alive. Leaving issues like employment, inflation, declining real wages, and growing costs of healthcare and education made the privilege of the affluent to be attended to with priority and more sincerity. Divisive agendas and programmes may shine in the initial stage and then lose their tempo, as witnessed all over. Such clashes help the rulers to divert the attention of the people from their mistakes and misdeeds. Even in countries ruled under theocratic principles, clashes among groups of the same religion are seen to be the perennial ones rather than giving peace to the people. In a country like India, even if one religion is allowed to dominate, the groups thriving on promoting the cause of their caste will gain further momentum to plunge the nation into a lasting socio-economic crisis. As available laws are not efficient enough to deal with such anti-people political parties and social outfits, it is the responsibility of the people to keep them at a distance.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

SAVE FORESTS

Madam—Planting a tree and protecting it till it grows has been considered a

EVM: Allegations are baseless



The Supreme Court decisively rejected a petition calling for the reintroduction of ballot papers in elections, highlighting the baseless nature of opposition allegations against Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). The court's remarks came after the petitioner argued that EVMs were vulnerable to manipulation, citing claims by various politicians, including Andhra Pradesh leaders Chandrababu Naidu and Jagan Mohan Reddy, as well as Elon Musk. The court pointed out that

these same politicians never raised concerns about EVMs when they won elections. "When you win, EVMs are fine; when you lose, EVMs are tampered."

Meanwhile, opposition parties, led by Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, continued to push for the return of ballot papers, with Kharge criticising the use of EVMs and demanding a campaign similar to the Bharat Jodo Yatra for their abolition. Kharge's repeated attacks on EVMs reflect the ongoing narrative within opposition circles, where EVM tampering is blamed for electoral losses. The SC's firm stance serves as a rebuke to the opposition's recurring narrative of EVM tampering, emphasising that such claims are opportunistic and lack substantiation. The opposition's continued attack on EVMs seems more like an excuse for poor performance than a genuine concern for electoral fairness.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

OLI CHOOSES BEIJING

Madam — Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli broke the usual ritual of visiting New Delhi first by choosing Beijing. Like the Maldives' President, Nepal's Prime Minister appears to be a pro-Chinese supporter. We all know how notorious China is for pushing countries like Nepal into debt. After Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and the Maldives, seeing Nepal follow the same path makes India worried. If Nepal signs the BRI execution treaty, it would pose a significant threat to India. Though our relations with China are improving, we all know it is merely a diplomatic friendship that could turn into animosity at any time. In the diplomatic world, no one is a genuine friend or ally to any country—everyone prioritises their own benefit. India needs to remain cautious, especially as it is being surrounded by countries drowning in China's debts.

Priya Thakur | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Aruna Vasudev: A tribute to the mother figure of Asian cinema

She leaves behind a profound legacy, having nurtured and inspired many. Though she is no longer among us, her influence continues to guide and motivate

In 1999, I first discovered the Cinefan Asian Film Festival. Excited, I headed to the India Habitat Centre (IHC) to collect a pass, only to learn that the festival was open to all. I couldn't believe my ears. Being new to Delhi, I had assumed that everything came at a price, but this experience proved me wrong. During the festival, I came to know Aruna Vasudev, the Festival Director. I also met filmmakers and critics from around the world, making it an unforgettable experience. The following year, I eagerly awaited the festival and even took seven days of leave from work to immerse myself in films. My journalist friends noticed my dedication and shared it with Aruna Vasudev. They told her about a boy from West Delhi who traveled daily, spending mornings to midnight watching films out of sheer love for cinema. That year, I managed to watch 37 out of the 42 films screened, missing a few only because I attended seminars. Aruna di, as I later called her, was impressed but quizzed me about the films to ensure I had truly seen them. I passed her test.



At the closing ceremony, in the presence of luminaries like Sharmila Tagore, Buddhadeb Dasgupta, Rituparno Ghosh, and Nandita Das, she mentioned my name on stage. She highlighted my passion and dedication, asking me to stand so the audience could see me. Afterward, she invited me to the closing dinner. During our conversation, she asked what I did for a living. When I replied, she told me, "Forget footwear; you are meant for film." I expressed my willingness to leave my job if she could offer me an opportunity. She laughed and said, "Stay in touch; I'll let you know."

I took her words to heart and kept reminding her of her promise whenever we met. Finally, in 2003, she asked me to join her team. Although she initially wanted me to start in January, I requested a

delay due to my sister's wedding. From February 1, 2003, until the end of her life, Aruna Vasudev became much more than a mentor. She was my friend, philosopher, guide, guru, and godmother. When I joined her team, I initially addressed her as "Madam." One day, she suggested I call her "Aruna di," as others did. From then on, she was Aruna di not only to me but also to my family. My work involved assisting her with the prestigious Cinefan Quarterly and the Cinefan Film Festival. During this time, she taught me much more than cinema-etiquette, communication skills, and the importance of being a good human being. One memorable instance was when she was busy on a call, and another call came through. Indicating she wasn't available, I conveyed that she was out of the country. Later, she gently corrected me, teaching that honesty in such situations was essential. Transforming a shy, lower-middle-class boy from a Bengali-medium school into someone comfortable in

Delhi's elite circles wasn't easy. Yet, she patiently guided me every step of the way. Aruna di's support was unwavering. When I asked if I was meeting her expectations, she replied that being able to pursue one's dream and earn a living from it was a rare blessing. Once, after just three months on the job, I noticed an unexpected salary increase. The accountant revealed that Aruna di was so pleased with my work that she had decided to raise it. This generosity stood in stark contrast to my earlier job in a footwear company, where long hours of grueling work brought only meager raises. Her faith in me was a source of strength. Despite occasional resentment from colleagues about the trust she placed in me, she always defended her decisions. She was my rock in both professional and personal challenges. When my mother met her, she said, "Though I gave birth to him, you have raised him." Touched by those words, Aruna di was moved to tears. (The writer is a Delhi based Film Festival curator; views expressed are personal)



SANTANU GANGULY





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A MINDFUL HEART FOR A MINDFUL LIFE

By integrating modern science with spiritual wisdom, it is essential for holistic healing



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

To be kind is more important than to be right. Many times what people need is not a brilliant mind that speaks but a special heart that listens... F. Scott Fitzgerald

We humans are blessed with only one heart which lasts us as long as we live. Alternatively, we live till the heart lasts. In that sense, the heart is the lifeline of the human body. Anatomically, it is a vital organ that supplies blood to the whole body. Symbolically, it is equated with the most powerful emotions of the human soul i.e. love as well as with instinct, interest and deep feelings. Hence it won't be wrong to say that the heart rules our life. But, today the same very heart has indeed become a matter of great concern as alarming statistics tell us how vulnerable it is to the onset of countless disorders, thanks to our modern lifestyle and polluted environment. Concerns over the health of the heart have led to an explosion of research to find ways to boost its longevity and smooth functionality. However, when all efforts to preserve the heart fail we even have an option to replace it. Isn't it great? But still, the figures in health reports don't seem to tell a happy story about the effectiveness of these developments because today we have an ever-growing number of people who are suffering or facing the risk of heart disease.

According to the eternal law of spirituality, everything in this material world grows old, decays and gets assimilated into its original elemental form. Similarly, everything in nature is getting recycled as energy is in constant flux. So, as souls, we all get a new body at every birth. However, the elements that constitute a body are the same old matter.



In that sense, everything in the world is old material packaged as new. Hence, with every consecutive birth, we as souls get a recycled body and hence a recycled heart. We get a new body only when we first come down from the soul world because we are pure and are entitled to get the best of the available resources at the time when we enter this world. Having said the above, we must not forget the fact that there was indeed a time when we all had a brand-new heart.

Yeah! Time was indeed called the 'Golden Age' when all the human souls and the elements of nature were pristine and pure. Everyone is perfect and purest there and so everything they had, including their body, was also perfect. There was no need for them to take care of their heart. The heart was so robust and healthy that it supported the body for a long and healthy life. However, today we all live in total contrast to the golden age i.e. Iron Age and there is hardly any human being in this world today who is free from any physical ailment, be it wealthy or poor, all are suffering from some or the other disease that is linked to unhealthy lifestyle and ecological degradation. In the present age, everyone's mind is beset with weak and negative thoughts which are the biggest hindrance to living a healthy & happy life. Throughout our lives, we never understand that the root cause of all diseases is our wrong actions. It's a proven fact that we get punished for our wrong deeds. Therefore it is very important to realize that all diseases have their origin in wrong thoughts and actions.

Today, medical science has accepted that along with a healthy lifestyle, meditation too can promote a healthy heart, as it helps regulate the heart's functioning by controlling negative thoughts that induce stress-related hormones in the body leading to harmful effects. By purifying the soul of bad 'sanskaras' (personality traits) like anger, fear, hatred and ego, it cures the root cause of disease and leads to holistic healing. Therefore to have a healthy heart, apart from a healthy lifestyle, it is essential to be a good-hearted person and to feed the mind with a healthy diet of pure thoughts and feelings.

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

Bridging the gender gap in skills and opportunities



DINESH SOOD

The beauty and wellness sector is emerging as a transformative force, equipping women with essential skills and providing financial sustainability



Despite various initiatives, a significant gender gap persists in learning and earning opportunities between men and women. Skill development can be a transformative force, enhancing women's professional growth and economic independence. By acquiring skills, women can access broader job opportunities, empowering them socially and economically.

A survey titled "Women's Economic Empowerment," conducted in 2023-24 by the Indian Statistical Institute Delhi, explores women's skill development and employment landscape. It reveals that 7 out of 10 women lack economic independence. India ranks 142nd out of 146 countries in the Global Women's Economic Participation and Opportunities Index. Women in India contribute only 17 per cent to the GDP, which is less than half the global average. Their economic participation is essential for sustainable development, gender equality, and poverty reduction.

According to the McKinsey Global Institute (MGI), integrating 68 million more women into the workforce by 2025 could potentially increase India's GDP by USD 0.7 trillion. The World Bank also reports that including 50 per cent of women in the workforce could boost India's GDP growth by 1.5 percentage points.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) states that India's Women's Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was about 32.8 per cent in 2023, while it was 67.2 per cent for men. Women are primarily found in specific sectors such as agriculture (73.2 per cent), education (44.1 per cent), and healthcare and beauty-wellness (31.4 per cent). An estimated 7.5 crore women are expected to join the workforce in the coming decade. To ensure that this vital human resource—nearly half of the country's workforce—is effectively utilised and contributes at least 25 per cent to national economic growth, the government must prioritise skill development for women's empowerment.

In addition to these gaps, prevalent gender stereotypes affect skill acquisition. Women generally pursue skills in beauty and wellness, textiles, clerical work, and healthcare. The DP-WEE study indicates that 30.2 per cent of skilled women aged 18 to 35 primar-



TO ENSURE THAT THIS VITAL HUMAN RESOURCE—NEARLY HALF OF THE COUNTRY'S WORKFORCE—IS EFFECTIVELY UTILISED AND CONTRIBUTES AT LEAST 25 PER CENT TO NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE GOVERNMENT MUST PRIORITISE SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

ily acquire skills in the beauty and wellness sector, followed by 21.5 per cent in tailoring. The beauty and wellness sector is one of the most significant forces driving women's empowerment in India today.

The industry's rapid growth, the accessibility of skill development, the increasing number of women entering the workforce and entrepreneurship, and the rise of women in leadership roles all contribute to fostering a more equitable society. In India, the beauty and wellness sector is rapidly advancing women's empowerment by providing substantial employment to approximately 12.3 million people, of whom 66 per cent are women.

This workforce includes individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds and educated families. According to a 2023 report by Technavio, the beauty and personal care industry in India is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.5 per cent from 2021, reaching a market value of over \$20 billion and creating employment opportunities for around 20.3 million people. Promoting female entrepreneurship in India is crucial, as participation is low, with only one in five entrepreneurs being women.

The beauty and wellness sector offers women significant employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Therefore, there is an urgent need to actively promote skill development, entrepreneurship, and self-employment in this sector through targeted training initiatives, entrepreneurship education, and financial support, enabling women to enhance their professional growth. India's beauty and wellness industry has low entry barriers for women looking to become entrepreneurs.

Many women have capitalised on this sector to establish their businesses, empowering them to take control of their financial futures and

influence the industry's direction.

Over 30 per cent of beauty and wellness businesses in India are now owned by women, ranging from small beauty parlours to large spa chains and wellness centres. By building businesses in this sector, women create financial independence and contribute to economic growth. Entrepreneurship fosters leadership skills, self-reliance, and resilience, making women more visible and influential economically.

Government initiatives and private institutions have been instrumental in equipping women with the necessary tools for success in the industry. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, has played a vital role in training women for careers in beauty and wellness. Initiatives like The Beauty and Wellness Sector Skill Council (BWSSC) provide certifications and skill development courses to millions of women nationwide.

According to the BWSSC, nearly 2 million women have been trained through skill development programs in beauty and wellness in India, significantly enhancing women's employability and career growth.

Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), has spent over two decades empowering 250,000 women in tier 2 cities and suburban areas with valuable skills in beauty and wellness. This initiative has helped bridge geographical disparities and enhanced their career prospects, enabling them to pursue diverse roles in the industry. The hybrid mode of training also boosts their chances for professional advancement and reducing the gender employment gap.

Beyond financial and professional empowerment, the beauty and well-

ness sector boosts women's self-esteem and confidence. In a society where women's appearances have often been scrutinised, the beauty industry allows women to express themselves, feel more self-assured, and engage actively in both social and professional spheres. Women are increasingly taking on leadership roles within this industry, driving trends and shaping its future. According to FICCI's 2021 report on the beauty and wellness sector, women hold significant leadership positions in major beauty brands and represent 50-60 per cent of senior management in several top companies.

As women advance to leadership roles, they influence industry trends, promote diversity and inclusivity, and help break down gender norms. Their leadership inspires the next generation of women to pursue prominent roles, further advancing gender equality in the workforce. With a growing focus on sustainability in the beauty and wellness sector, women have opportunities to lead initiatives that promote environmental awareness and social responsibility.

Many women in this field are focused on business growth and actively cultivating sustainable and ethical practices that positively impact society. By offering women financial independence, career advancement opportunities, and self-expression platforms, the beauty and wellness sector is reshaping the future for women in India. This sector's economic, social, and psychological benefits pave the way for a new generation of women contributing to India's growth trajectory.

(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI; the views expressed are personal)

Reviving the spirit of peace: A call to action for a divided world

As the voices of peacemakers grow faint and their initiatives struggle for survival, the urgency to reignite hope and unity has never been greater

This is my story. As a child, I often heard harrowing tales of emotional and physical trauma, turmoil, displacement, and violence from my family elders—stories of what they endured during Partition. They spoke of their flight from Rawalpindi and how, as refugees, they rebuilt their lives and made Delhi their home.



APS MALHOTRA

Listening to these sagas of resilience, courage, and the indomitable human spirit, I was reminded of the philosopher George Santayana's warning: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Tragically, we have done just that—forgetting the lessons of the past and repeating the same mistakes,

over and over again. Thirty-seven years after Partition, another tragedy unfolded. A so-called "big tree" fell, and the reverberations shook Delhi to its core. What followed was a horrific bloodbath: gross attempts at ethnic cleansing, as thousands of innocent people were butchered in the nation's capital within hours. Law enforcement turned a

blind eye. Places of worship were desecrated. Homes were looted, ransacked, and burned. Women were violated, and men were hunted like wild animals.

In those dark and desperate times, when it seemed as though humanity had been consumed by madness, there were still beacons of hope. Veterans like the late Kuldeep Nayar stood steadfast, risking their safety to uphold the ideals of peace. Stories of individuals and groups lighting candles, distributing sweets and roses at the Attari-Wagah border, and praying for harmony between two estranged nations filled me with admiration and hope. I longed to join them—to move from being a passive

observer to an active participant in this peace movement.

But it remained a dream for decades. Finally, some years ago, the opportunity came during a visit to Amritsar for a seminar. By sheer luck, I was given a VIP pass to witness the Beating Retreat Ceremony at the Attari-Wagah border.

I was thrilled beyond words. That day, under a gentle winter sun, I took my seat near the massive gate where the ceremony unfolds. It was a spectacle to behold—smartly dressed soldiers marching in perfect sync on both sides of the border. The crowd was electric, brimming with patriotic fervor, singing Bollywood songs, and soaking in the



festive 'pind da mela' atmosphere. But as dusk fell and the ceremony ended, a sense of disappointment crept in. The cold wind seemed to mirror

my mood. None of the scenes I had dreamed of since childhood were there. There were no doves soaring freely across the man-made divide, no warm embraces or

gestures of reconciliation—only the stark reality of a deeply entrenched divide. That day, I walked away with nothing but the wistful reveries of a peacenik.

Now, as I approach the close of my 56th year, my concern for the future has grown. The peacemakers—the dreamers who championed harmony and understanding—are fading, their initiatives struggling to survive. A way forward must be found, and urgently. The solution lies within each of us, but it will take collective effort to revive the peace offensive.

If we fail to act, we risk losing this fight entirely. And history, as well as future generations, will not forgive us.

The path to peace is fraught with challenges, but it is one we must tread with urgency and determination. The fading voices of peacemakers must be reignited, their efforts revitalised, for the sake of a shared future. If we fail to come together now—to heal divisions, foster understanding, and embrace humanity's collective strength—the dream of harmony will wither away. The responsibility lies with each of us to ensure this does not happen. Let us act before it is too late, for history will not absolve us, and future generations will inherit the consequences of our inaction. Peace cannot wait.

(The writer is an author and blogger; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Airfares have moderated in 2024, says Govt

The government has said airfares have moderated in 2024 compared to 2023 and notably, a decline in air ticket prices was observed in various routes during festival seasons. Amid concerns in certain quarters that air ticket prices are rising high, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol told Rajya Sabha that airfares are not subject to regulation by the government and airlines have the flexibility to determine their airfares based on their operational needs while adhering to existing rules. "...the government generally refrains from regulating airfares to maintain market competitiveness, however, it remains vigilant, and the government intervenes to shift capacity from one sector to another to prevent exorbitant pricing to ensure passenger comfort and welfare," he said in a written reply on November 25. Airfares are dynamic and is a function of demand and supply. With continuous engagement with airlines & Online Ticketing Agents (OTAs) and keeping a watch on the movement of airfares by the government, Mohol said airfares have moderated in 2024 relative to 2023.



Second phase of PM e-Drive notified

Buyers of cargo electric three-wheelers will continue to avail the subsidy benefit as the government has advanced the second phase of incentives for such vehicles under the Rs 10,900-crore PM e-Drive Scheme. The move comes as the subsidy allocation for the ongoing financial year on L5 category electric three-wheelers has already exhausted with the registration of over 80,000 such vehicles till November 7. Also, the subsidy amount has been capped at Rs 25,000 per vehicle, down to half from Rs 50,000 per vehicle for the 80,546 vehicles registered between April 1 and November 7, 2024. According to the latest notification published on November 26, up to 1,24,846 vehicles to be registered on the Vahan portal from November 8, 2024 to March 31, 2026 will be able to avail subsidies at reduced rate of Rs 2,500/kWh, down from Rs 5,000/kWh in phase I. When the scheme was announced in September this year, 80,546 electric three-wheeler cargo vehicles were targeted to be supported for FY25 and 1,24,846 units for FY26.



Godrej Properties launches QIP to raise Rs 6,000 cr

Godrej Properties on Wednesday launched its qualified institutional placement (QIP) to sell equity shares to investors for raising up to Rs 6,000 crore to fund its growth plan. Last month, the company's board approved raising of up to Rs 6,000 crore through the issue of securities. In a regulatory filing, Godrej Properties informed that the QIP Placement Committee authorized the opening of the issue on November 27, 2024. The panel also approved the floor price for the QIP issue, being Rs 2,727.44 per equity share. Godrej Properties' share price closed at Rs 2,833.05 apiece on Wednesday, down 2.35 per cent from Tuesday. The company is one of the leading developers in the country. It has a major presence in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Pune and Bengaluru. It has entered into Hyderabad market recently. In the last fiscal, the company's sales booking jumped 84 per cent to a record Rs 22,527 crore, the highest among listed realty firms in 2023-24. Godrej Properties has set a target of achieving Rs 27,000 crore worth of sale bookings.

'French aircraft, defence industries should look at India to set up base'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday urged the French aviation sector to explore opportunities to set up manufacturing facilities in India.

He said that India is the world's largest aviation market with 1,500 planes ordered with the capability of taking the order up to 2,000.

"Indian companies have 1,500 aircraft on order and have the option to take it to 2,000. It would also be in the best interest of French companies to look at Indian manufacturing possibilities, to look at expanding their own sales in India for both aircraft, spare parts for aircraft, maintenance, repair and overhaul and all other associated industries," he said while addressing the Asia-Pacific Forum of French Foreign Trade Advisors.

A large part of the order of aircraft by Indian companies has gone to French manufacturer Airbus.

India has increased the number of airports to 125 from 75 in 2014 and by 2029, 75 more airports will become operational.

"It gives huge opportunities for companies who wish to develop airports and other associated industries," Goyal said.

The minister also suggested for joint production partnership between Indian and French companies in the defence sector for the world markets.

"We are encouraging companies from across the world to manufacture in India. We allow 100 per cent ownership of defence manufacturing companies.

"We don't even insist on technology transfer in most cases," he said.

Goyal also invited French companies for partnerships with India in the area of agriculture and food processing, renewable energy, electric vehicles, artificial intelligence and quantum technologies, and services sector.



'India needs quantum leap in scale, size of fiscal bodies'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India needs to take a quantum leap in the scale and size of the financial institutions to achieve the aspiration of becoming a developed nation by 2047, RBI Deputy Governor M Rajeshwar Rao has said.

He was speaking 'High-Level Policy Conference of Central Banks in the Global South' organised by the Reserve Bank of India as a part of commemoration of its 90th year here last week.

"As we retrospect, we observe that the regulatory developments and policy measures initiated in the past have led to development of a robust, resilient and strong financial system in India which has weathered several crises.

"But the goals we have for our nation require us to take a quantum leap in the scale and size of the financial institutions," he said.

This will also possibly expose the entities and their users to an increased amount of risk.

In view of this, robust governance and effective risk man-



The regulatory developments and policy measures initiated in the past have led to development of a robust, resilient and strong financial system in India which has weathered several crises

Further, there will be entry of new players, products, and services (private credit) to meet the growing credit needs, the senior RBI official said.

Therefore, an enabling regulatory system would have to be put in place to meet these challenges and safeguard financial stability without hindering the process of innovation, Rao added.

He also emphasised that there are not many central banks in the world which have a mandate as broad-based as that of RBI.

RBI, he said, is a full-service central bank with a mandate spreading across functional areas such as monetary policy, currency management, regulation and supervision, payment system, financial inclusion and management of forex reserves.

Despite this humongous responsibility, the nine illustrious decades of RBI's existence and 75 years of experience as a regulator and supervisor have built a foundation of a strong financial sector which could support the country in fulfilling its developmental aspirations, Rao added.

Total debt on major telcos hits Rs 4.09 lakh cr

BSNL debt lowest at Rs 23,297 crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The total debt on four major telecom operators in the country stood at Rs 4,09,905 crore in the financial year 2024, with state-owned BSNL recording the lowest debt among competitors at Rs 23,297 crore, Parliament was informed on Wednesday.

According to data shared by Minister of State for Communications Pemasani Chandra Sekhar in a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Vodafone Idea registered a debt of Rs 2.07 lakh crore, Bharti Airtel Rs 1.25 lakh crore and Jio Infocomm Rs 52,740 crore as of March 31, 2024.

BSNL had a debt of Rs 40,400 crore in FY22, which was reduced to Rs 28,092 crore with the help of a revival package and financial support from the govern-



ment.

"In 2019, the first revival package amounting to around Rs 69 thousand crores was given that brought down the operating costs of BSNL/MTNL.

In 2022, a revival package amounting to around Rs 1.64 Lakh crore was given. It focused on infusing fresh capital, restructuring debt,

viability gap funding for rural telephony etc," Sekhar said.

The minister also said that the government approved the allotment of 4G/5G spectrum to BSNL with a total outlay of around Rs 89,000 crore. "As a result of these packages, BSNL has started earning operating profits from FY 2020-21," Sekhar said.

India to spend over Rs 9 lakh cr on power transmission infra

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A total expenditure of Rs 9.12 lakh crore has been planned to augment power transmission infrastructure capacity in the country by 2032, according to Union Minister Shripad Yesso Naik.

The National Electricity Plan (Transmission) covers the transmission plan till 2031-32, said Minister of State for Power Shripad Yesso Naik in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha on Monday.

As per the Plan, 1,91,474 circuit kilometres (ckm) of transmission lines and 1274 Giga Volt Ampere (GVA) of transformation capacity would be added (at 220 kV and above voltage level) in the 10-year period from 2022-23 to 2031-32.

In addition, he stated that 33.25 GW of High Voltage

Direct Current (HVDC) bipole links are also planned.

The inter-regional transmission capacity is planned to increase to 143 GW by 2026-27 and further to 168 GW by 2031-32, from the present level of 119 GW.

The Plan also highlights new technology options in transmission, cross-border interconnections and private sector participation in transmission.

He informed the House that total expenditure likely to be incurred on this plan is about Rs 9,16,142 crore.

The Transmission Plan provides visibility to the Electricity Generators, Equipment Manufacturers, Transmission Service Providers (TSP) and investors for the growth opportunities in Transmission Sector.



NTPC Green Energy shares jump 13 pc in debut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of NTPC Green Energy Ltd, the renewable energy arm of NTPC, ended with a premium of 13 per cent against the issue price of Rs 108 on Wednesday.

The stock made its debut at Rs 111.60, up 3.33 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it climbed 13.65 per cent to Rs 122.75. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 122.10 apiece, rallying 13.06 per cent.

On the NSE, it listed at Rs 111.50, up 3.24 per cent. The stock ended at Rs 121.25, a jump of 12.26 per cent.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 1,02,885.49 crore.

In terms of volume, 343.59 lakh shares of the firm were traded on the BSE and 3,009.61 lakh shares on the NSE during the day.

Air India Express to start flights to Bangkok

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Air India Express will start flights to Bangkok from Surat and Patna from December 20, making Thailand's capital its 15th international destination. Besides, the Tata Group carrier will commence services to Dimapur (Nagaland) and Patna (Bihar). With these new cities, the airline will be connecting a total of 51 cities across India, the Middle East and Southeast Asia.

"Operations to Bangkok will commence on 20th December 2024, with direct flights connecting Surat and Patna to the vibrant capital of Thailand. Additionally, the airline strengthens its domestic network with the launch of services to Dimapur and Patna, offering daily direct connectivity between Dimapur and Guwahati, and Patna and Bengaluru and Hyderabad."

Sensex rises by 230 pts on gains in Adani stocks, select blue-chips

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex climbed 230 points in a volatile session on Wednesday following gains in Adani group stocks and foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share index rose by 230.02 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 80,234.08 as 18 of its shares closed in green and 12 in red. During the day, it surged 507.09 points or 0.63 per cent to 80,511.15.

In a see-saw trade, the NSE Nifty rose by 80.40 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,274.90. The index moved between a high of 24,354.55 and a low of 24,145.65.

Utilities, power, services and capital goods shares advanced while realty and healthcare stocks were the laggards.

Adani group shares led the recovery rising up to nearly 20 per cent after the group clar-



ified that chairman Gautam Adani and his aides had not been charged under the US Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. They faced three other charges, including securities and wire fraud that are punishable with monetary fines, the group stated.

Adani Ports & SEZ was the biggest gainer among Sensex stocks, rising by 6 per cent. HDFC Bank rose by 1.43 per cent contributing over 167 points to total Sensex gains.

NTPC, Bajaj Finance, Maruti and Axis Bank were among the other gainers.

In contrast, Titan, State Bank of India, Asian Paints, Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Tech, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank and ICICI Bank were among the laggards.

Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in equity markets on Tuesday which also bought strengthened the sentiment.

Gold gains Rs 650 to Rs 78,800 per 10 grams

Silver sees steepest single-day jump

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bullion prices rebounded after two days of sharp fall with silver logging its steepest single-day gain of Rs 5,200 to hit Rs 95,800 per kg on Wednesday amid strong global trends and buying rush from local jewellers.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity climbed Rs 650 to Rs 78,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The yellow metal had lost Rs 2,250 in the previous two straight sessions. It ended at Rs 78,150 per 10 grams on Tuesday.

Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 950 to Rs 78,700 per 10 grams on Wednesday.

Silver saw its steepest single-day jump of Rs 5,200 and regained the Rs 95,000 per kg level after a gap of two-weeks in the national capital. Earlier, the steepest one-day rise in silver price was recorded on October 21 when it had gained Rs 5,000.

The white metal had plunged Rs 2,700 in the past two days and ended Tuesday's session at Rs 90,600 per kg.



Traders attributed the increase in precious metal rates to volatile geopolitical situation in the Middle East as well as the rising consumption in industrial and wearable segments in the domestic market.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for December delivery jumped Rs 702 or 0.93 per cent to trade at Rs 75,913 per 10 grams.

"Gold traded with strength as markets continued to factor in geopolitical tensions and dollar volatility. While the broader bullish trend in gold remains intact, short-term uncertainty persists."

"At Rs 75,900 on MCX, gold is slightly off its peak but significantly above the Rs 67,500 low seen during the Budget week," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Silver futures contract for December delivery rose Rs 280 or 0.32 per cent to Rs 88,530 per kg on Wednesday against the previous close of Rs 88,250 per kg.

Globally, Comex gold futures advanced USD 27 per ounce or 1.02 per cent to USD 2,673.30 per ounce.

Fiscal deficit likely to be at 4.75 pc of GDP: IndRa

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The government will be able to register the fiscal deficit at 4.75 per cent in FY25, 0.19 per cent lower than the budget aim, by reigning in expenditure, domestic rating agency India Ratings and Research said on Wednesday.

The revenue expenditure, excluding subsidies, will be 0.12 per cent of GDP, lower than the budget estimate, the rating agency added.

Its chief economist and head of public finance Devendra Kumar Pant said the govern-

ment capital expenditure will come out to be Rs 62,000 crore lower than the estimate of Rs 11.11 lakh crore.

Pant was quick to add that the government capex will still be 10.6 per cent higher than the year-ago period. The government was initially envisaging a 17.6 per cent growth in the key number.

Even as there is a dip in the government capital expenditure projected, the capex to GDP in FY25 at 3.21 per cent is estimated to be at a two-decade high, the agency said.

"The FY25 capex growth has



been impacted by the general elections in May 2024, and capex in 1H FY25 shrank 15.42 per cent year-on-year. To achieve the FY25 (BE) target, capex in 2H FY25 must grow

52.04 per cent, which appears to be a daunting task," it added. Among ministries, railways, and road, transport and highways will breach their FY25 capex allocations, the agency

said. There will be a slippage of 0.10 per cent of GDP on the subsidies front due to higher outgoes on food, fertiliser and petroleum subsidies, the agency said, pointing that the overall spending has been 54.55 per cent higher than the budgeted levels in the first half of the fiscal.

On the revenue expenditure, excluding subsidies, the rating agency's report said actual spending by 43 ministries other than civil aviation, railways, and road, transport and highways in the April-September

period was less than 40 per cent of their allocation.

The FY25 gross and net tax revenue will come at 12.02 per cent of GDP and 8.08 per cent of GDP, respectively, which will be a 17-year high, the report said, adding that income tax and corporate tax are estimated to contribute 80.94 per cent and 10.53 per cent, respectively, to the additional gross tax revenue.

Non-tax revenue and disinvestment receipts are to be lower than the budgeted amount of Rs 5.46 lakh crore and Rs 78,000 crore, respectively, in FY25, it said.

BHUMI PEDNEKAR HINTS AT A 'MAGNANIMOUS' THE ROYALS

Actress Bhumi Pednekar has shared details about her upcoming projects including the series *The Royals*, which she said will be "magnanimous" and the polar opposite psychological thriller *Daldal*. Speaking about *The Royals*, Bhumi, who co-hosted this year's International Film Festival of India (IFFI) opening ceremony, said: "It's my first long format. I'm very, very happy that our collaborators are Netflix. It's going to be magnanimous. It's romance, it's comedy. I love that genre myself."

The actor added that while the show falls into the rom-com category, it features "layered" and "nuanced" performances from a cast that includes both established and new actors, including veteran Zeenat Aman and Ishaan Khatter. She also discussed her role in the series *Daldal*, describing it as being the absolute opposite of *The Royals*. "I haven't in my career read a character that's this complex," said the actress. Bhumi shared the stage with actors Khushbu Sundar and Suhasini Mani Ratnam, filmmaker Imtiaz Ali and actor, author and film administrator Vani Tripathi Tikoo.



HOUSEFULL 5 GETS STARRY BOOST!

One of India's biggest comedy franchises, Sajid Nadiadwala's *Housefull 5*, is now entering its final schedule of filming. To celebrate the legacy of the film, the team has unveiled a star-studded image featuring the biggest ensemble cast. Sajid Nadiadwala's *Housefull 5* marks a milestone as the first franchise to reach its fifth instalment. It is packed with five times the entertainment, fun, comedy. It is one of the big-budget film shot in a luxurious cruise starting from London to France to Spain and back to the UK.

Housefull 5 is the comedy of ages bringing together some of the biggest names in Bollywood, including Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh, Abhishek Bachchan, Fardeen Khan, Jacqueline Fernandez, Sonam Bajwa, Nargis Fakhri, Sanjay Dutt, Jackie Shroff, Nana Patekar, Chunky Pandey, Johnny Lever, Shreyas Talpade, Dino Morea, Chitrangada Singh, Ranjeet, Soundarya Sharma, Nikitin Dheer, and more. Directed by the talented Tarun Mansukhani. *Housefull 5* is scheduled for release on June 6, 2025!

what's brewing?

Norman Joseph weighs in on *Moana's* live-action remake

Norman Joseph, the General Technical Director of *Moana 2*, takes us on an inspiring journey from the vibrant streets of Mumbai to the dazzling world of Hollywood animation. With a career spanning blockbuster hits like *Frozen*, *Encanto*, *Big Hero 6*, and *Zootopia*, Joseph has cemented his place as a leading force in the animation industry, blending technical brilliance with creative storytelling.

In an interview, Joseph shares his fascination with simple yet impactful storytelling that drove him to pursue computer graphics at Purdue University after a stint as a software engineer and even a brief career as a child actor. Reflecting on his contributions to *Moana 2*, he explains how his team revolutionised the lighting workflow to bring an even more vibrant and immersive visual experience to life, saying, "Our job is to empower the artists, giving them the tools they

need to fully focus on their craft." Joseph also draws parallels between the film's narrative and real-world growth. "In *Moana 2*, the characters evolve and so does their community. It's a beautiful reflection of how beliefs and values transform over time. As artists, we've grown too and bringing that journey to the screen has been an incredible privilege," he shares.

As Disney embarks on a live-action reimagining of *Moana* with Dwayne Johnson reprising his role, Joseph expresses his excitement. "It's always amazing to see filmmakers reinterpret what we created. Their fresh perspectives add new layers to the world we built, and I can't wait to see it unfold."

With *Moana 2* hitting Indian theatres on November 29, fans can look forward to a stellar cast returning alongside new voices, promising another heartwarming adventure on the high seas.



Kristin Cavallari slams Scott Disick's manipulative DM, denies affair rumours

Kristin Cavallari is setting the record straight and pulling back the curtain on her complicated past with Scott Disick. In a candid and fiery revelation on the November 26 episode of her *Let's Be Honest* with Kristin Cavallari podcast, the 37-year-old entrepreneur and reality TV star addressed longstanding rumors about her alleged affair with Disick while he was dating Kourtney Kardashian and exposed the manipulative tactics she claims Disick used in an attempt to reconnect. Cavallari, who has been open about her friendships with both Kourtney Kardashian and Scott Disick over the years, shared details about a recent Instagram direct message she received from Disick, in which he attempted to reopen lines of communication after years of silence. She called out the message as manipulative, revealing it to her podcast audience. "I get a DM on Instagram from Scott f---ing Disick. And I'm going to read it to you guys because I don't give a flying f--- anymore," Cavallari began. "If this is not the most manipulative text I've ever gotten, well then, I don't know what is. Guys, this is classic textbook manipulation, control bulls---"

Cavallari read aloud the message Disick allegedly sent, which was an attempt to reconnect. According to her, it said: "I feel like it would be so good to see you and catch up and just talk about the stress and all the different things you got to go through with kids and changing your life around over and over. Really miss you though and wish I would have reached out earlier. I don't have time for much, but trying to think about myself a little bit again, or trying anyway. Hope to hear from you." Unimpressed, Cavallari

dismissed the message as nothing more than a calculated move by Disick, implying that he had ulterior motives, including reigniting an old connection. "His intentions were insincere," she added, slamming him for what she viewed as a manipulative approach. Addressing the infamous 2008 affair rumours, Cavallari took the opportunity to once again clear the air about her relationship with Disick. She firmly denied ever having an affair with him while he was with Kourtney Kardashian, explaining that the two had been close friends for years, moving in similar

social circles since she was just 18 years old. Cavallari reflected on a time when Disick and Kardashian briefly split in 2008, which was when she went on a trip to Las Vegas with Disick and his friends. This trip, which she emphasised was not romantic, quickly became the subject of intense tabloid speculation that suggested she and Disick had a fling. Cavallari strongly believes these rumors were fabricated, accusing Disick of possibly planting them himself in an effort to provoke Kardashian. "There was never any flirting or inappropriate behaviour between me and Scott," Cavallari explained, adding that she was never alone with him during the trip. "We were just friends and it was all blown out of proportion." Cavallari made it clear that her friendship with Kourtney Kardashian was genuine and she had nothing but admiration for the Kardashians star. Despite the drama and the years of gossip, Kristin continues to assert that her relationship with both Scott and Kourtney was rooted in friendship, not scandal. Her explosive podcast revelations mark the latest chapter in the ongoing saga of the intertwined lives of Hollywood's reality TV elite.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



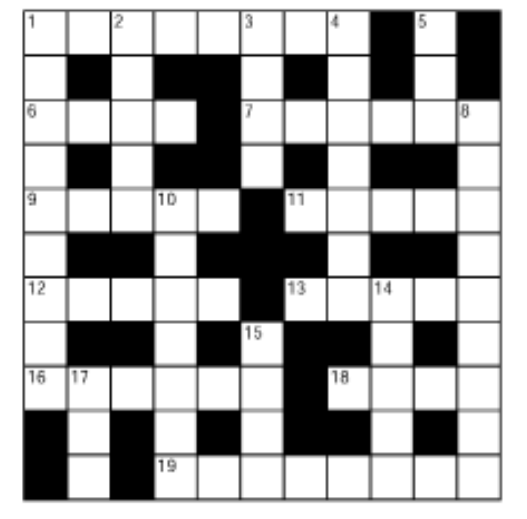
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- 1 Creatures that turn into frogs
 - 6 Absent
 - 7 Extremely foolish
 - 9 Vote into power
 - 11 One fifth of thirty-five
 - 12 Memorise
 - 13 The part of a theatre where people perform
 - 16 Take something away
 - 18 A toy on a string that can be spun up and down
 - 19 Dried grapes used in baking
- 4 Someone studying at college or university
- 5 The number 3 in Roman numerals
- 8 Very unsafe

10 Inquisitive

14 A nut from an oak tree

15 A prisoner's room

17 Finish

DOWN

- 1 Someone on a journey
- 2 A male duck
- 3 Fewer

GINGER MEGGS



TEJAL SINHA
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Spirituality is not just a practice – it's a way of life. In a world where chaos and uncertainty often reign, the pursuit of spirituality offers a beacon of hope and inner peace. As a revered spiritual leader from the Himalayan Yogi Institute and Swamiparman Foundation, Acharya Advait Yoghushan is on a mission to share the wisdom of Aum and promote holistic well-being. We had the privilege of sitting down with Acharya to discuss his teachings, the true essence of yoga and the path to enlightenment.

As we delve into the heart of his teachings, Yoghushan reveals the profound impact of yoga and Vedic wisdom on personal and societal transformation. "For me, yoga, meditation and the broader Vedic teachings are not just personal practices; they are the blueprint for a transformative way of living. These ancient tools offer us a direct path to uncover our true nature—beyond the layers of conditioning and ego. As we cultivate inner peace and clarity, we align ourselves with the universal rhythms and that alignment becomes the foundation for societal change."

When individuals awaken to their deeper selves, he says, they naturally embody compassion, integrity and harmony. A society made up of such individuals would be a society that values truth over materialism, interconnectedness over division and peace over conflict. This is the larger mission: to awaken the consciousness of the individual so that the collective consciousness evolves and people live in nonduality (Advait), bringing about true transformation on both a personal and societal level.

In an era where yoga has become a global phenomenon, he sheds light on the delicate balance between accessibility and authenticity, saying, "Yoga's essence lies in its spiritual depth, not just physical postures. While its global popularity has made it more accessible, I focus on guiding people beyond the surface—inviting them to explore yoga as a holistic practice that unites body, mind and soul. To balance accessibility with authenticity, I teach yoga as a living philosophy, emphasising meditation, self-awareness and mindfulness. *Yoga Abhyas* make changes in subtle body if practiced appropriately. This way, even in a world that often focuses on the external, the deeper transformative power of yoga remains intact and accessible to all."

As we explore the concept of enlightenment, Acharya Advait Yoghushan offers a profound insight. "Enlightenment is not a distant goal, but a way of being—an unfolding realisation that we are not separate from the divine, but intimately connected to it," he explains. According to Advait, enlightenment is about seeing life with clarity, free from the distortions of the ego. "In my daily practice, enlightenment is reflected in how I approach each moment—with nondualism, gratitude and a deep sense of awareness."

Acharya



ILLUMINATING LIVES BEYOND YOGA MAT



Advait Yoghushan emphasises that enlightenment is not about escaping the world, but fully embracing it with love and understanding. "Through yoga, meditation, and conscious living, I cultivate this awareness every day, allowing it to guide my actions, my interactions, and my inner peace." He views enlightenment as a shift in

perspective, seeing the divine in the ordinary and realising that every breath is a step closer to awakening.

In today's fast-paced world, Acharya Advait Yoghushan recommends timeless techniques for cultivating resilience and mental clarity. He notes that the practice of *pranayama* or breath control is incredibly powerful, as it calms the mind, centers the nervous system and restores balance. "Meditation, especially with *Aumkar Sadhana* repetition or simply observing the breath, creates a space of stillness amidst chaos, helping us reconnect with our true nature."

His work in yoga and spirituality extends to physical, mental, and emotional well-being. He believes that the practice of yoga, as he teaches it, offers a profound antidote to the mental and emotional challenges of our time. "Yoga, in its truest form, is a profound antidote to the mental and emotional challenges of our time," he explains. "In a world filled with stress and anxiety, the practice I teach focuses on cultivating inner stillness and awareness. Through *pranayama* (breathing exercises), we learn to regulate the breath, which directly impacts the nervous system, calming the mind and reducing anxiety." In a society oriented toward

external achievement, he guides people to reconcile their spiritual pursuits with their external goals. "In a society that values external achievement, the path of self-realisation might seem counterintuitive, but they are not opposing forces; they are complementary," he notes. "True success, as I teach, is not measured by external markers—titles, wealth, or recognition—but by the inner peace and fulfillment that come from knowing and aligning with your true self."

Acharya Advait Yoghushan also explores the intersection of Vedic sciences and modern science.

"Yes, there is a profound alignment between Vedic sciences and modern

While yoga is often practiced individually today, he notes that its true power lies in community. "In the Vedic tradition, *Satsanga*—the gathering of like-minded individuals—was essential for spiritual growth. Community provides support, accountability, and shared wisdom, helping us stay grounded and inspired on our journey."

In making Vedic and yogic philosophies relevant and approachable for people with diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, he focuses on universal principles and practices. "My yatra, inspired by my own journey through adversity, focuses on awakening the sacred sound of (Aum), which symbolises the universal

vibration that connects all beings," he shares. "I believe that this sound transcends religious

boundaries and resonates with anyone seeking peace and harmony." His approach to mindfulness and yoga is rooted in making these practices accessible and practical for all. "When I conduct sessions, whether in schools, local communities, or temples, I integrate mindfulness and yoga in ways that are accessible and practical," he explains. Acharya Advait Yoghushan focuses on simple, universal practices that promote well-being, such as breathwork, meditation, and mindful movement, which are relevant across cultures. For children, he tailors his sessions to foster a sense of inner calm, self-awareness, and compassion – values that transcend specific religious teachings. In temples, he speaks on themes like forgiveness and letting go of negativity, which are universal human experiences that can resonate with anyone, regardless of their faith.

At the heart of his work is the concept of "spirituality in action." He emphasises that this is about living what we practice, no matter where we are. "I encourage people to bring mindfulness into their work and daily life by reminding them that everything we do can be done with presence and intention," he notes. Acharya Advait Yoghushan stresses that compassion plays a big part in this approach. "When we approach others with kindness and understanding, we're practicing spirituality in the real world."

Spirituality meets social impact in the remarkable journey of Acharya Advait Yoghushan, a visionary spiritual leader dedicated to spreading the universal message of peace, harmony and self-realisation.

In an exclusive conversation with The Pioneer for Community Wise, the Acharya delves into the transformative power of yoga, mindfulness and awareness, offering invaluable peace and more

science, especially when we look beyond the surface," he observes. "Vedic teachings, with their focus on consciousness, the interconnectedness of life and the subtle energies of the universe, echo many of the discoveries made in quantum physics and neuroscience."

In fact, in the Vedic tradition, he highlights that mindfulness and awareness go much deeper than simply being present in the moment or observing our thoughts, as is often emphasised in Western interpretations. "In the Vedic context, mindfulness is seen as the ability to maintain a steady, focused attention on the true nature of the self—beyond the fluctuations of the mind, emotions and the external world."

Unlocking potential of radiography in healthcare

We need to raise awareness of the value of radiography in healthcare. This has to come in the form of knowing the importance that radiography and X-ray technology play in the diagnostics and treatment of various conditions, which is not within the public's general knowledge. Radiography professionals exert their expertise in discovering injuries, diseases and illnesses. In so doing, there is recognition for their efforts in healthcare. The evolution of X-rays is a landmark contribution from professionals in radiography to the medical profession. It has revolutionized the science world because it allows physicians to look at structures without any need for invasive procedures. It is helpful that we let the public know the advancement in the technology and practical capacity of radiography. Radiography uses X rays to visualise the mechanics of the body in medical domains including imaging and interventional medicine, such as catheter placements and biopsies that diagnose fractures and diseases such as tumors and infections. In oncology, therapeutic radiography also plays a part in planning and delivering targeted radiation therapy to combat cancer while ensuring the protection of healthy tissue. In dentistry, X-rays are used to assess health status, diagnose cavities, and monitor bone density alterations. Similarly in medicine, radiography is an essential tool for detecting and diagnosing a variety of health-related concerns in animals. Advances and Developments in Radiography Radiography has undergone a great evolution, advancing from both the diagnostic accuracy and patient safety standpoints.

With Digital Radiography, it is now possible to obtain high-resolution images and expose the patient to far less radiation than ever, and processing is also completed much faster. This decreases the waiting time for the patient. The advent of 3D Imaging, with Cone Beam CT, and 3D reconstruction gives a better view of the complex areas that is always proving invaluable in intricate surgeries and dental procedures. The integration of AI with Machine Learning into

radiography has improved the accuracy of diagnostics by enhancing the ability to detect subtle patterns or anomalies through radiologists, as early-stage tumors or fractures among others. Low-dose techniques are being positioned at the forefront of the debates on radiography, focusing on minimizing exposure to radiation while providing good quality images for patient safety. Portable radiography units, today, are able to acquire images at patient bedside and have already proven to be invaluable in critical care as well as in emergency settings and with the current COVID-19 situation wherein mobility and containment was the issue. These technological advances show how radiography has become safer, more effective, and versatile in practice. Significance of Radiography in Health Care The importance of radiography lies in the medical field because it offers the earliest and most effective identification and diagnosis of grave conditions such as broken bones, infections, and cancers. Identifying those conditions at early stages gives the largest hope for successful treatment and survival. Treatment planning also relies heavily on adequate radiographic imaging, especially in fields like oncology and surgery. Good treatment plans often rely on clear images of the affected area. Radiography provides a least invasive form of diagnosis, which negates the risk of surgical exposure that would strain the patient's body, shortens procedures as short as possible, and reduces the painfulness and recovery time. Radiographic imaging also enables one to observe patients continuously, hence tracing the developing or resolving pathologies and evaluating the effects of treatment by monitoring a reduction in size, in the case of tumors, in cancer treatment. This makes radiography an essential element of good practice and patient-focused care, providing accurate, early, and continuous insight into health conditions.

(The author, DrRavindra B Kamble, is a Lead Consultant - Neuro-Intervention & Diagnostic Radiology, at Aster RV Hospital.)



Shaping Telugu literature with grace

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For some, a career in teaching is the culmination of years of dedication. For others, it's merely the first chapter of a much larger story. This is especially true for this celebrated Telugu poet and writer, who transitioned from the classroom to the literary world with grace, determination and an unwavering passion for storytelling.

DrKondapalli Neeharini, a relentless torchbearer of Telugu literature, seamlessly balances the roles of homemaker and literary trailblazer, inspiring countless women along the way. Hailing from Chinna Pendyala in Jangaon district, her journey was shaped by her parents' powerful legacy—her mother, a leader in women's empowerment and her father, a freedom fighter and the first Lok Sabha MP from Warangal.

Her notable works, from poetry collections like *Arra Talupulu* to her biographies and travelogues, reflect her deep social consciousness and feminist perspective. She has dedicated decades to preserving cultural legacies, notably through her biography of her father-in-law, DrKondapalli Seshagiri Rao and her exploration of Telangana's history through her PhD thesis on the Oddaraju brothers.

Her contribution to literature has earned her numerous accolades, including the prestigious Amruthalata Award, the She Award and international recognition, yet she remains grounded, known for her humility and deep empathy. Through her words, she continues to be an advocate for societal change, equality and the transformative power of storytelling, inspiring generations to come. Her literary journey began quietly, as many do. "I was always inclined toward writing," she says with a smile that suggests fond memories of simpler times. "Even as a student, I was drawn to Telugu literature. When I pursued my degree and later my MA in the same subject, I felt like I was uncovering the depths of my language and culture." What started as a hobby during her early teaching career quickly evolved into something more profound. "I had a habit of writing poetry and essays, but it was after I left my teaching job—out of family responsibilities—that I began taking my writing seriously. It was no longer just about expressing myself but about creating something meaningful for others."

The next step in her journey was penning articles for newspapers, an endeavor that brought her closer to her growing audience. "I felt a deep sense of responsibility with each piece I wrote. If ten people read my work, I knew it had the potential to shape their thoughts. A writer's words carry weight, and I never took that lightly." Her transition from teacher to writer wasn't without challenges. It required adapting to new forms of expression and finding her unique voice in a competitive literary landscape. But the results were worth the effort. Over the years, she became known for her ability to balance introspective poetry with engaging essays on social and cultural topics.

It wasn't just the creative aspect of writing that she loved; she also enjoyed the process of learning and observing. "When I write, I don't just focus on my thoughts—I actively seek out perspectives that challenge me. Whether it's analysing the good and the bad or diving deep into a subject, my work is about understanding and conveying the complexity of life." One of her most celebrated works is *Six Months in America*, a travelogue that offers both cultural reflections and personal anecdotes. "When I traveled to America, it was for a deeply personal reason—to

support my daughter during her pregnancy and celebrate her milestones," she explains. The experience was transformative. For someone deeply rooted in Indian traditions, America presented a world of contrasts. "It was my first time travelling abroad and I felt torn between the bonds I'd left behind and the responsibility that brought me there. I remember observing everything—the festivals, the family dynamics, the way of life—and constantly relating back to my own culture."

Six Months in America is more than a travelogue—it's a meditation on identity and belonging. By blending her personal journey with broader cultural commentary, she invites readers to reflect on their own experiences of home, heritage and adaptation. Beyond her literary success, her work has been a beacon for women's empowerment. "In our society, there are countless women—teachers, doctors, leaders—doing extraordinary work. But their stories often remain untold. Through my writing, I want to highlight their achievements and inspire others to recognise the greatness within themselves." "Women are the backbone of our society, and it's time we give them the recognition they deserve," she asserts. Despite her accomplishments, she remains grounded. "Awards and recognition are a double-edged sword," she admits. "On one hand, they validate your efforts. But on the other, they come with the pressure to keep achieving, to keep meeting expectations. It's a burden, but one I carry with pride."

Her journey—from a teacher with a penchant for poetry to a celebrated voice in Telugu literature—is a testament to the power of perseverance and passion. Her stories, essays, and reflections continue to inspire readers, offering a glimpse into the world through her eyes. As she puts it, "Writing is more than a profession—it's a way of understanding life. Through my words, I hope to leave behind not just stories, but a legacy of thought, compassion, and connection." In the quiet corners of her mind and the bustling world around her, she continues to create. A contemporary artist, a feminist voice and a relentless seeker of truth, she reflects on her evolving identity with fervour. "I don't want to stop here. I am constantly reading, writing, and creating. The world still holds so many untold stories and I feel compelled to bring them to light," she says. Her commitment to feminist ideals transcends literature, shaping her vision for aspiring writers in the Telugu literary space. "Feminism is not about opposing men but about steering them toward understanding. It's about standing on our own feet—achieving financial freedom and using it to navigate life's challenges," she asserts with conviction. These views are deeply rooted in her upbringing and personal history. Born into a politically charged family during the Razakar movement, she witnessed resilience and revolution firsthand. Her father, an underground revolutionary turned MP, instilled in her the belief that education is a transformative tool. "He always said, 'We don't have anything but education.' That stayed with me." Her life story reads like a movie script, a tale of determination, losses, and triumphs. Despite facing academic setbacks and societal hurdles, she emerged as a voice for change. "We have to embrace our identity as women and lead with intelligence, maturity and compassion," she says. As she works on completing her latest book and exploring new artistic endeavors, she remains a mentor to young writers. Her advice to them is simple yet profound: "Observe society, write with intention and never forget that true freedom lies in achieving your dreams."

From her humble beginnings as a teacher to her rise as a literary trailblazer, Dr Neeharini's story is a testament to the power of passion, perseverance and dedication to one's craft. In a heartwarming conversation with The Pioneer, we delve into the remarkable life and works of Neeharini, a celebrated Telugu poet, writer and feminist voice



Gavaskar credits Kohli's stance adjustment for success in Perth

PTI ■ PERTH

Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar feels a subtle adjustment to his batting stance in the second innings of the Perth Test helped Virat Kohli neutralise the Australian attack and rediscover his vintage form.

Kohli arrived in Australia after a lean run of form across formats in recent months. His struggles against spin on turning tracks raised doubts about his spot in the team.

However, he silenced his detractors by scoring his 30th Test ton in the first Test at Perth. It was his first hundred after the 121 against the West Indies at Port of Spain in July 2023.

"His body was completely relaxed when he came into bat in the second innings. In the first innings, because of the fact that India had lost two wickets early, he would have also been under pressure," Gavaskar said on Star Sports. "In that second innings, you could sense apart from chang-

ing that stance, I think he also got his legs, which were maybe just a little bit wider at the start. Just a little bit, maybe I'm thinking too much, but that little thing might have given him that height he wanted. Well, in Australia, on the bouncer pitches, you need that edge.

"I liked that mid-wicket boundary that he hit off Hazlewood. That, to me, was not the easiest of shots. A straight drive is a little easier because your stance is like that, but just to open up a little bit and play that - that was all magic."

Having gotten out on 5 in the first innings, Kohli brought all his technical expertise into play while dealing with the vagaries of variable bounce in the second essay as Australian bowlers desperately tried the off-stump line, short ball tactic and even attacking the line of stump to get the veteran batter out.

Former Australian cricketer Matthew Hayden also commented on Kohli's stance



adjustments in the second innings, saying the move to be more upright on a pitch where variable bounce was present

worked for Kohli. "It's a very good point because the reverse can be said also to someone touring

to India and having to lower their stance. I know I certainly did that. But being able to be a little more upright

means that your head position has to stay on top of the bounce so that it starts to work in your favour.

"I said right from the start that I actually liked his move, batting in more line with the ball. I thought that was a good strategy. I think he loves to play like that, and we saw some classic cases where he just eased the ball through mid-wicket. But you can't do that from outside off stump, so getting into the line, I thought, was important."

"The other little adjustment that you mentioned, being a little more upright, so he could stay on top of the bounce, was also really important. If you're getting closer to the ball like he was -- another thing, I think, was probably playing the ball later. "When he's not in his best form, he goes quite hard, feeling for the ball. He wants to feel the ball on the bat, particularly on the front foot. But he just seemed to give himself a little more time and be a little softer."

Gavaskar compared Kohli's recent struggles to the time when tennis legends like Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal

and Novak Djokovic went without a title.

"I said in commentary that Roger Federer, Novak Djokovic, and Rafa Nadal, they are title winners. If they lose in the semi-finals, people say, 'Oh, they're not in form.' Anybody else getting into the semi-finals, you would say, 'Oh, what a wonderful performance.'"

"Similarly, with Virat Kohli, because everybody is so used to him scoring so many hundreds quite regularly, when he doesn't score 100, even if he's getting 70-80 -- which a lot of guys will be very happy to get -- people say, 'Look, he's not scoring runs.' And that is the reason why there was that feeling. "But then again, Indian fans, they're greedy fans. They're not going to be happy with their idol scoring only 60-70s. They want their icons, their idols, to score hundreds, and that is the reason there was this little talk about, 'Oh, he hasn't got a hundred since July 2023.' July 2023 is just about a year ago," he added.

Syed Modi International: Sindhu, Lakshya storm into second round

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Top seeds PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen advanced to the second round of the women's and men's singles respectively at the Syed Modi International Super 300 badminton tournament after registering straight-game victories here on Wednesday.

Two-time Olympic medalist Sindhu defeated rising shuttler Annol Kharb 21-17, 21-15, while Lakshya, 2021 world championships bronze medalist, powered past Malaysian qualifier Sholeh Aidil 21-12, 21-12 in another match.

Sindhu, who is returning to the tournament after a two-year hiatus, will face compatriot Ira Sharma, who triumphed over Deepshikha Singh 21-13, 21-19 in her opening match.

"I'm happy to be back here after two years. I couldn't play last year because of injury, but it feels great to be playing on home soil again," Sindhu said after her win.

"I was playing against Annol for the first time, and she did well. We've played together in the Asian Team Championships before, so I was confident. It was my first match, and I made some mistakes, but overall I'm happy



with my performance." Lakshya will next face either Ravi or Israel's Daniil Dubovenko.

"It's always great to play in front of the home crowd. I've competed here in the past, but right now, I'm focusing on my next match. My goal is to do well in the BWF tournaments and at the World Championships," said Lakshya, the 2022 Commonwealth Games champion.

In the men's singles, third seed Kiran George, eighth seed Ayush Shetty, and Meiraba Luwang Maisnam also progressed to the second round.

In the women's singles, second seed Malvika Bansod,

fifth seed Anupama Upadhyaya, Isharani Baruah, Devika Sihag, Unnati Hooda, Tasnim Mir and Shriyanshi Valishetty all advanced to the next stage.

Malvika defeated Viktoria Dabczynska 21-16, 21-7, while Anupama overcame Azerbaijan's Keisha Fatimah Azzahra 19-21, 22-20, 21-15. Hooda, meanwhile, beat Thailand's Thamonwan Nithitittirai 21-12, 21-16.

In the men's singles, Kiran George triumphed over Alap Mishra 21-12, 23-21; Ayush Shetty outlasted Raghu Mariswamy 21-18, 15-21, 21-16; and Meiraba Luwang Maisnam defeated Thailand's Saran Jamsri 14-21, 21-19, 21-10.

Cricket is religion in India but not roadblock for other sports: Coe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

World Athletics boss Sebastian Coe is quite aware that cricket is nothing short of "religion" in India but he feels it shouldn't be viewed as a "roadblock" for other sports, which can challenge its dominance by producing trailblazers like javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra to capture the public imagination.

Coe, one of the candidates for next year's International Olympic Committee (IOC) presidential elections, has been in the country for the past two days, meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya among others to discuss the growth potential of Indian sports.

Expressing faith in the country's potential to become a powerhouse, the four-time Olympic medal-winning former middle distance runner said, "When you have an Indian athlete winning Olympic titles and world championships, then you are in good shape."

"When you have athletes of the calibre and high profile of Neeraj, then you can actually mount a very good challenge to other sports. And look, we know the national religion is cricket," he stated in a telephonic interview with PTI on Wednesday.

"It's really important that India have athletes that capture the



imagination of the public, ultimately the broadcasters. And Neeraj does both," added Coe, who also headed the 2012 London Olympics bid.

Chopra won an unprecedented track-and-field gold in the Tokyo Olympics before adding a silver to his kitty in Paris this year making him an all-time great in Indian sports at a mere 26 years of age.

Cricket not a roadblock for other sports

Cricket enjoys massive following in India but Coe said it is not a roadblock for others and they should find innovative and creative ways to gain popularity. "It (cricket) shouldn't be a roadblock, because every country has sports that are dominant. It would be like saying in the UK, well, football is an inhibitor for track and field. We have one of the best

track and field teams in the UK that we've had for many years," the 68-year-old Coe said.

"You have to live with what you have to live with. And you can't just sit there saying, well, India, the cricket or football or rugby or wherever these sports are really strong. You sort of give up, you don't.

"You have to be more innovative, more creative. The sporting landscape is very competitive. Cricket is a very dominant sport in India. I watch it all the time," said the long-time administrator, whose grandfather was an Indian (hotlier Sardari Lal Malhotra).

'Dialogue with PM a private conversation'

India's Olympic performance at this year's Paris Games was underwhelming for a billion-strong country with six medals, none of them being gold.

The nation is now aiming to host the quadrennial showpiece in 2036 and has submitted a letter of intent to the IOC. The bid is being backed by PM Modi, whom Coe met on Monday.

"I'm not going to divulge a private conversation. But we talked about the importance of big events in India. He was very clear that big events promote not just better competition, but have a broader societal impact, particularly on the health, mental and physical of young people" Coe said.

"And he (PM) is obviously very keen for more events to come to India and was particularly encouraging of the Indian athletics federation (AFI) to bid for more of our events," he added.

With World Athletics Ultimate Championship (WAUC) set to outshine all global athletics events in terms of star cast and record-setting prize money of USD 10 million starting 2026, Coe said India could joint the bidding process. Budapest has been chosen as the venue for the inaugural event.

"I sincerely hope so (India can aspire to host the event). But look, we have a bidding process, which we actively encourage all our federations that love athletics and have the capacity to deliver those events, to want to bid for them.

"So, World Athletics is open for business and India is a very

important market for us," he said.

Coe said the idea of giving USD 50,000 to gold-winning track and field athletes at the Paris Olympics was driven by a desire to provide them financial security.

"Look, there was nothing new in what we announced. And it's certainly been my philosophy for the best part of 45-50 years. I've always believed that the welfare of the athletes isn't just about mental and physical.

"It's also about giving them some financial security. So look, the decision we made was a decision that is in line with our prize money policies in the sport. I have to say that it's been welcomed by our athletes.

'Protecting women's sport is non-negotiable'

The participation of transgender athletes in women's sports events has become an increasingly contentious issue with the IOC drawing flak for allowing this to happen. WA, under Coe, has maintained a strictly-women stance, a decision criticised by trans-rights advocates.

"You know my position. It's very clear. It's very much in the public domain...For me, protecting the female category, protecting women's sport is non-negotiable.

"And at World Athletics, we have very clear cut policies that make that declaration of intent very clear."

Bayern Munich fans protest against PSG president Al-Khelaifi

AP ■ MUNICH

Bayern Munich fans protested against Paris Saint-Germain president Nasser Al-Khelaifi during the teams' Champions League match.

The supporters in Bayern's stadium's Südkurve held up several banners making clear their opposition to the Qatari businessman during the first half of Bayern's 1-0 win.

One banner showed Al-Khelaifi's face with a line over it, another accused him of being "plutocratic" with an expletive, and more banners read: "Minister, club owner, TV rights holder, UEFA ExCo member & ECA chairman all in one?" The 51-year-old Al-Khelaifi is



unpopular among the Bayern fans for his influence on European soccer as chairman of the European Club Association, Qatar Sports Investments -- the owner of PSG -- and the Qatari state-owned beIN media group. He also joined UEFA's executive committee in 2019.

Al-Khelaifi has long drawn scrutiny for apparent conflicts of interest because of his various roles. The ECA has a big influence on shaping the Champions League's playing format and commercial strategy, while beIN is one of the competition's major broadcast partners.

In 2022, UEFA left Al-Khelaifi unpunished despite finding PSG guilty of misconduct for confrontations with match officials after losing in the Champions League. There were heated scenes involving Al-Khelaifi and then-PSG sporting director Leonardo after a defeat to Real Madrid.

UEFA sanctioned Leonardo but did not cite Al-Khelaifi in its disciplinary statement, nor did it say why.

Al-Khelaifi, a former tennis professional, is a longtime friend of Qatar's ruling emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, an International Olympic Committee member who is influential in global sports. Bayern fans had long protest-

ed against their own club's sponsorship deals with Qatar, which was accused of human rights abuses before it hosted the 2022 World Cup. The fans eventually got their way last year when Bayern's long-running sponsorship deal with Qatar Airways was not renewed.

The Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper reported at the time that the decision came from Qatar. Sheikh Tamim was reportedly unhappy with the Bayern fans' constant criticism and the club's failure to distance itself from their protests.

Kim Min-jae's first-half header was enough for Bayern's victory, its seventh straight without conceding across all competitions.

I want to prolong England career: Stokes' reason for skipping IPL mega auction

PTI ■ CHRISTCHURCH

England Test captain Ben Stokes said he opted out of the recent IPL mega auction to prolong his international career, and focus on some important assignments such as the Ashes.

The newly-framed IPL rule disallow a player to enter the mini auction if he was not registered for the mega auction. A total of 52 English players went under the hammer in the auction held at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia recently.

"There's no hiding behind the fact that I'm at the back-end of my career. It's about looking at what I've got ahead and making the decision that is right for



me to be able to prolong my career as long as possible," Stokes told BBC ahead of England's first Test against New Zealand, starting here on Thursday.

"There is just so much cricket. I want to be wearing this England shirt for as long as I can," he added. In the past, Stokes has played

for Chennai Super Kings, Rajasthan Royals and Rising Pune Supergiant, for whom he was the most valuable player in 2017.

Stokes was bought by the erstwhile Pune outfit for Rs 14.5 crore ahead of IPL 2027. "It is about prioritising games and when I do play - obviously I'm in South Africa this year - so it's about looking at what I've got ahead," he said.

"Looking after my body and looking after myself as much as I can is key to that," said the 32-year-old. The Durham man will head to South Africa for a series at the end of England's trip to New Zealand before starting preparations for next year's Ashes.

Phillip Hughes remembered on 10th death anniversary as Abbott gets teary-eyed

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Sean Abbott was seen wiping away tears as family and friends paid tribute to the late Australian cricketer Phillip Hughes on Wednesday to mark the 10-year anniversary of his tragic death after being struck on the neck while batting.

Abbott bowled the fatal delivery that struck Hughes during a Sheffield Shield match between New South Wales and South Australia in 2014 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

NSW players consoled Abbott as they stood for an emotional tribute, including observing a minute's silence, before the start of play on day four of their Sheffield Shield match against Tasmania at the SCG. Hughes, who played 26 Tests,

25 ODIs and one T20I for Australia, lost his life three days before his 26th birthday. Players in the Sheffield Shield have been wearing black armbands in matches since Saturday as a tribute to Hughes.

"Today marks the 10-year anniversary of the passing of our treasured son and brother, Phillip Joel Hughes," the family said in its message. "Phillip was a loving, humorous and an infectious person to be around."

According to reports in local media, Abbott was consulted in advance about whether he would be comfortable with a match being scheduled on the anniversary of one of the most saddest moments in Australian sports.

The family further said, "He always aimed to make those



around him smile and enjoy the little things in life, where his beautiful smile would come to life. He shined bright even in the tough times, which is a testament to who he was as a person, and we loved everything about him.

"He was the light of our lives. Phillip had a profound love for his family and lived his life with respect to everyone around him.

Cricket Australia had planned in advance a series of initiatives to mark the 10th anniversary of Hughes' death including a tribute before the start of the second Test between India and Australia at the Adelaide Oval scheduled from December 6-10.

played on the toughest pitches around the globe, alongside the toughest of cricketers to the world stage, but never forgot where he came from and who helped along the way," the family said in the message. "He was a unique individual that took risky and adventurous strides to conquer the dreams he set for himself to become test baggy green number 408.

"He played cricket for all the right reasons and had the ability to take it all in his stride. He loved being a part of a team and representing Australia for the game he loved so deeply."

Cricket Australia, which has produced a special documentary on him, will broadcast it ahead of the second Test between India and Australia, as part of a two-

week commemoration programme. Batting on 63, Hughes collapsed before receiving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and was subsequently taken to Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, 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.

GOLD MEDALIST-TURNED-DIRECTOR, SUKU PURVAJ TAKING TELUGU CINEMA BY STORM

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Suku Purvaj, a gold medalist from Andhra University in Fine Arts, turned out to be the director of four Telugu films. It's an interesting story when talking about his debut film, *Shukra*, released in the year 2019. "It's a thriller and we were all excited as we announced the release date and even held an event before the release day," reminisces Suku.

But at the same time the pandemic happened and most of the theaters were all closed. "My film ran successfully for a couple of years, but because the lockdown theatres closed. We made the film with a budget of 75 lakhs, but it ran successfully on Amazon Prime Video and collected an amount of Rs 4.2 crore," said Purvaj.

A filmmaker approached him for the second film. "They liked my *Shukra* and approached me for another film, which I made, *Matarani Maunamidi*. This is a horror film and after the film was completed and ready to hit the screens, at that time the second lockdown happened," said

Purvaj. Though his films did not have a big-screen release, he was never disappointed. Reason—he got a good name as director. Hailing from Visakhapatnam, Purvaj completed an MBA. Before that he completed his graduation in Fine Arts from Andhra University. "I was a gold medalist from the university," he said. "From my childhood, I was into writing and formation scenes," he said. He added that in his third class he wrote a play in school.

Purvaj learnt all the skills that are needed for cinema. "I learned at Raj Kapoor Memorial, Pune, about photography and acting," he said. "I feel it is my destiny to become a director and I am confident that I can show my talent and in the coming years, people will talk about me," he said.

Now, Purvaj is coming up with a superhero film titled *A Masterpiece*. "The film is completed and the VFX work is pending. A UK-based company is doing the VFX and once it is completed, I want to release it in the coming summer," he said. He added that Aravind Krishna, Aashu Reddy, Jyothi Pooraj, Jayaprakash, Manish Gillada and many others played



important roles.

"I have taken the story from mythology. From *Vishnu Purana* and *Ramayana*, I took a few points and added some fictional stories to it," said Purvaj. In the *Ramayana*

Dasaradha is the king and one of the finest ministers of his is Aryasumantra. "In my film, the superhero is the great, great grandson of Aryasumantra," he said. With the mythology mixed with the present situa-

SUKU PURVAJ, THE MAN BEHIND SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING FILMS IN RECENT TELUGU CINEMA, SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY TO THE PIONEER ABOUT HIS CREATIVE PROCESS, HIS INSPIRATIONS AND WHAT'S NEXT FOR THIS TALENTED FILMMAKER!

tion, Purvaj wrote this superhero story. "A means Aryasumantra; that's why my title is *A Masterpiece*," he said.

The film is pending for the VFX, so he started another thriller called *Killer*. "In my earlier films, I wanted to act, but because of a few circumstances, I couldn't act. But now, I am producing the film on my own, so I decided to act in this *Killer*," he said. The first schedule is already completed.

Though he hails from Visakhapatnam, many of his films few portions were shot here. "My superhero film was shot in Araku, Visakhapatnam, Vadodara, Hyderabad and many other places," he said. He is plan-

ning to release the superhero film in Hindi too. He made the film with a budget of Rs 15 crores. "I am very confident that my superhero film will definitely enthrall everyone," said.

When asked about the name Suku Purvaj, which is not familiar to Telugu people. He said his actual name is Suresh Kumar. So he has taken the first two letters from the name 'Suku'. "I met a Swamiji at a village near Visakhapatnam and he gave me the name Purvaj. From then onwards I started as Suku Purvaj," he said.



It's official! Keerthy Suresh & Antony to enter wedlock this Dec



Folks, the day we were all waiting for is here. The rumours around actress Keerthy Suresh dating her long-time beau Antony Thattai are true! Yes, you read that right. And who has confirmed it? Keerthy herself.

Keerthy on Wednesday shared an adorable Instagram post. She shared a photo of the two enjoying fireworks, captioning it, "15 years and counting! It has always been... AntoNY x KEerthy."

Well, adding to the excitement, Keerthy's father, G. Suresh, revealed that the two have been friends since Class 12. "The wedding will take place in Goa in December. The exact date is yet to be decided as she is presently finishing her debut film in Hindi (*Baby John*)," said Kumar.

He further revealed that Antony is an engineer by profession and after working in Qatar, he returned to Kochi briefly and is now engaged in wholesale business in Venetian blinds.

He added that the wedding in Goa is going to be a very close affair and will see very few people. "We are deciding whether to have a reception and if it happens, it is likely to be in Thiruvananthapuram," said Kumar.

Keerthy (32) began her career as a child actress in the early 2000s and returned to films after studying fashion design. Her first lead role was in the 2013 Malayalam film *Geethaanjali*, directed by Priyadarshan.

In 2018, she won the National Award for acting in the Telugu film *Mahanadi*. Her younger sister, Revathy Suresh, is now an assistant to Priyadarshan.



Pushpa 2 set for a long haul!

Lately, the length of a film has been a topic of discussion in film circles. While some argue that a good film will keep audiences engaged regardless of its duration, others feel that films over three hours are too long. Films like *Arjun Reddy* and *Animal*, both of which exceeded three hours in length, went on to become blockbusters. Now, the highly anticipated *Pushpa 2* has also finalised its runtime. The film clocks in at three hours and 20 minutes. The film has also finally completed its censor certification on Wednesday.

"You never feel bored as every scene is iconic and interesting. Though our film is more than three hours, you feel like it is two and half hours after watching. It needs this much length and I am sure the audience will enjoy every bit from

the film," said Naveen Yerneni, one of the producers of Mythri Movie Makers production house.

Sukumar is the director and this is sequel to the earlier *Pushpa*. Rashmika Mandanna is playing the female lead, while Sreeleela appears in the special song. Devi Sri Prasad is the music director. When asked about Devi Sri Prasad's comments on producers, they said it is not a big thing. "He only said that I love him, so we will work with DSP in more films in the coming days and we don't have any differences between us," said Ravi, one of the producers.

Meanwhile, Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna electrified fans in Kochi, Kerala, with a pre-release event. The event marked a pivotal moment in the promotional journey of the sequel to the blockbuster *Pushpa: The Rise*.

CHIRALA GOES THRILLS AS CRIME THRILLER WEEKEND TAKES OFF

The much-anticipated crime thriller *Weekend* has commenced its first shooting schedule in Chirala. Featuring VIP Sri as the protagonist and Priya Deshapaga as the lead heroine, the film is being produced by ID Bharathi under the Khadgadara Movies banner.

Promising to be a gripping commercial entertainer, *Weekend* is set to blend crime, suspense and other intriguing elements.

The shooting began at St. Ann's College of Engineering, Chirala, in the presence of the film's directors and producers. The launch was marked by NRI Lela

Jaya switching on the camera, while senior character artist Ajay Ghosh gave the first clap.

The team has announced that the first schedule will take place entirely in Chirala, setting the stage for this exciting project.



STANDALONE



The love birds, Aditi Rao Hydari and Siddharth, on Wednesday shared a few adorable pictures of their wedding for the second time at the magnificent Aila Fort Bishargarh. The couple announced their wedding on September 16, 2024. While fans were all in awe already, their latest wedding pics are no less than a visual treat.

After this film, Sreeleela and I will become a hit pair: Nithiin

Actor Nithiin is coming up with his upcoming film *Robinhood*, directed by Venky Kudumula. The film, starring Sreeleela as the female lead, is set to hit the screens on December 25. It is interesting to note that Nithiin is pairing up with Sreeleela again in this film. During the promotions of his earlier film *Extraordinary Man*, Nithiin had criticised Sreeleela for not providing sufficient dates to complete the film. At that time, he had also cautioned Venky Kudumula about this issue. "I know I said those words, but for this film, she gave her time, and after its release, we became a hit pair," said Nithiin.

The actor has also joined hands with director Venky Kudumula for the second time after *Bheesha*. "In this film, you can see more entertainment than *Bheesha*," said Venky. He added that this film will definitely give a boost to Nithiin's career. Talking about Sreeleela, the director said that till now, many see her as *Dancing Queen*. "But now, with this film, Sreeleela could prove herself as a

good actress with her performance," said the director.

Sreeleela is currently in the news for her special song from *Pushpa 2*. When asked whether the makers had initially wanted to rope in Shraddha Kapoor for the same song, she replied, "I don't know about it, but when it came to me, I decided to do the song." When

asked about her remuneration for the song, she said, "I haven't discussed it with my producers yet." Mythri Movie Makers, the producers of *Pushpa 2* and *Robinhood*, are confident that they will end the year on a high note. "Our film *Robinhood* is definitely a good film," said Ravi, one of the producers.



Hansika Motwani's Sri Gandhari casts its spell for Dec release

Hansika Motwani is set to stun audiences with her dual-role performance in the upcoming horror-thriller *Sri Gandhari*. Directed and produced by R Kannan under the Masala Pix banner, the film reunites Hansika with the filmmaker after their successful collaboration on the 2013 comedy *Settai*.

The movie will be brought to Telugu audiences by Raju Nayak of Lachuram Productions, in association with Saraswati Developers and presented by Vikram Kumar Rejintala. Scheduled for a December release, *Sri Gandhari* has already generated excitement with its trailer and promotional material, receiving a fantastic response.

In the film, Hansika portrays a young officer leading a Hindu Trust Committee, embarking on a fascinating mission to unravel the mysteries of the ancient 'Gandharva Kota' monument. The fort, steeped in history and secrets, serves as the backdrop for a gripping tale of suspense, horror and intrigue. The ensemble cast includes Metro Sirish, Mayilsamy, Thalavasa Vijay, Aadukalam Naren, Stunt Silva, Vinodhini, Pavan, Brigida Saga, Vadivel Murugan and Kalairani. With a story by Tholkappiyar and a screenplay by Dhananjayan, the film promises a compelling narrative.

The technical team features Balasubramanian as the cinematographer, LV Ganesh Muthu as the music composer, Jijnthra as the editor and Silva as the stunt director, ensuring a visually and emotionally engaging cinematic experience.

Sri Gandhari blends horror, mystery and suspense, promising to keep audiences on the edge of their seats. The exact release date will be announced soon.

