

Terrorism hurdle in regional cooperation:
Jaishankar 5

'NEED TO PROMOTE NATURAL FARMING TO IMPROVE SOIL HEALTH'
TJ GNANAVEL 8

I want to make prequel of Vettaiyan. Director
TJ GNANAVEL 11

QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer
 Rs 20,000 cr burden on the public due to alignment changes made to the Regional Ring Road (RRR) to benefit contractors. Recent changes in the alignment of the southern section of the RRR were made to benefit a few influential landowners. The alignment changes increased the length of the road from 182 kilometers to 198 kilometers, a modification the central government would not accept. These changes clearly favour certain individuals at the expense of the state, and it is the people who will bear the cost
 - Harish Rao, BRS MLA P2

DON'T MISS...

DGP's stress on scientific ...

The Telangana State Police inaugurated First Police Duty Meet at the Telangana Police Academy (TGPA) on Wednesday. This is the first State-level duty meet since Telangana's formation, with the last such event held in 2013 in Kakinada. The programme opened with a march-past by police teams from various units, demonstrating their unity and discipline. Following this, Dr Jitender, Director General of Police, officially launched the duty meet by releasing balloons and pigeons alongside other dignitaries. Dr Jitender, in his ...

-PAGE: 3

Will complete loan waiver ...

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Wednesday reiterated the state government's commitment to farmer welfare. He was speaking at a meeting at Nidadamoor and Haliya in Nalgonda district. At both events, Nageswara Rao highlighted the government's efforts to complete the loan waiver process and ensure that all eligible farmers are benefited. He also stressed the importance of promoting oil palm cultivation. In Nidadamoor, the ...

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'Awareness about retirement ...

Awareness about retirement planning has been rising in urban India with growing number of people feeling the need to start planning for their post-work life early, a report said. As much as 44 Indians consider the right age to start planning for retirement is before 35 years, as per the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS) released by Max Life Insurance. Encouragingly, 63 per cent respondents have already begun investing for retirement, leading to reduced concerns about meeting both basic and luxury...

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Day 1 of first Test between India...

Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday. The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour earlier. The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around 1.50 PM. But there were large damp areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some...

-SPORTS

NO REPRIEVE FOR TG IAS OFFICERS
HC declines stay on cadre move

TG gov't swiftly makes FAC appointments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a significant move, following the Telangana High Court's rejection of several IAS officers' pleas concerning their transfers, the state government has made a series of Full Additional Charge (FAC) appointments.

The officers, including Vani Prasad, Vakati Karuna, Ronald Rose, Amrapali, Srujana, Sivashankar, and Harikiran, had sought the High Court's intervention to delay their relief from posts until a tribunal hearing scheduled for November 4.

However, the High Court, led by Justice Abhinand Kumar Shavili, denied their request, urging them to comply with the rules set by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). The Court empha-

The officers, including Vani Prasad, Vakati Karuna, Ronald Rose, Amrapali, Srujana, Sivashankar, and Harikiran, had sought the High Court's intervention to delay their relief from posts until a tribunal hearing scheduled for November 4



sized the officers' responsibility to avoid causing disruptions and upheld the Centre's authority in determining officer postings. The Court felt that they should first report to the states to which they are allotted, pending adjudication of their case. Amid this ruling, the Telangana

government swiftly issued orders placing several key IAS officers in Full Additional Charge (FAC) of important posts.

Ilambarti K, IAS, Commissioner of Transport, has been given FAC of the Commissioner, GHMC in place of Amrapali Kata.

Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS, Principal Secretary to Government, Finance Department, now has FAC as the Secretary to Government, Energy Department, and CMD of Genco & Transco in place of Ronald Rose. N. Sridhar, IAS, Principal Secretary to the Government, SCD Department, has been placed in FAC as Principal Secretary to Government, YAT&C Department, and Director of Archaeology in place of Vani Prasad.

Continued on Page 5

3 kids among 7 killed as car plunges into stream

PNS ■ MEDAK

In a horrifying accident, seven people of a family, including three children, met with a watery grave when the car in which they were travelling plunged into a stream in Medak district on Wednesday. The accident took place at Usirikapalle village when the family was returning from Toopran, the police said. The driver of the car survived the mishap, but suffered leg fracture.

The car initially crashed into a tree before veering into the stream in Shivampet mandal, according to local witnesses.

The deceased, belonging to Bhimla Thanda, were identified as as Santi (38), Ammu (12), Seetharam Thanda (3), Anitha (35), Indu (13), Shravani (12), Sivaram (56) and Naamsingh (40).



The ill-fated car in the stream

CM REVANTH EXPRESSES SHOCK 2

'CASH FOR VOTE' CASE
Revantth Reddy may appear in court on Nov 14

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The 'cash for vote' case, in which Chief Minister Revantth Reddy is an accused, would now be heard on November 14. As the Metropolitan Sessions Judge was on leave, the case could not be heard on Wednesday.

There are six accused in the case, including Chief Minister A Revantth Reddy.

During the previous hearing on September 24, none of the accused was present in the court. The Court expressed its displeasure at this, and ordered that all the accused should appear before the Court on October 16.

So, it is expected that Revantth Reddy and others may appear before the Court on November 14.

Among the accused, Bishop Harry Sebastian, Mathaiah Jersusalem, and Sandra Venkata Veeriah were present in the Court on Wednesday.

Speaking with the media on Tuesday, one of the accused, Mathaiah, said that he would commence a hunger strike outside the court house if Revantth Reddy failed to appear at the hearing.

The case was filed in 2015 when Revantth Reddy was a member of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The allegation against him is that Revantth Reddy attempted to bribe nominated MLA Elvis Stephenson to secure his vote for a TDP candidate in the 2015 Legislative Council elections.



LAB REPORT CONFIRMS
Gutta ghee pure

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Officials released a report on Wednesday confirming the purity of ghee used in the preparation of prasadam at the Yadagirigutta Lakshminarasimha Swamy temple. Samples of the ghee, supplied by Mother Dairy for over 40 years, were analysed in a government-approved lab and found to be pure.



Omar Abdullah sworn in as J-K CM 5

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Yadagirigutta Executive Officer Bhaskara Rao stated that the ghee samples were sent for testing as part of a government directive, issued in

Continued on Page 5



Cabinet hikes wheat MSP by Rs 150

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Cabinet on Wednesday raised the minimum support price (MSP) for wheat by 6.59 per cent to Rs 2,425 per quintal for the 2025-26 rabi marketing season. The Rs 150 per quintal hike in wheat support price is significant ahead of elections in states like Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Delhi. Rabi marketing season begins from April 2025.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the increase in the MSP of six mandated rabi crops for 2025-26 marketing season in the range of Rs 130-300 per quintal.

Continued on Page 5

HYDRAA gets teeth to protect public assets

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government on Wednesday issued a Government Order (GO) granting HYDRAA powers to protect public assets like roads, drains, streets, water bodies, open spaces, public parks and other lands belonging to the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation or the state government.

Later, HYDRAA Commissioner Ranganath said that the GO was issued as a follow-up to the ordinance. Now Hydraa will have powers under the GHMC Act to protect public assets. "We can now issue notices, speaking orders or demolition orders, seizure of buildings etc under the act", he added.

According to the GO, in the context of growing urbanisation there is increased vulnerability of these public assets from encroachments. Protection of these public assets has assumed greater significance as most of these assets act as lung spaces for the city environs, useful for future recreational and essential community needs as well as indispensable to mitigate climate change effects.

"Against the above backdrop, it is considered essential that the services of Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) can be engaged for effective protection of all Public Assets within GHMC as protection of such assets would be helpful in Disaster mitigation efforts and the HYDRAA being specialised agency for both Disaster Management and Asset Protection can take care of both the issues", the GO reads.

KTR: HYDRAA meant to blackmail builders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a meeting held at the Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday with city MLAs and MLCs, BRS working president KT Rama Rao criticized the Congress government in Telangana for its lack of planning and inconsistency, which he believes is causing severe difficulties for the poor, lower-middle class, and common citizens in Hyderabad. He accused the state government of making hasty decisions without considering their impact on the people.



Cong gears up for GHMC elections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

At a crucial meeting held here on Wednesday by the Hyderabad District Congress, Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president Mahesh Kumar Goud emphasized the importance of maintaining discipline and unity within the party, but warned that strict action would be taken against anyone violating the party line. "No one, regardless of their position, will be spared if they fail to adhere to party

Warns of strict action against indiscipline in TPCC

Mahesh Kumar Goud calls for unity, focus on welfare programs

discipline," he declared. He stressed that every leader and member must work towards achieving success in the upcoming Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation elections, which he described as "crucial for the party's future".

Continued on Page 5



Law is not blind anymore

Lady Justice in SC library now holds Constitution with open eyes

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In an initiative shedding the colonial imprint and traditional attributes, the statue of Lady Justice, in the judges' library of the Supreme Court, now holds a copy of the Indian Constitution, instead of a sword, and the blindfold has come off to leave her with open eyes.

The change effected under the tenure of incumbent Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud, now signals that the law in the country is not blind and does not merely symbolise punishment. Traditionally, the blindfold suggested equality before the law, mean-

ing that the dispensation of justice should not be influenced by the status, wealth, or power of the parties. The sword historically symbolised authority and the capacity to punish injustice.

In a departure from colonial influences, like the replacement of the colonial-era penal code with the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the new Lady Justice signifies that the law in the country sees everyone equally as mandated under the Constitution.

The might of the Constitution, not of the sword, prevails in the justice delivery process.

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No paddy allocation to defaulters this season

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Defaulters will not be allocated paddy under any circumstances this season, according to a decision taken on Wednesday at the second meeting of the Cabinet Subcommittee on paddy procurement held at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Secretariat. The panel made it clear that defaulters must hand over all rice to the government without delay.

The ministers on the panel, including Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, emphasized the need for strict action against defaulters, noting that irregularities in the procurement process would not be tol-

erated. According to the committee's observations, while billing 100 kilograms of fine rice yields only 58 kilograms, milling 100 kilograms of coarse paddy produces 67 kilograms of rice. The millers brought to the committee's attention that the previous government neglected key issues related to transport, custody, and milling charges.

Ministers Tummala Nageswara Rao and Sridhar Babu participated in the meeting online. Special Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao, Raghunandan Rao, Commissioner DS Chauhan and GM Nageswara Rao were also present at the meeting.



NSG commandos withdrawn from security duties, CRPF steps in

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government has ordered the complete withdrawal of the counter-terrorist commando force NSG from VIP security duties and handing over its nine "high-risk" VIPs to the CRPF by the next month, official sources said Wednesday.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has also sanctioned a fresh battalion of specially trained personnel, recently withdrawn from Parliament security duties, to be attached to the CRPF VIP security wing. The 'black cat' commandos of the National Security Guard (NSG) provide 'Z plus' category protection to nine VIPs

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Will Jagan break free from the coterie around him?

“YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, you see, adopted an ostrich-like policy when he was in power. That is why we voted against him. If he had kept his ear to the ground, he would have remained in power for 15 more years,” an auto-rickshaw driver remarked during a no-holds-barred conversation recently.

This prompted another question to him: “Which of the policies adopted by the Jagan Mohan Reddy government hurt you, considering that auto drivers used to get Rs 10,000 every year through the government?”

The driver replied that the police used to collect at least half of the amount the government used to give them by imposing penalties on them ahead of the distribution of benefits every year.

“Who advised Jagan Mohan Reddy to appoint PSR

Anajanyulu as chief of the Intelligence Bureau? Doesn't he know that the National Human Rights Commission declared back in 2012 that 16 out of the 19 deaths of various people were extra-judicial killings in 'fake' police encounters that had taken place when PSR Anajanyulu was the superintendent of police in Guntur and Kurnool district in the united Andhra Pradesh?”

This is also the question that many of YSRCP's well-wishers had posed.

It may be recalled that the National Human Rights Commission conducted an inquiry for over a decade on a complaint by noted advocate B Chandrasekhar on behalf of the Human Rights Forum in Guntur.

A security guard at an auditorium, where an 11-day ceremony relating to a politician who had died recently took place, was heard telling a gov-

The rich and powerful are making a long list of commissions and omissions of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. They accused him of adopting an ostrich-like approach and plundering the State's wealth to distribute it to various sections of people, ignoring the long-term developmental aspects of the State.

ernment employee: “You (government employees) contributed greatly to the humiliating defeat of Jagan Mohan Reddy.” His grouse runs deep. The security guard had been denied a house because a government employee had created fake data suggesting that he already owned a house.

The rich and powerful are making a long list of commissions and omissions of the Jagan Mohan Reddy government. They accused him of

adopting an ostrich-like approach and plundering the State's wealth to distribute it to various sections of people, ignoring the long-term developmental aspects of the State.

The high and the mighty in Andhra Pradesh remain unchanged though the regimes they embraced collapsed like a house of cards. The irony is that the common ostrich, being the world's largest bird, has large eyes that can see as far as 3.5 kilometres away. So,



SRIRAMULU K

the description hardly fits Jagan Mohan Reddy, who, as is clear now, could not see beyond the next election.

What else can be said about the defeat of Jagan Mohan Reddy who founded a party without any support from any popular politician and came to power? For five years he enjoyed unbridled power; then, people from almost all sections rejected him.

It is common for people, particularly the powerful, to always

humiliate those who had suffered defeat in the political arena. It is a different matter that they may have kowtowed before them when they were in power. Hence, a politician should not ignore signs of common people developing a dislike towards him. This is not to say that all people in Andhra Pradesh dislike him.

Perhaps the reshuffle of the Cabinet midway through the term could have tarnished the image of Jagan Mohan Reddy. Not only that, he appeared to have failed to focus on the nitty-gritty of the administration, despite having the best of officers at the helm. Instead, he acquiesced to the machinations of some of his advisors who had no idea that their tactics would have disastrous consequences. Besides, his government's strategy of suppressing even peaceful protests cost him heavily. For instance, when teachers and Anganwadi

workers planned to march to the capital to stage a protest, the police, perhaps in a bid to get into the good books of the powers that be, not only arrested them at the railway station, but also allegedly ill-treated them. This also led to disenchantment of various sections with the government.

According to veteran politicians, whenever people are allowed to peacefully protest, the reputation of the government will go up. So, the brash style of the government too seemed to have eroded the confidence of people in the administration. The civil administration had vanished into thin air. It is the complaint by people of all sections, not only in villages but also in towns and cities.

The government employees, particularly teachers, reportedly spread disinformation against the Jagan Mohan Reddy government to vilify it.

The Ministers, instead of paying attention to what the common people were saying, relied on the police to suppress even peaceful protesters on the pretext of maintaining law and order. Instead of analysing the criticism against the government in the media, Jagan Mohan Reddy reportedly used to frown at the newspapers which carried reports critical of his government. Even a small bit of comment in an article in a popular newspaper reportedly angered Jagan Mohan Reddy, though the particular daily had always supported him.

All such follies seemed to have led to Jagan Mohan Reddy's humiliating defeat, according to analysts. Will he at least now extricate himself from the clutches of the coterie around him is the question that cannot be left unanswered.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

TO MEET DECEMBER 2026 DEADLINE

Uttam orders fast-tracking of SLBC tunnel works

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N Uttam Kumar Reddy on Wednesday directed officials to expedite the Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel works on a war footing, aiming for the completion of the project by December 2026

Uttam Kumar Reddy made these remarks during a review meeting on irrigation projects in the Devarakonda and Miryalguda Assembly constituencies held at Jalasoudha. Key attendees included Devarakonda MLA Balu Naik, Miryalguda MLA B Lakshma Reddy, Irrigation Advisor Adityanath Das, Secretary Rahul Bojja, Special Secretary Prashant Jeevan Patel, R&R Commissioner Vinay Krishna



Reddy, ENC (General) Anil Kumar, Chief Engineer Nalgonda Ajay Kumar, Chief Engineer Minor Irrigation Chandrashekhar, DFO Rajashekhar, Additional Collector Nalgonda Srinivas, Deputy ENC K. Srinivas, Advisor (Lift Irrigation) Penta Reddy, and other officials.

Representatives from agencies executing the works were also present. The SLBC tunnel, with

a capacity of 30 TMC feet, is designed to deliver 4,000 cusecs of water daily. Upon completion, it would become the world's largest irrigation tunnel built without intermediary audits. Of the total 44 km length, 9,559 km of tunnel boring remains. The executing agency, JP Associates, and its US-based partners informed the Minister that critical components are being imported to expedite completion.

Uttam Kumar Reddy announced that a government order had been issued, releasing Rs 4,637 crore for the completion of the project. The tunnel will operate by gravity flow, eliminating the need for additional lifting costs, which would save approximately Rs 200 crore annually. This project is expected to significantly benefit the fluoride-affected Nalgonda district.

The Minister also noted that the lining of the SLBC high-level canal, at a cost of Rs 440 crore, will provide irrigation to nearly 4 lakh acres. In addition, the Dindi project will facilitate irrigation for 3.41 lakh acres in the highly fluoride-affected and drought-prone areas of Nalgonda district, in addition to providing drinking water facilities to 200 villages.

TPCC chief to reveal names behind land grabs soon

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Speaking at a media interaction after a meeting with GHMC corporators at Gandhi Bhavan, TPCC president Mahesh Kumar Goud expressed confidence that the Congress will secure all seats in the upcoming GHMC elections.

He also announced that reviews of the remaining districts would take place soon, followed by district visits. Addressing allegations from opposition parties, Mahesh Kumar Goud remarked, “We are fulfilling the promises we made in the elections, but the opposition is making baseless accusations against us.” He clarified the Congress stance on the Musi cleaning project, asserting that the party is not demolishing poor people's houses under the guise of cleaning the Musi river.

Rs 20,000 cr burden on people due to RRR realignment: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister and BRS MLA Harish Rao has criticised the government for its handling of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) project, claiming that the mismanagement is placing a massive Rs 20,000 crore burden on the people of Telangana. Speaking during an informal discussion at Telangana Bhavan, Harish Rao expressed concern over delays, alignment changes and the government's failure to deliver on its promises.

Harish Rao explained that the RRR was originally planned during the previous government, with separate proposals for the northern and southern sections. The 158-kilometer northern section, which had been approved by the Central government, was to have its land acquisition costs shared equally between the central and state governments under Section 3A. However, despite a notification

being issued 10 months ago, land acquisition has seen no progress. “Farmers who are supposed to be compensated are still waiting. The delay in moving the project forward is



unacceptable, and immediate action is needed,” he urged.

He also raised concerns over the recent changes in the alignment of the southern section of the RRR, which he believes were made to benefit a few influential landowners. The alignment change increased the length of the road from 182 kilometers to 198 kilometers, a modification Harish Rao warned the central government would not accept. “These changes clearly favor certain

individuals at the expense of the state, and it's the people who will bear the cost,” he remarked.

Harish Rao was particularly critical of the state government's decision to take on the RRR project on its own, resulting in a Rs 20,000 crore financial burden. “Why is the State government taking this on when the central government is ready to handle it? This only benefits contractors and influential individuals, while the people of Telangana pay the price,” he questioned.

The former minister also slammed the government for not releasing the Assembly Constituency Development Programme (ACDP) funds, which were promised at Rs 5 crore per constituency. “It's been six months, and not a single rupee has been released. The necessary orders haven't even been issued. These funds are critical for constituency development and must be released immediately,” he demanded.

KTR questions Rs 80,500 cr borrowings by CM

Seethakka says devil quoting scriptures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a heated exchange on X, KT Rama Rao, BRS working president, accused Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy of amassing Rs 80,500 crore in loans within just 10 months of assuming office, questioning the transparency and purpose behind these borrowings. KTR pointed out that despite such massive debts, no new irrigation projects had been launched, nor had any election promises been fulfilled.

“What are these loans being used for?” KTR questioned, hinting that the borrowed funds were being funnelled into large contractors' bills and possibly misappropriated for commissions. KTR contrasted this with the BRS government's past borrowing

practices, stating that while his government had also taken loans, they were invested in infrastructure projects and used to solve long-standing issues in Telangana. He challenged the current government to disclose where the borrowed Rs 80,500 crore were being spent, alleging that the State's economic growth was being jeopardised by mismanagement.

In response, Minister Seethakka launched a counter-attack, accusing KTR and the previous BRS government of creating a debt legacy that the current administration is struggling to manage. “The State's financial condition is such that we are forced to take on new loans just to pay the interest on the debts you created.”

TG skeptical of Pawan Kalyan's stand on Conocarpus axing

NAVEENA GHANATE naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

In Telangana, Conocarpus trees have been a frequent topic of discussion in the meetings of the forest department after Andhra Pradesh's Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan ordered the removal of these trees, citing environmental concerns.

Hyderabad is filled with Conocarpus trees, raising questions about their long-term impact on urban ecosystems. Conocarpus is banned in Telangana, but the State government is indecisive about axing the existing ones. Top sources in the forest department said that the entire capital city, medians and footpaths have Conocarpus, “but what we don't have is concrete evidence to go about with mass axing”.

Sources indicate that while there is growing concern over the environmental effects of these trees, officials are hesitant to proceed with large-scale removal without written, factual evidence to present to environmentalists and possibly the courts. Top sources in Forest Ministry said, “We need to have concrete scientific data to support any legal or environmental action against Conocarpus, or else it will be difficult to make a strong case”.

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Gujarat banned Conocarpus as the exotic tree's roots on telecommunication cables, drains and freshwater pipelines are posing a risk to infrastructure. Furthermore, it draws attention to the adverse effects of the species' pollen, which can lead to colds, coughs, asthma and allergies among individuals, particularly during winter.

Eatala urges expansion of RRR, seeks Central funds for TG projects

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Malkajgiri MP Eatala Rajender has called for the expansion of the Regional Ring Road (RRR) project to include areas like Gajwel, Bhuvanagiri and Choutuppal, ensuring its construction within a 40 km radius.

Addressing a press meet at Telangana Bhavan in Delhi, Rajender revealed that he had met with Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, requesting an increase in the compensation for land acquisition in these areas.

“Farmers have already lost land for various projects, canals and even power lines. They should not be pushed to the streets with inadequate compensation,” he remarked, referring to the meagre compensation of Rs 10 lakh for land worth Rs 1 crore.

In his interactions with Gadkari, Rajender emphasised the need for an immediate resolution and shared that Gadkari had promised to arrange a meeting to address the issue. Additionally,

Rajender approached Union Urban Development Minister Manohar Lal, advocating for a higher allocation of double-bedroom houses to the State and the enhancement of Swachh Bharat funds for urban development, particularly for lake rejuvenation and the Strategic Nala Development Programme (SNDP). “We requested funds to clean and divert the sewage polluting Hyderabad's lakes,” he added.

Rajender criticised the Telangana government for fail-

ing to properly utilise Central funds for various development projects, including housing. He noted that thousands of double-bedroom houses promised by the State were either incomplete or not distributed fairly, and many essential services, such as hostel rents for residential schools, remain unpaid. “The State government's inability to pay rents for school hostels is shameful,” Rajender remarked, urging the government to prioritise immediate payments.

CM expresses shock

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed shock and grief over a tragic road accident in Shivampeta mandal of Medak district. The CM spoke to the authorities and inquired about the road mishap immediately. The CM said it is sad that seven persons of the same family lost their lives in the accident. He directed the officials to provide better medical treatment and necessary assistance to the injured. The CM conveyed deep sympathies to the bereaved family members.

Cabinet approves 3% hike in DA of central govt employees

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved a 3 per cent hike in Dearness Allowance (DA) for government employees.

During a press briefing after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said that the DA hike was effective from July 1, 2024.

The Dearness Relief for pensioners has also been revised by 3 per cent, Vaishnav said.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has approved an additional instalment of Dearness Allowance (DA) to Central Government employees and Dearness Relief (DR) to pensioners w.e.f. 01.07.2024 representing an increase of three per cent (3 per cent) over the existing rate of 50 per cent of the Basic Pay/Pension to compensate against price rise,” as per a government release.

The combined impact on

the exchequer on account of both DA and DR would be Rs 9,448.35 crore per annum, it added.

As per the release, this increase is in accordance with the accepted formula, which is based on the recommendations of the 7th Central Pay Commission. This will benefit about 49.18 lakh central government employees and 64.89 lakh pensioners. The Dearness Allowance/Dearness Relief is paid to central government employees/pensioners to adjust the cost of living and to protect their basic pay/pension from erosion in the real values. These are revised twice a year from January 1 and July 1 based on increase in 12 monthly average of All India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (AICPI-IW) published by the Labour Bureau.

Since the hike is effective from July 2024, the employees will get arrears for July, August and September.

TODAY	
ALMANAC	
Month & Paksham:	Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Purnima:	Oct 16 08:40 PM to Oct 17 04:56 PM
Krishna Paksha Pratipada:	Oct 17 04:56 PM to Oct 18 01:15 PM
Nakshatram:	
Revati:	Oct 16 07:17 PM to Oct 17 04:20 PM
Ashwini:	Oct 17 04:20 PM to Oct 18 01:26 PM
Rahukalam:	1:28 PM to 2:55 PM
Yamagandam:	6:13 AM to 7:40 AM
Varjyam:	09:55 AM to 11:19 AM
Gulika:	9:07 AM to 10:34 AM
Amritakalam:	02:14 PM to 03:38 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:38 AM to 12:24 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Scattered Thundershowers
Temp: 29°
Humidity: 78%
Sunrise: 6:10 AM
Sunset: 5:53 PM
Updated: October 16, 2024 5:00 PM

KK tenders apology to party leaders on behalf of Mayor Vijayalaxmi

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Congress senior leader and State government advisor K Keshava Rao tendered apologies on behalf of his Mayor daughter Gadwala Vijayalaxmi, for accusing some leaders of barking like dogs in the party review meeting held at Gandhi Bhavan on Wednesday under the leadership of TPCC president B Mahesh Kumar Goud, it is learnt.

The chaos took place when Deputy Mayor Srilatha Reddy commented that the Congress party has no cadre in Hyderabad. Finding fault with Srilatha Reddy's comment, Adam Santhosh Kumar and others argued with her saying that they worked hard with their cadre. In the melee, Mayor Vijayalaxmi commented that the leaders are barking like dogs in the meeting, leading to utter chaos. Finding fault with Vijayalaxmi, Khairathabad corporator Vijaya Reddy and others slammed Vijayalaxmi alleging that she got the mayoral post due to her father. Finding fault with Vijaya Reddy's comment, Mayor slammed Vijaya Reddy saying that she also got to this position due to her father (late PJR). Some other women leaders pointed out to Vijayalaxmi saying that she is supposed to speak in the meeting while standing as it is protocol that the leaders must have to speak in front of TPCC president by standing only.

Modi becomes first 'active member' of BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday became the first person to be enrolled as the 'active member' of the BJP as he launched the party's 'Sakriya Sadasyata Abhiyan' here.

He took his 'Sakriya Sadasyata' (active membership) in the presence of BJP president J P Nadda and general secretary Vinod Tawde, who is convener of the nationwide membership drive.

An 'active member' of the BJP has to enrol at least 50 persons as party members in a booth or in an assembly seats. Only active members take part in the party's organisational elections, which will begin after the membership drive ends.

Modi said on X, “Adding



momentum to our endeavour of making a Viksit Bharat! As BJP Karyakarta, proud to become the first Sakriya Sadasyata and launch the Sakriya Sadasyata Abhiyan today... This is a movement which will further strengthen our Party at the grassroots and ensure effective contribution of our Party Karyarkartas for national progress.”

Active members, Modi noted,

will be eligible to contest elections for a 'Mandal Committee' and above. At the same time, they will get many opportunities to work for the party in the times to come, he added.

Every six years, the BJP launches a fresh membership drive. Every existing BJP member is also required to enrol himself afresh, while new members are also added

CITY EVENTS

Tribal Exotica

Nagaland bites x Japanese spirits

Venue

The House of Suntory, The Park, Hyderabad
October 17, 7.30 pm onwards

Toxic

By Abhishek Upmanyu

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika
November 2

Prateek Kuhad

Silhouettes tour.

Venue

Hyderabad international convention centre
November 8

Bottle Art workshop

Join us for a lively and creative event where we turn ordinary bottles into extraordinary works of art! Participants are encouraged to bring their old bottles-whether they're from beer, water, or any other source-and engage in a hands-on bottle paint workshop

Venue

Trailing Ivy Cafe
till November 17

LVPEI milestone: Completes 50K corneal transplants

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Experts here on Wednesday discussed policies and infrastructure to be created for a robust, self-reliant system to eliminate corneal blindness.

Celebrating the completion of highest number of corneal transplants ever (over 50K) at Shantilal Shrivastava Cornea Institute, a center of excellence for cornea care at the LV Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI), the experts averred that improvement in the infrastructure would eliminate corneal blindness.

Venkaiah Naidu, former Vice-President of India, spoke of his transformational corneal transplant surgery. In India nearly 2 per cent of the adult population is blind and about 13 per cent are visually impaired.

Corneal opacities are the second major cause of blindness in India among those who are 50 years and older and the primary cause in those younger.

Dr Gullapalli N Rao, founder Chairman shared, "There were many skeptics discouraging us, when we started on this journey.

I am pleased that we have proved all the naysayers wrong.

This has been a journey of many twists and turns, with learnings at every turn. I am proud of my team who worked tirelessly over the years and congratulate them on reaching this milestone."

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD THURSDAY | OCTOBER 17, 2024

03

FIRST STATE-LEVEL DUTY MEET SINCE FORMATION

DGP's stress on scientific evidence in solving cases

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Police inaugurated First Police Duty Meet at the Telangana Police Academy (TGPA) on Wednesday. This is the first State-level duty meet since Telangana's formation, with the last such event held in 2013 in Kakinada.

The programme opened with a march-past by police teams from various units, demonstrating their unity and discipline. Following this, Dr Jitender, Director General of Police, officially launched the duty meet by releasing balloons and pigeons alongside other dignitaries.

Dr Jitender, in his address, praised the organising committee for their efforts and stressed the importance of the duty meet in building team spirit and preparing officers for real-world challenges. He also acknowledged the participation of new units like TGNAB and TGCSB, encouraging officers to use the event to evaluate and improve their skills. "Excellence in the duty meet translates to excellence in the field, especially in cases where scientific evidence plays a crucial role," he added.

Shikha Goel, DG CID and chairperson of the organising committee, highlighted the historical significance of the duty meet, which dates back to 1953



when the first competition was held in Nagpur, Maharashtra. She expressed pride in hosting the event, emphasising its role in fostering greater collaboration among police units. "This event is a crucial step toward strengthening team work within the department and promoting innovation in crime investigation," she said.

A total of 13 teams from 26 different police wings, including district units, commissionerates, CID, TSNAB and Octopus, are competing in this meet,

with 400 participants selected through rigorous preliminary rounds held in September and October 2024.

The duty meet will feature six key competitions: Scientific Aids to Investigation, Anti-Sabotage Checks, Dog Squad, Computer Awareness, Photography and Videography.

Winners of these events will undergo specialised training and represent Telangana at the All India Police Duty Meet in Ranchi, Jharkhand, in January 2025.

Women SIs confident to bag a prize in competitions

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The police service is a matter of pride and has been aimed to outshine the majority of men in the service, say women officers at the First Police Duty Meet inaugurated on Wednesday. Women sub-inspectors from Cyber Security Bureau of Hyderabad feel confident of winning a prize in competition against many skillful police officers who would be competing from October 16 to 19. Sub-Inspectors S Likhita Varma and P Madhavi were sporting a confident smile that they could get selected from rigorous preliminary examination including written and practical and then they will be competing with various teams to win a prize. They said, "With four years of experience, we have written examinations on our investigation stages such as from receiving a complaint to what we do at the scene of the offence and later how we coordinate with the forensic department to the last step of being helpful to the victim by collecting evidence and proving the crime of the accused." These include videography, photography testing and we have taken our seniors' advice and prepared to compete, so that we get selected to represent Telangana in All India competitions," they added.

Govt sanctions 33 posts for real estate tribunal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The government has issued a notification on October 15 sanctioning 33 posts for Telangana Real Estate Appellate Tribunal on full-time basis. The government has allotted Krishna Hotel at Dr Marri Chenna Reddy Human Resource Development Institute of Telangana in Jubilee Hills for it.

Telangana Real Estate Appellate Tribunal chairperson and former judge of Telangana High Court Justice A Rajashekar Reddy and other officials held a meeting along with the tribunal members. They are Judicial member Pradeep Kumar Palte, Retired IAS officer Chitra Ramchandran, RERA authority chairman N Sathanarayana, members of RERA K Srinivasa Rao, J Lakshminarayana, RERA adjudicating officer Latif Ur Rehman and other officials.

Chairperson Justice Rajashekar Reddy said that the appellate tribunal will commence the work from Friday.

Temple vandalism: Identity of accused revealed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad City Police revealed the identity of the accused in Muthyalamma temple vandalism case.

Salman Salim Thakur (30), a native of Mumbai, near Mumbai, came to Hyderabad early in October 2024 to attend a month-long personality development workshop which was organised by English House Academy under the correspondence of Munawar Zama, Md Kafeel Ahmed and others at Hotel Metropolis, Regim Bazar, Secunderabad. The Police also

found out that the hotel premises was rented illegally for running the academic course which has no formal permission. Salman is a BE Computer Engineering graduate and is active on the social media. He started watching Islamic religious preachers' videos like Zakir Naik and others on the Facebook and Youtube. He became self-radicalised and developed a hatred towards the practices of other religions.

It was also revealed that the accused was involved in similar type of incidents in Mumbai, where he damaged idols of gods.

Centre urged to establish semiconductor plants in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Emphasising Telangana's readiness to contribute to India's vision of a \$10 trillion economy, IT Minister D Sridhar Babu strongly urged the Central government to establish semiconductor advanced packaging and manufacturing plants (APMP) and assembly, testing, marking and packaging (ATMP) units in Telangana under the Indian Semiconductor Mission (ISM).

Speaking at the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTS) 2024 in New Delhi on

Wednesday, Sridhar Babu highlighted the State's strong infrastructure, the presence of global tech giants and a thriving startup ecosystem.

During the roundtable session, which included participation from State chief ministers and IT ministers, Sridhar Babu highlighted Telangana's capabilities as a leading hub for semiconductor and AI development.

Sridhar Babu also said, "As India moves towards over 1 billion smartphone users, 10 million electric vehicles and 2 billion IoT devices, the demand for

semiconductors will skyrocket. Stressing that Telangana stands ready to lead this change, hosting global giants like NVIDIA, Qualcomm and Broadcom, as well as dynamic startups for both local and global markets.

The Minister also added, "With strong infrastructure, supportive policies and a skilled workforce of over 3.5 lakh AI and semiconductor professionals, we are well-equipped to host APMPs and ATMP units." He said, "Our vision is to achieve a \$1 trillion economy while contributing to India's goal of a \$10 trillion economy."



IT Minister D Sridhar Babu speaking at the World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly 2024 in New Delhi on Wednesday

Global Tourism Awards on Oct 19

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Asia Prime Media is set to host the prestigious Global Tourism Awards on October 19 at the Hotel Taj Deccan, Hyderabad. The awards ceremony aims to celebrate excellence and innovation in the global tourism industry and will feature Juppally Krishna Rao, Minister for Tourism, Telangana, as the chief guest.

Asia Prime Media Research and Network, a research-driven organisation offering sophisticated market intelligence, cutting-edge media strategies, esteemed awards programmes and premium consulting services was founded by Munnuswamy Jayaraman and led by Divya Jayaraman, Chief Executive Officer.

Reflecting on the importance of this event, Divya stated, "The Global Tourism Awards serve as a platform to acknowledge and celebrate the outstanding contributions of individuals and organisations in the tourism sector. We are honoured to welcome distinguished nominees and

stakeholders who are passionate about driving the industry towards innovation and sustainability."

This year's awards attracted over 2,500 nominations from countries around the world, with notable entries from South Asia, including Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Nepal, Lakshadweep and the Maldives.

The event will honour the top 30 entities that have made exceptional contributions to the tourism sector.

The awards will be evaluated by a panel of esteemed jury members, including Dr Syed Anwar Kabir, Director and Editor of Scholars Retreat; Bashyakarla Sailaja, former Executive Administrative Aide to the Commissioner of Telangana; and Thirumurthy OD, an alumnus of IIT Kharagpur.

Their diverse backgrounds and vast experience in the industry will ensure a rigorous and fair selection process, highlighting the most deserving contributors to the tourism sector.

TB Association of TG launches 75th Seal Sale Campaign

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tuberculosis Association of Telangana inaugurated its 75th TB Seal Sale Campaign at Raj Bhavan, Hyderabad. It was honoured by the presence of Jishnu Dev Varma, Governor of Telangana and president of the Tuberculosis Association of Telangana, who inaugurated the campaign.

In his inaugural address, Governor Varma underscored the curability of tuberculosis and called for concerted efforts to eliminate the disease from Telangana. He highlighted the advancements in treatment options available through the National TB Control Programme and urged TB patients to strictly adhere to prescribed treatments.

The Governor also emphasised the need for active community participation and family support to achieve a TB-free India by 2025.

UST partners with GHMC to restore Bongulakunta lake

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

UST, a digital transformation company, partnered with the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) to restore Bongulakunta lake in Nizampet, Hyderabad, as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme.

The restoration aims to help around 250 families and over 1,000 residents by providing a stable water supply

through borewells. UST's CSR team in Hyderabad also built a walkway around the lake, creating a community area with a children's park and seating.

The project included building a restoration bund and a water storage facility to revive the lake, which had been affected by drought and neglect. The lake's inauguration on Wednesday was attended by Vijayalakshmi Subba Rao, Corporator of

Nizampet Division-1 and UST team members, including Venkata Peram, UST Head, Hyderabad.

Venkata Peram stated that UST's focus is on lasting positive change, addressing both water conservation and community well-being. He also added that UST was previously honoured with the Hyderabad Software Enterprises Association Award (2023) for its CSR efforts in Hyderabad.



New chairman appointed for TCHE

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prof V Balakista Reddy, Dean School of Law of Mahindra University, has been appointed as new Telangana Council of Higher Education (TCHE) chairman.

The notification issued by B Venkatesham, Principal Secretary to government, said that Prof. Balakista Reddy, Professor in Law, has been appointed the Chairman of Telangana Council of Higher Education, for a term of three years with immediate effect.

Earlier, he served as registrar at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad and director, Centre for Aerospace and Defence Laws and the Centre for Tribal and Land Rights.

HC reserves order on Asifabad MLA's election

CHITHALURI REVANTH
revanth.chithaluri@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

Justice K Lakshman of the Telangana High Court on Wednesday reserved the order over Asifabad Assembly constituency election in 2023.

A writ petition seeking to invalidate the election as the candidate did not reveal the last four years' income in the election affidavit. The court pointed out that the allegation in the election petition is that the elected candidate did not file assets and liability prop-

erty and there is no allegation of tampering of EVMs.

The counsel for the petitioner said that non-disclosure of the financial status of the candidate for the last four years would affect the election materially. The counsel cited four judgments of the Supreme Court.

The counsel for Candidate Kova Lakshmi told the court that nowhere in the form 26 (affidavit) it was mentioned to submit the yearly financial status.

The Judge said that the contention of the petitioner that

Group I aspirants protest to postpone the exam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Just five days before the Group I Mains exam, more than 100 government job aspirants on Wednesday conducted a rally and protested at Ashok Nagar to postpone the Group I exam.

They showed placards to postpone the mains exam. They raised slogans against GO 29. "Abolish GO 29", they shouted. As the protest intensified,

the Police have taken some of the protestors into custody.

The Telangana Public Service Commission (TGpsc) will conduct the Group I Mains in Hyderabad from October 21 to 27. The TGpsc released the hall tickets also.

On the basis of the preliminary test, a total of 31,382 candidates have been selected for the Mains examination for 563 vacancies.

The counsel for the Kova Lakshmi said that according to a letter issued by the Assembly Secretary, she has not received any pension. It says that she has not drawn an ex-legislator's pension from August 4, 2019 to December 3, 2023. During that period she served as Zilla Parishad chairman. As such she was not entitled to pension.

The counsel said that according to the rules, PAN number has been submitted. She has disclosed her income status for all the last five years. She disclosed assets and liabilities.

Will complete loan waiver before Diwali: Tummala Nageswara Rao

OPNS ■ NIDAMANNOOR/HALIYA

Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao on Wednesday reiterated the state government's commitment to farmer welfare.

He was speaking at a meeting at Nidadamnoor and Haliya in Nalgonda district.

At both events, Nageswara Rao highlighted the government's efforts to complete the loan waiver process and ensure that all eligible farmers are benefited. He also stressed the importance of promoting oil palm cultivation.

In Nidadamnoor, the Minister praised the government's handling of the loan waiver scheme and how over Rs 18,000 crore had been credited to the accounts of more than 22 lakh farmers under the scheme. Before Diwali, loan waiver benefits would reach another 20 lakh farmers.

He also noted that the government is taking steps to waive loans for those with more than Rs 2 lakh loans and is providing subsidies to encourage oil palm cultivation.

The Minister explained that



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao speaking at a meeting at Nidamanoor in Nalgonda district on Wednesday

Telangana is the first State in the country to initiate such large-scale loan waiver programs for farmers. No State in India has so far waived farmers' loans on such a large scale, he said.

He pointed out that oil palm cultivation is a lucrative venture and explained how the government plans to expand oil palm cultivation to 10 lakh acres across the state. In this way, Telangana would

not only support its farmers but also become a leader in palm oil production, which is currently a major requirement for the country. Rao's address in Nidadamnoor also highlighted the government's

focus on agricultural infrastructure. He assured the gathering that the government is taking steps to enhance irrigation facilities by ensuring water reaches all parts of the district, especially through the implementation of the SLBC (State Level Bankers Committee) tunnel project, which will provide irrigation water across the region.

Apart from farmer welfare initiatives, the Minister also highlighted the government's efforts to improve infrastructure in the district. He mentioned that Rs516 crore had been allocated for road repairs and construction across Nalgonda with 15 kilometers of roads being developed at an estimated cost of Rs11 crore, and 11 kilometers of roads to be constructed in another part of the district at a cost of Rs 25 crore. These improvements are aimed at enhancing connectivity and providing better access to rural areas.

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, who spoke at the meeting, stressed that the market committees should ensure farmers' welfare.



Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy donating books to Zilla Parishad Study Circle in Nalgonda on Wednesday

Komatireddy exhorts students to aim high, emerge as leaders

The Roads and Buildings Minister donated books worth Rs 1.65 lakh to help students appearing for competitive examinations

PNS ■ NALGONDA

On Wednesday, in a significant gesture to support students preparing for competitive exams, Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, the founder and chairman of the Komatireddy Pratheek Foundation, donated books worth Rs 1,65,000 to the Zilla Parishad Study Circle and District Library Organisation. The donation was made at his camp office with the aim of assisting students in their pursuit of success in competitive exams.

The event was attended by ZP CEO Nandyala Prem Karan Kumar Reddy and local library librarian Balemma, who were urged by the Minister to ensure proper arrangements for making these books accessible to students. The Minister assured the youth that the Komatireddy Pratheek Foundation would extend full support in ensuring that these resources are effectively utilized by the students.

Speaking on the occasion, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy emphasized the importance of hard work and dedication in achieving one's dreams just as APJ Abdul Kalam had done. He

urged students to make the most of the available resources and strive to excel in their academic and professional lives. The minister also expressed his continued commitment to supporting education in the region and assured further assistance to students in their endeavor. He exhorted the students to aim high and emerge as leaders in their respective fields.

CEO Prem Karan Reddy and librarian Balemma thanked the Minister for his generous contribution and appreciated the foundation for its role in supporting education in the district. They also assured that all necessary arrangements would be made to distribute the books among the students in a timely manner.

The students, who were present at the event, expressed their sincere gratitude to the Minister for his help to reach their goals.

The event was also attended by several prominent individuals, including Foundation CEO Gona Reddy, Municipal Chairman Burri Srinivas Reddy, Kolanupaka Ravikumar, Laxmaiah, Gummala Mohan Reddy, and Ramesh, among others.

Surekha prays to tribal deities for welfare of people

PNS ■ MULUGU

Minister of Endowments Konda Surekha on Wednesday offered prayers to tribal deities Sammakka and Sarakka at Medaram along with her family members. She got her grandson tonsured and offered prayers with *bangaram* (jaggery) seeking the blessings of the goddesses.

During her visit to the Sammakka Saralamma tribal deities in Mulugu district's Tadwai mandal, she expressed her gratitude and made offerings.

The annual festival honouring the tribal deities Sammakka and Saralamma is celebrated grandly every two years, attracting millions of devotees who come to fulfil their vows. She highlighted the uniqueness of the festival.

Minister Surekha rued a lack of support from the Central government in declaring Medaram Jatara as a



Endowments Minister Konda Surekha carrying bangaram (jaggery) on her head at Medaram on Wednesday

national festival. She recalled many developmental initiatives undertaken during the YS Rajasekhara Reddy regime and promised to improve facilities due to the increasing number of devotees visiting the jatara. Her grandson Srihans made offerings of hair and gold to the goddesses during their visit. The Minister prayed for the welfare of the people. With a strong resolve to

implement various developmental programmes in Telangana, the Congress party is committed to strengthening the economy.

She said that under the guidance of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, the government would push forward with the development of the State. She pledged to develop temples in the State.

Elderly couple murdered in Rangareddy district

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a shocking incident, an elderly couple was brutally murdered in the Kothaguda area under Kandukur Police Station limits in Rangareddy District.

The victims, identified as Muga Ushaiah (70) and Muga Santhamma (55) hailed from Mustipalli village. Their bodies were discovered in an agricultural field where they had been working.

According to the authorities, the couple had been farming for the last two years on a plot owned by Manohar Rao in Kottagudem under Kandukur mandal.

Early in the morning, the farm owner tried to contact the couple. After failing to reach them, he sent someone to check on their whereabouts.

The individual found the lifeless

body of Ushaiah lying in a pool of blood around 200 meters away from where Santhamma's body was discovered. The authorities were immediately alerted to the gruesome scene.

Speaking on the incident, the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police mentioned that four teams have been formed to investigate the crime.

Maheshwaram ACP Laxmikant Reddy, along with officers from Kandukur Circle Inspector, Maheshwaram Circle Inspector, and teams from Clue and sniffer Dog units, are actively working on the case to crack the mystery behind the murder.

According to the police, Ushaiah and Shantamma, hailing from Nagarkurnool district, were working at the farmhouse for the past few years.

Bhadradi temple to launch YouTube channel soon

PNS ■ BHADRACHALAM

Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple, known as Ayodhya of South, will soon launch a YouTube channel to enable devotees to have the opportunity to watch services online. It is similar to Tirumala's online service.

Soon, the Bhadrachalam YouTube channel will be available. Officials have created a 20-minute video detailing this. The Bhadrachalam temple is setting up its own YouTube channel named 'Bhadra Dhridivya Kshetram.' Temple authorities announced, stating that they will upload information about the temple's festivals, rituals, and

more. This will provide global Rama devotees with insights into the temple's daily rituals. Officials mentioned that the trial run of the channel had already been completed.

The Bhadrachalam Sri Sit Rarama Chandraswami temple holds nearly 1,300 acres of land in the two Telugu states. Additionally, it possesses about 68 kilograms of gold and 980 kilograms of silver ornaments.

A 20-minute video detailing this will be uploaded soon to the YouTube channel. This will also include videos of various festivals held at the temple. The channel will be going live shortly.

Ponguleti emphasises quality in developmental works

Minister inaugurates construction of CC drains in SC Colony, 60th Division, Ramannapet

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Minister of Revenue Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy has stressed the importance in ensuring high-quality in developmental works. He asked the contractors to complete works within a stipulated time.

On Wednesday, the Minister laid the foundation for the construction of cement concrete drains in the Scheduled Castes Colony of 60th Division in Khammam Municipal Corporation, funded by the State Disaster Response Fund with an

allocation of Rs25 lakh.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister instructed that the construction of the two-lane drains along the road should be executed with quality and completed on time. He emphasised that the works undertaken should be of high quality to prevent any future issues.

The event was attended by Municipal Commissioner Abhishek Augustya, Corporator of the 60th Division Badde Niranjan Kumar, elected representatives, relevant officials, and others.



Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy laying the foundation stone for CC drains at SC Colony in Khammam on Wednesday



Peddapalli Additional Collector GV Shyam Prasad holding a review meeting in Peddapalli on Wednesday

Cotton farmers advised not to fall prey to middlemen

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

Additional Collector GV Shyam Prasad Lal has advised cotton farmers not to fall prey to middlemen. He advised the farmers to sell their produce at procurement centres established by Cottong Corporation of India (CCI).

At a review meeting on cotton procurement with officials at the Integrated District Collectorate on Wednesday, he emphasised the need to purchase cotton at the minimum support price. If market price fell below the government-announced support price for quality cotton, immediate support must be provided through the CCI centres.

He noted that the minimum support price for cotton with 8 per cent moisture content is set at Rs 7,521. Farmers are urged not to sell their cotton to middlemen or traders for lower price. Instead, they should sell their produce only at the four designated procurement centres in the district if the price offered is below the minimum support price.

He mentioned that the cot-

ton procurement centres would begin operations on October 16 at four ginning mills. Two of them in the Peddapalli market yard, one in the Sultanabad market yard, and one in the Kamanpur market yard. Farmers are advised to take into consideration the quality standards when bringing their cotton to the centers.

Farmers must link their bank accounts with their Aadhaar cards when bringing cotton to the procurement centres, and the Agriculture Department officials were instructed to create necessary awareness among the farmers.

Additional Collector Shyam Prasad Lal also directed that the procurement centres be equipped with necessary moisture testing and weighing machines. District Marketing Officer Praveen Reddy, District Agriculture Officer Adi Reddy, District Road Transport Officer Rang Rao, District Weights and Measures Department officer Visveshwar and others were present.

Five-year-old girl dies of heart attack

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

In a tragic incident, a five-year-old girl has died of a heart attack. The child's sudden collapse while playing has left family members devastated.

Raj and Jamuna, residents of Jammikunta in Karimnagar district, had a daughter named Ukku (5). On Tuesday morning, after waking up, the little girl played for a while before telling her mother that she was feeling dizzy.

The mother took her to the local hospital. Upon examination, the doctors found her condition to be critical and advised her to take the child to Hanamkonda government hospital.

The girl was rushed to Hanamkonda, but tragically, she passed away while the doctors were still examining her. Doctors mentioned that the child had underlying heart-related issues, which her parents had not been able to recognise. They expressed suspicion that this oversight may have led to a heart attack.



Ukku

Seethakka walks through stream to reach Gundi village

Orders speedy completion of bridge over the stream

PNS ■ KUMRAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

Telangana Minister Sithakka, along with local BRS MLA Kova Lakshmi, MLC Dande Vital, and Congress General Secretary Sattu Mallesh, walked through a stream to reach Gundi village in Asifabad mandal of Komaram Bheem Asifabad district.

The group was heading to the village to inaugurate the upgraded Upper Primary School, which has now been extended to include classes up to the tenth grade.

However, due to the incomplete construction of a bridge over the Gundi stream, vehicles were unable to pass, forcing the leaders and officials to make their way on foot through the water. Sithakka, visibly concerned about the delay,



Minister for Panchayat Raj Sithakka wading through a rivulet at Gundi village in Asifabad district on Wednesday

instructed the officials to expedite the construction of the bridge to ensure easy access for the villagers and schoolchildren. She emphasized that the completion of the bridge is crucial for the community, urging the

authorities to accelerate the work. District Collector and other officials accompanied the group during the visit, with Sithakka reiterating the need for swift action to address the infrastructural gaps in the area.

Road sanctioned from Chevella to Mudimyala via Malkapur

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

The long-awaited road connecting Chevella to Mudimyala via Malkapur has been sanctioned much to the relief of the local residents.

Chevella Lok Sabh member and Whip Konda Visveshwar Reddy extended his heartfelt thanks to the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Danasari Anasuya (Sitakka) for approving the construction of the road.

The Panchayat Raj Department issued GO Rt No.582, approving the construction of a 3.28 km road from Chevella mandal headquarters to Mudimyala via Malkapur.

The project, which is set to cost Rs 3.35 crores comes as a significant development for the region.

Last August, villagers from Mudimyala, Kummera, and Malkapur brought the poor road conditions to the attention of MP Konda Visveshwar Reddy. Responding promptly,



Konda Visveshwar Reddy

he wrote to Minister Sitakka, urging her to address the issue. Minister Sitakka acted swiftly, securing the necessary funds for the road's construction.

On behalf of the people of Chevella Mandal, Visveshwar Reddy expressed his gratitude to the Minister for her immediate action in resolving the road problem.

ACROSS THE STATES



KNP records 446 butterfly species

More than 446 butterfly species have been recorded in Assam's Kaziranga National Park (KNP), famed for the one-horned rhinoceros, making it a habitat with the second highest concentration in the country after the Namdapha National Park in Arunachal Pradesh, a park official said. The long-term observation and records are a culmination of years of work put in by a scientist from Kaziranga, Dr Monsoon Jyoti Gogoi. The survey was conducted in different parts of the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape, especially in the Panbari Reserve Forest, which is home to a diverse range of butterfly species. A new pictorial guidebook on butterflies, authored by Gogoi, documents 446 species of butterflies recorded in Kaziranga, 18 of which are new in the country.



'Pink alarms' in Datia hospital for safety of staff

In a first, 'pink alarms' have been installed at the government-run district hospital and medical college in Datia town of Madhya Pradesh, officials said on Wednesday. The issue of safety of women staff at public hospitals came to the fore recently after the rape and murder of a trainee doctor at Kolkata's R G Kar Medical College and Hospital. The alarm system was district collector Sandeep Makin's initiative, a state public relations department official said. "This is the first government hospital in the state where this facility has been provided," he said. The pressing of an alarm will set off a siren and within five minutes the security will reach the person in trouble, the official added. Alarms were installed in the staff duty room on all the three floors of the Maternity Ward, Trauma Center and the New OPD Block, civil surgeon and hospital superintendent Dr K C Rathore said.



Kerala to host conclave on higher education

The Kerala government will organise an international conclave on next generation higher education on December 19 and 20 at the Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) in Kochi. Titled "Shaping Kerala's Future: International Conclave on Next-Gen Higher Education," the event would bring together experts and thought leaders in higher education from India and around the globe, an official statement said here on Wednesday. The two-day event would be inaugurated by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan. A Nobel laureate is also expected to take part in the inaugural session on December 19, it said. As Kerala embarks on a transformative journey in higher education, this conclave is expected to serve as a critical platform for addressing the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Netaji's niece Roma Ray dies at 95

She had witnessed her uncle's rise in the 1930s when Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was elected the president of the Indian National Congress in 1938. She was also very close to Netaji's wife, Emilie Schenk, since she had lived in Vienna in the 1950s, where Schenk also resided. Ray was invited to speak at Schenk's funeral in Germany in 1996. She was married to renowned medical practitioner Dr Sachis Ray.

Gutta ghee..

Continued from page 1
the wake of the recent Tiru mala ghee adulteration scandal, which had sparked widespread outrage after it was

revealed that animal fat, lard and fish oil had been mixed with the ghee supplied to TTD. In view of the Tirumala ghee controversy, samples of ghee used in several temples across both Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have been sent for lab testing as part of the directive.

Terrorism hurdle in regional cooperation: Jaishankar

PNS ■ ISLAMABAD

Delivering a thinly veiled message to Pakistan from its national capital, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday said if activities across borders are "characterised" by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows and connectivity in parallel.

In his address at a conclave of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) chaired by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and attended among others by Chinese Premier Li Qiang, Jaishankar also asserted that trade and connectivity initiatives must recognise territorial integrity and sovereignty and it is essential to have an "honest conversation" on lack of trust.

The remarks came amid the lingering military standoff between Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh and concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the Indian Ocean and other strategic waters.

Ahead of the SCO deliberations at the Jinnah Convention Centre, PM Sharif shook hands with Jaishankar and warmly received him for the second time in the last two



In his remarks at the conclave, Jaishankar said cooperation must be based on mutual respect and sovereign equality and that the SCO member nations can benefit immensely if the grouping moves ahead collectively with mutual trust. He especially stressed on adhering to the SCO charter, highlighting its underlying essence of strengthening mutual trust, friendship and good neighbourliness.

days. Sharif and Jaishankar shook hands and briefly spoke at a dinner reception last night.

In his address at the conclave, Jaishankar flagged concerns over a number of challenges including that of countering the 'three evils' of terrorism, extremism and separatism.

"If activities across borders are characterised by terrorism, extremism and separatism, they are hardly likely to encourage trade, energy flows, connectivity and people-to-people exchanges in parallel," the external affairs minister said, without naming Pakistan.

Before leaving Islamabad, Jaishankar thanked PM Sharif and Pakistan Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar in a post on 'X' that is being seen as a positive gesture by senior functionaries in the Pakistan establishment.

He also described the SCO's Council of Heads of Government meeting as "productive".

"Departing from Islamabad, Thank PM @CMShehbaz, DPM & FM @MishaqDar50 and the Government of Pakistan for the hospitality and courtesies," Jaishankar said.

In another post, the external affairs minister identified eight takeaways from the Indian perspective at the conclave that included the inclusion of digital public infrastructure (DPI) and digital in the SCO framework and a decision to develop a dialogue on the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.

Other key takeaways listed by the minister included upholding fair and balanced connectivity projects in accordance with international law and reemphasising rules-based, non-discriminatory, open, fair, inclusive and transparent multilateral trading systems with WTO at its core.



Omar Abdullah sworn in as J-K CM
Cong stays away from govt for now

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

National Conference leader Omar Abdullah took oath as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday, heading the first elected government in the union territory since 2019 when its special status was revoked.

As Jammu and Kashmir turned another page in its troubled history, the 54-year-old was sworn in along with five other ministers, three from Jammu region and two from the Kashmir Valley. The effort towards regional balance within the administration was also reflected in his choice of deputy chief minister -- Surender Choudhary from Jammu region's Nowshera constituency.

The Congress, a member of the pre-poll alliance with the

NC, has decided not to take up any ministerial positions in the new government as of now. The new Jammu and Kashmir government, which ends six years of direct central rule, can have up to nine ministers.

Lt Governor Manoj Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Abdullah and his ministers at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Centre along the banks of the Dal Lake.

Abdullah, who takes over as chief minister for a second term, is the third generation of the influential Abdullah family to occupy the office -- after his grandfather Sheikh Abdullah and father Farooq Abdullah.

His first term as chief minister was from 2009 to 2014 when Jammu and Kashmir was a full-fledged state.

Saini to take oath as Haryana CM today

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Nayab Singh Saini will be sworn-in as the chief minister of Haryana on Thursday, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP's top leadership, among others attending the oath-taking ceremony.

Saini, 54, on Wednesday met Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya and staked claim to form the next government after he was unanimously elected as the leader of the BJP legislature party in a meet-

Modi, Shah to attend event

ing held at the party office in Panchkula. Massive security arrangements have been made in the wake of the swearing-in ceremony which will take place in Panchkula.

Besides Modi and Shah, several Union ministers including Rajnath Singh and J P Nadda, who is also the BJP president, chief ministers of many states, and senior party leaders will attend the oath-

taking event. Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya will administer the oath of office and secrecy.

Haryana BJP chief Mohan Lal Badoli on Tuesday said while PM Modi, Union ministers, chief ministers of the BJP-ruled states and NDA partners will attend the oath-taking function, opposition leaders of various parties, 'progressive farmers', 'Lakshpati Didis' and people from various



social organisations have also been invited.

Badoli had also said Valmiki Jayanti falls on October 17, the day when the new government would be sworn-in.

In the October 5 Haryana polls, the BJP secured an unprecedented third term in the state, winning 48 seats in the 90-member assembly. The Congress won 37 seats.

With the BJP forming the government for a third time in a row in Haryana, Saini will be taking oath as the chief minister for the second time.

KTR: HYDRAA meant to blackmail..

Continued from page 1

KTR likened the Congress government's approach to that of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of demonetization, as it had been constantly shifting its explanations for various decisions. "One day they talk about Musi beautification, the next day about providing water to Nalgonda, and then they suddenly claim to spend Rs. 1.5 lakh crore with no clear direction," KTR said.

The BRS working president condemned the state government for creating a sense of fear around HYDRAA operations and the Musi project. "They are using HYDRAA to threaten large builders. The way they are handling the Musi project, with talk of demolishing houses given permission 50 years ago, is unacceptable," KTR remarked, while accusing the

state of irresponsibly targeting the poor as well.

"HYDRAA is being used to create an atmosphere of fear, targeting poor people and threatening their homes. If the government continues to act recklessly, BRS will not stay silent," he warned, adding that BRS would stand as a protective shield for the poor in Hyderabad. "Revanth Reddy is sending bulldozers, but our leaders will stand in their way to protect the people's homes," he declared.

The BRS leader highlighted that the previous government had spent Rs. 4,000 crore on sewage treatment plants, ensuring supply of clean water for Nalgonda from Musi. "There is no need to spend another Rs. 1.5 lakh crore as they are claiming," KTR observed.

KTR reiterated that during their government, projects like

the Kondapochamma Sagar to Gandipet water pipeline, costing Rs. 1,100 crore, were approved, obviating the need for further spending. He rejected claims by the Congress that the current government had been providing clean water to Nalgonda, asserting that arrangements had already been made earlier.

Referring to previous efforts to renovate Musi under Sudheer Reddy's chairmanship, KTR noted that KCR had halted the project out of concern for the poor. "A humane leader like KCR takes such decisions to avoid causing harm to the underprivileged," he said, pointing out that BRS never undertook any project at the expense of the poor.

KTR suggested that the government had failed to deliver on its promises. "The government is silent on Rythu

Bandhu, hasn't given the promised Rs. 500 per quintal bonus for paddy, and is imposing quality restrictions on paddy purchases," he said. He questioned why the Chief Minister or the Agriculture Minister had not stood up for Telangana's farmers in any meaningful way.

KTR intensified his attack on the Congress government by referencing Revanth Reddy's Rs. 80,000 crore debt contracted in just 10 months. He sought to know where the money had gone, considering no new projects had been initiated. KTR vowed that BRS would continue its efforts to protect the interests of Hyderabad's poor. He urged citizens facing any issues to approach BRS representatives or visit Telangana Bhavan, assuring that their concerns would be addressed.

Cabinet hikes wheat MSP..

Continued from page 1

"The major decision taken by the cabinet is related to the welfare of the farmers. Like in Kharif, there is a significant increase in the MSP for rabi crops," I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told media after the cabinet meeting. He said the support price for wheat has been increased to Rs 2,425 per quintal for 2025-26, from Rs 2,275 per quintal in the previous year.

To increase domestic production of oilseeds, the cabinet increased the support price for rapeseed/mustard seed by Rs 300 to Rs 5,950 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season. The support price for safflower was increased by Rs 140 to Rs 5,940 per quintal from Rs 5,800 per quintal in the previous year.

In case of pulses, support price for lentil (masur) increased by Rs 275 to Rs

6,700 per quintal, while that for gram MSP raised by Rs 210 to Rs 5,650 per quintal for the 2025-26 marketing season.

Support price for barley increased by Rs 130 to Rs 1,980 per quintal for 2025-26 rabi marketing season, from Rs 1,850 per quintal in the previous year. The increase in rabi crops MSP is in line with the Union Budget 2018-19 announcement of fixing the MSP at a level of at least 1.5 times the All-India weighted average cost of production.

The expected margin over the All-India weighted average cost of production is 105 per cent for wheat, followed by 98 per cent for rapeseed & mustard; 89 per cent for lentil; 60 per cent for gram; 60 per cent for barley; and 50 per cent for safflower. This increased MSP of rabi crops will ensure remunerative prices to the farmers and incentivise crop diversification, the minister added.

Cong gears up for GHMC..

Continued from page 1

Goud highlighted the achievements of the Congress government, which has been in power for 10 months, including the launch of large-scale public welfare initiatives and developmental projects in the state. In contrast, the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi government had pushed the state into debts. "The BRS government has left Telangana with Rs 7 lakh crore in debts over the last decade," he observed, adding that the Congress had

worked hard to fulfil its promises and deliver effective governance.

Mahesh called on party leaders to study the welfare programs deeply and understand their impact on the people. "There is already a positive response from the public, and we need to strengthen that connection as we head into the elections," Goud exhorted. He emphasized the need to counter the Opposition, accusing BRS and BJP of colluding to damage Congress's image, particularly through social media.

HC declines stay on..

Continued from page 1

Additionally, Dr. Christina Z. Chongthu, IAS, Secretary to Government, HM&FW Department, is placed in FAC of the Director, AYUSH, while Dr. T.K. Sreedevi, IAS, Commissioner, SCD, is placed in FAC of the post of Secretary to Government, WCD & SC Department in place of Vakati

Karuna. R.V. Karnan, IAS, Director, Health & Family Welfare, will now also serve as Chief Executive Officer, Aarogyasri Health Care Trust.

These appointments signal the government's swift administrative action, following the Court's decision, ensuring that the bureaucratic machinery continues to function without hurdles.

NSG commandos withdrawn from..

Continued from page 1

which include Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath, his predecessor and BSP supreme Mayawati, Union defence minister Rajnath Singh, veteran BJP leader and former deputy prime minister L. K. Advani, and Union shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

The others include BJP leader and former Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh, former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) president Ghulam Nabi Azad, National Conference (NC) president Farooq Abdullah and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu.

The transfer of duties between the two forces under the MHA is expected to be completed within a month, they said.

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), which has six VIP security battalions, has been asked to absorb a seventh battalion for this purpose.

The fresh battalion is the one

that used to guard the Parliament till a few months back. After a security breach that took place last year, the Parliament security was handed over to the CISF from the CRPF, a senior officer told PTL.

As part of the taking over the new task, a team of Andhra Pradesh Police was in Delhi recently for the change of its chief minister's security from the NSG to the CRPF, the sources said.

Two among these nine VIPs will also have the advanced security liaison (ASL) protocol being undertaken by the CRPF-- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and UP Chief Minister Adityanath, as per the sources. ASL involves an advance reconnaissance of the location to be visited by the VIP. The CRPF undertakes such a protocol for five of its VIPs including Home Minister Amit Shah, former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and three Gandhi family Congress leaders.

The plan to relieve NSG from VIP security tasks has been in the making since 2012

when NSG commanders foresaw an event where simultaneous terror attacks could be witnessed at one time on multiple centres in the country and the commandos would have to be rushed in different directions. PTI had reported in January 2020, that after the removal of the SPG (special protection group) from the Gandhi family-- Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra-- a committee of the MHA had decided to withdraw NSG from VIP security tasks.

The Union government has decided to "restructure" the NSG and use its manpower to raise and station 'strike teams' of commandos in some high-risk areas like near the Ram temple in Ayodhya and around some critical assets located in the southern part of the country.

Withdrawal of the NSG from VIP security, once done by November, will happen after over two decades since the 'black cat' commandos were drafted in this duty, a task not originally charted for it when the force was conceptualised and raised in 1984.

Law is not..

Continued from page 1

However, the scales of justice in the right hand of Lady Justice have been retained, symbolizing a societal balance and the significance of careful consideration of facts and arguments from both sides before arriving at a verdict. Last month, President Droupadi Murmu unveiled the new flag and insignia of the Supreme Court to commemorate the 75th year of its establishment. Under CJI Chandrachud's tenure, the SC began live-streaming proceedings of the Constitution Bench on YouTube and used artificial intelligence and natural language processing technology for live transcription of such hearings of national importance. The judicial hearings in the NEET-UG matter and R.G. Kar Medical College and Hospital suo moto case garnered huge public views.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Election time

The elections in the two states, along with by-elections, will provide a clear snapshot of the public sentiment

It is election time once again. The last round of elections in 2024 would be held in November. The Election Commission has announced that Assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand will begin on November 13. Jharkhand will go to the polls in two phases, on November 13 and 20, while Maharashtra will hold a single-phase election on November 20. The votes for both states will be counted on November 23. Additionally, dates for several Lok Sabha by-elections, including in Wayanad, Kerala, where a bypoll is needed after Rahul Gandhi vacated the seat, have been announced. The Assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand are critical for both the ruling and the Opposition parties, as they serve as key battlegrounds to gauge their standing. In Maharashtra, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) faces a formidable challenge from the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, comprising the Shiv Sena (UBT), the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and the Congress.



The MVA aims to capitalise on public dissatisfaction over issues like economic distress and governance failures while projecting a united front despite internal tensions.

In Jharkhand, the contest is equally poised, with the incumbent Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-Congress alliance seeking to fend off the BJP's challenge. The ruling coalition is banking on Chief Minister Hemant Soren's popularity and social welfare schemes to retain power. However, the BJP is expected to emphasise issues like law and order and tribal rights to swing the vote in its favour. Apart from the Assembly polls, by-elections will be conducted on November 13 for four Assembly seats in Punjab—Dera Baba Nanak, Chabbewal (SC), Gidderbaha, and Barnala. These bypolls are seen as indicators of the prevailing political sentiment in the regions, potentially setting the tone for broader electoral battles. In addition, the by-election for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat in Kerala presents another crucial contest. Speculation is rife that Priyanka Gandhi Vadra may make her electoral debut from this constituency, adding a significant dimension to the Congress's campaign strategy. Elections in India are not only a period of heightened activity for political parties but also a monumental task for the Election Commission and government machinery. Conducting elections in the country is no small feat, as ensuring a peaceful, free and fair process presents significant challenge. The upcoming assembly elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand, along with the bypolls, will serve as critical indicators of India's evolving political dynamics. As the states prepare for high-stakes battles, various political scenarios could unfold, influenced by factors like coalition strategies, regional issues and leadership challenges. But ultimately it would be the unpredictable and elusive voters who would decide the fate of the political parties.

On the contrary, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav's statement a day after the defeat indicated that the alliance with Congress would continue. Akhilesh said, "I want to say that the INDIA bloc will be there. The UP and Congress alliance will remain intact..." The Aam Admi Party has said it will go solo in the Delhi Assembly poll, while it allied with the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls three months ago. Congress won no seat. The other allies criticise Congress for its overconfidence and rigid attitude toward seat sharing. The resurgent Congress, which had doubled its tally in the Lok Sabha polls, weakened after its Haryana shocker. Most exit polls suggested an astounding win for Congress in Haryana because the BJP faced a 10-year anti-incumbency and dealt with a section of disgruntled people. However, the BJP sprung a surprise and registered its most impressive victory in Haryana. No party has ever won a third term in the rural state. Discussions occur between the Congress, the Shiv Sena

Haryana setback exposes cracks in INDIA Bloc

The Congress defeat has not only dampened the party's resurgence narrative but also underscored the need for a recalibrated approach to coalition politics



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Grand Old Congress Party faces criticism from its INDIA coalition partners for mishandling the recent Haryana Assembly polls, allowing the BJP to win for a third time despite ten years of anti-incumbency. Most exit polls had predicted a clear win for the Congress, but the BJP secured 48 out of 90 seats, a victory even the BJP itself was surprised by. A win in Haryana would have boosted the Congress resurgence story. However, Congress lost this fifth Assembly election recently due to internal conflicts, adding to its previous losses in Punjab, Uttarakhnad, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It is uncertain whether the partners will be united in fighting against the BJP. Questions like whether an alliance with AAP would have favoured Congress to win in the Haryana polls are being debated. Secondly, the defeat would impact the upcoming elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The immediate impact of the Haryana result is likely in seat sharing in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Delhi, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. Thirdly, it is uncertain whether the Congress and AAP will have an alliance. The AAP has already said it will go solo. The INDIA bloc performed well in the 2004 Lok Sabha polls due to its adaptability and compromise. The main aim of the Coalition was to give a one-to-one fight with the BJP and not split the anti-BJP votes. The Coalition put irritable issues on the back burner and managed to work well. They functioned with the sole aim of defeating the BJP and, to a certain extent, succeeded. The BJP majority was reduced, and the government had to be formed with the help of JD (U) and TDP. The Haryana defeat has altered the situation within the Coalition, with the INDIA bloc getting an edge over the Congress. The partners would probably deal with a slightly more restrained and sobered Congress. No one has said so far that the INDIA bloc is finished.



On the contrary, Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav's statement a day after the defeat indicated that the alliance with Congress would continue. Akhilesh said, "I want to say that the INDIA bloc will be there. The UP and Congress alliance will remain intact..." The Aam Admi Party has said it will go solo in the Delhi Assembly poll, while it allied with the Congress in the Lok Sabha polls three months ago. Congress won no seat. The other allies criticise Congress for its overconfidence and rigid attitude toward seat sharing. The resurgent Congress, which had doubled its tally in the Lok Sabha polls, weakened after its Haryana shocker. Most exit polls suggested an astounding win for Congress in Haryana because the BJP faced a 10-year anti-incumbency and dealt with a section of disgruntled people. However, the BJP sprung a surprise and registered its most impressive victory in Haryana. No party has ever won a third term in the rural state. Discussions occur between the Congress, the Shiv Sena



THE MAIN AIM OF THE COALITION WAS TO GIVE A ONE-TO-ONE FIGHT WITH THE BJP AND NOT SPLIT THE ANTI-BJP VOTES. THE COALITION PUT IRRITABLE ISSUES ON THE BACK BURNER AND MANAGED TO WORK WELL

(Uddhav) and the Nationalist Congress Party in Maharashtra. Congress needs to be more responsive to the seat-sharing formula and Sena's demand for Thackeray to be projected as the CM's face even before the polls. The AAP won no seat in the Haryana election but got roughly 1.78 per cent of the votes. It would have undoubtedly added to the INDIA bloc's kitty if Congress had allied with AAP. According to Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut, the Congress ignored the smaller parties and their offers for collaboration. Leaders from the Trinamool Congress, AAP, Shiv Sena (Uddhav), National Conference, RJD, Nationalist Congress Party, and others were critical of the Congress for messing up the Haryana polls. Shiv Sena mouthpiece Saamna said, "No one thought the BJP government would be elected in Haryana again. It seems Congress's overconfidence and arrogance of local Congress leaders led to the party's defeat," the Marathi paper said in its editorial on Wednesday. Repeating the formula adopted during the

Lok Sabha polls for seat sharing is crucial, at least in the Maharashtra and Jharkhand polls. The subdued Congress will not have the upper hand in seat sharing with most of its allies. The present mood in the INDIA coalition must impact Congress's relations with its partners. The Opposition may not be able to withstand any more shocks. Congress must focus on the 286 seats in a direct fight with the BJP. The 2024 polls proved the Congress' strike rate against the BJP rose to 29 per cent from 8 per cent in 2019. Significantly, the number of seats in which the Congress fought with the BJP was 286, down from 370 in 2014. Congress came to power in 2004 and 2009 because of its cordial relationships with the partners. The onus for keeping the alliance is broadly on the Congress. It must realise that every partner, small or big, is essential. Congress has had introspection sessions, and Panchmadi and Shimla are good examples. It is time for one more such session. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

PICTALK



A vendor arranges earthen lamps (Diya) for sale, in Bikaner

PTI

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

INDIA-CANADA DIPLOMATIC CRISIS

Madam — Apropos to the article 'Souring relations', on October 16, India is withdrawing its High Commissioner from Canada after Canadian PM Justin Trudeau again accused India of masterminding the June 18, 2023, killing of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar outside the Guru Nanak Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia. Trudeau's accusation and mischaracterisation of India is based on the American intelligence's raw data supplied to Canada. But, Sikh militants in both Canada and California are deeply involved in organised crime and gang violence. Perhaps, Trudeau believed the volume and frequency of the accusation could trump the truth. He also may believe that doubling down on Sikh militants might win him votes in key districts. On both points, he is wrong. After Khalistani terrorists blew up Air India Flight 182, ignorance can be no excuse about the movement's lethality. Left unchecked, the Khalistani extremists Trudeau's government shelters can be as lethal as Al Qaeda. The movement would be impotent without funding, however. Here, Canadian banks are as complicit as the Arab and Somali hawala agents who ultimately helped move money around prior to Al Qaeda's 1998 East Africa embassy bombings and the September 11, 2001, terror attacks in New York and Washington. Hence, Canada is guilty of abetting terrorism.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

END COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Madam — It is indeed a matter of concern that communal clashes are again showing their ugly faces. No religion can recommend violent reactions for any reason. But every religion suggests being patient even under utter provocation. Therefore, clash in the name of God and religion is only an organised attempt to disturb peace and take undue advantage of it. But the history is clear with its messages that such chauvinists can

Firecracker ban insufficient



This refers to the news, "Delhi government imposes ban on firecrackers to combat air pollution" (October 15). Besides the increasing population density, the air in Delhi remains polluted and it is being inhaled by the majority of the populace and people commuting there. Recently, the AQI level is showing

alarming conditions. Apparently the decision of the Delhi government to ban the production, storage, sale and use of firecrackers till January 25 seems to help in reducing the worsening pollution condition, but it will irritate the majority of Hindus in view of the upcoming Ghathh pooja and Diwali festivals. The State BJP President Virendra Sachdeva has raised a valid question to the Delhi government that the main reasons for pollution are the burning of stubble in the neighbouring state of Punjab and dust is flying on many broken roads. Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee President Devendra Yadav has argued the bitter truth that the arrangements made to control pollution have been inadequate. It would be better to discourage the use of firecrackers in social and religious events. Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

attract some people for sometime but not all for all the times. People have their basic livelihood issues and any group interested in relieving them of their plights should come out with constructive ideas and suggestions. But sharpening the frictions and promoting clashes should be understood by the people as anti-social acts that aim at reaping advantages for the self or the group. If any group plans to promote its cause by promoting differences and violent reactions, it should remember that the results of such activities will be only negative in the long run and the gains, if any, will be purely ephemeral. However, it is for the people to identify such persons and groups and keep them at a distance without falling prey to their deceptive traps. A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Madam — In our daily lives, mindless scrolling on social media has turned into an addiction fuelled by the constant overflow of news and information.

People often find themselves endlessly scrolling through content without any specific purpose. We must try to acknowledge that this scrolling addiction can lead to a decrease in cognitive ability leading to various psychological disorders, or sometimes it may also hamper the mental well-being of an individual, resulting in a reduction and a lack of focus and attention while doing any job or specific task. Scrolling might give us temporary pleasure, but at what cost? We are just making ourselves more vulnerable and slowly becoming a puppet of social media and mobile phones. Setting a limit on scrolling, planning a digital free period, and bringing offline leisure activities into our daily routine can help an individual to alleviate this dangerous addiction. So, don't lose yourself for some momentary pleasure because ultimately health is wealth. Neha Tomar | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Why Indian women deserve support, not judgement

We must start questioning the unrealistic expectations placed on women and inculcate a culture that promotes shared responsibilities and duties

Indian women are increasingly taking on obligations that exceed 55 hours per week. They manage to pursue their professional careers while also managing a household—what one may refer to as the "second job." It reveals an unsettling fact about the intimidating pressure on women to perform above their capabilities. Although this problem between job and private life affects women all over the world, it is especially difficult for Indian women due to cultural expectations, societal standards and the long-held conviction that they "must do it all."



to continue fulfilling traditional roles has not diminished. Instead, it has expanded, creating an unsustainable juggling act. Are women taken for granted? In many ways, yes. The concept that women are born to balance this act manifests itself in the belief that they can easily handle a high-demanding profession while also serving as primary carers, homemakers, and support for the rest of the extended family. However, such an assumption ignores the impact on their physical and mental well-being. Each woman's drive is influenced by the societally imposed "superwoman" image, which puts undue pressure on them. And when they falter, they are unfairly judged. But why should society judge women for trying to manage the impossible? The expectations placed on women often come with little recognition or appreciation for the sacrifices they make. Instead, when women struggle or choose to prioritise one aspect of their life over another, they are met with criticism rather than compassion. This is especially true for those who lack a strong support system. If a woman does not have family members willing to share the load of child-rearing or household management, she is left to carry an even heavier burden. Should she be judged for

this? Absolutely not. Let us not forget that many Indian women are also teachers, a profession that requires nurturing, patience and a relentless dedication to the betterment of future generations. These women are shaping young minds in the classroom while simultaneously caring for their own families at home. The least society can do is give them the space and freedom they deserve, without the weight of judgement. It's time we, as a society, recognise that women's worth is not measured by their ability to "do it all." We must start questioning the unrealistic expectations placed on them and, instead, advocate for a culture that promotes shared responsibilities. Supporting women in their endeavors—whether in their careers or at home—by giving them the freedom to make choices without judgement is essential. Only then can we begin to alleviate the unnecessary pressures that have, for too long, weighed on the shoulders of Indian women. (The author is a motivational speaker and a freelance writer; views are personal)



RACHNA LAKHPATRI



FIRST COLUMN

REVIVING FAMILY BONDS

A family can transform a person into an achiever by right encouragement and support



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJI

Small family, Happy family (Chhota Parivar-Sukhi Pariwar) & 'Hum Do Hamare', these two jingles coined by the administration had changed the family planning scenario in India over the years. But it's so ironic that despite becoming the first country to adopt a national policy for limiting a great Indian proclivity, India is expected to overtake China in 2034. At the time of independence, there were 345 million Indians. The world took 454 years to go from 345 million in 1310 AD to a billion, but India took just 52 years. Looking at the above facts and figures one wonders as to what would be the societal structure in a country that takes the burden of a population of a billion people. Sadly, the situation is quite grim, because today we see fewer families and more individuals living their lives on their terms with an 'I care a damn attitude' which is quite common in the metropolises.

Our forefathers were brought up with strong family values, but with passing time and ever-changing scenarios, today those core values have been left behind to adopt new so-called modern values. It's so unfortunate that today very few of us know the importance of living or growing up in a family. One must understand the fact that a family is the first school where the literate and the illiterate have got their first lessons in the art of living and values, traditions, customs and conventions. Also in a family, everyone feels secure and protected. Everyone feels strong because of the strength of the family. Everyone feels that others welcome him or her. Everyone feels a kind of support, sustenance and encourage-



ment. It is, therefore, essential to help and facilitate the growth of good supportive families for foundation as a family tradition rather than promoting an individualistic lifestyle for the sake of the next Gen & future to come.

There is some kind of magnetic force that holds the members of a family together. In other words, it is a feeling of closeness and belongingness in the mind of every person and the feeling of acceptance on the part of the whole group that gives it the nomenclature of a family. This feeling of acceptance is always based on the feeling of mutual love, loyalty and trust and also understanding and accommodation. Today we see that families are splitting up.

Certain values like mutual affection, love & genuine caring that make a family work are vanishing because everyone wants to live an independent life without any kind of family interference. However, if the younger ones continue to give regard to the elders and the elders continue to give love to the younger ones, then the family life will continue to be undisturbed and everyone will act responsibly. But, if each one gives up their responsibility and the feeling of concern for others, then cracks would appear and get deeper. Hence to preserve the family structure & tradition, one needs to have tolerance, sobriety & humility because family is very essential to civilised life, be it a spiritual family or the society as a family or of nations. Hence we should consider family as a place where we can work for physical, mental, moral and spiritual growth and can create an environment where others also can grow. A family can change a person into a great leader, disciplinarian, soldier, criminal or scholar by encouraging or discouraging, supporting or condemning certain positive or negative traits in him.

We must, therefore, pay attention to the transformation of families because families are the breeding grounds for good or bad human beings. So, let us awaken people to observe family values such as mutual love, trust, acceptance, accommodation, consideration and care for the wellbeing of others, the spirit of adjustment, tolerance, responsibility and cooperation because if these family values flourish, the nation and the whole humankind will flourish too.

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

Stubble burning crisis needs practical solutions



BISWAJEET BANARJEE

Without swift and sustained efforts, northern India would face yet another year of deteriorating air quality, leaving millions to grapple with bad air quality



The Supreme Court has taken a strong stance against the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) for its failure to control stubble burning, a major contributor to air pollution in Delhi-NCR. The court's rebuke, delivered during a hearing on October 3, emphasised the need for effective ground-level interventions and questioned why the Commission had not implemented any provisions of the relevant Act to curb pollution from crop residue burning. Stubble burning, especially in the northern states of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, has been a major environmental challenge for years. Farmers often resort to burning crop residue after harvesting paddy and wheat due to the increasing mechanisation of farming, the use of combined harvesters, a shortage of labour, and rising labour costs. This practice, prevalent in October and November following the paddy harvest, results in the release of large amounts of particulate matter into the atmosphere, contributing to the hazardous air quality in Delhi-NCR.

The Supreme Court's criticism of the CAQM reflects a broader frustration over the Commission's inability to effectively tackle this issue. Despite being set up three years ago to address pollution in the National Capital Region and surrounding areas, the CAQM has been criticised for its slow pace and lack of tangible outcomes. The court particularly highlighted that the Commission meets only once every three months, a frequency deemed inadequate for addressing a recurring crisis like stubble burning.

Moreover, the Commission has issued only 82 directives since its inception, a number that the court described as insufficient to deal with the scale of the problem. A significant concern raised by the Supreme Court is the lack of adequate staffing within the pollution control boards of Delhi-NCR and other affected states, including Uttar Pradesh. The



FARMERS OFTEN RESORT TO BURNING CROP RESIDUE AFTER HARVESTING PADDY AND WHEAT DUE TO THE INCREASING MECHANISATION OF FARMING, THE USE OF COMBINED HARVESTERS, A SHORTAGE OF LABOUR, AND RISING LABOUR COSTS

court ordered that these vacant posts be filled by April 30, 2025, to improve monitoring and enforcement capabilities. Effective staffing is critical for implementing measures on the ground, particularly when dealing with farmers who rely on burning crop residue as a quick and cost-effective way to clear their fields.

Despite repeated interventions from both the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and the Supreme Court, stubble burning incidents continue to surge. Last year alone, more than 33,000 incidents of stubble burning were recorded in Punjab, even after explicit instructions to engage with farmers to explore alternatives. The lack of a coordinated effort between the state governments and the CAQM has only exacerbated the pollution crisis during the winter months.

Turning Stubble into a Resource: While the focus remains on the failures of the CAQM and the continued challenges in states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a notable example of how stubble can be managed more sustainably. The state has successfully implemented initiatives that transform stubble into an energy resource and natural fertiliser, benefiting both the environment and the agricultural community.

The key to this transformation has been the establishment of Compressed Biogas (CBG) plants that convert crop residue into energy and high-quality compost. This approach has not only addressed environmental concerns but has also created an additional income stream for farmers, who sell stubble as raw

material for the CBG process. In this way, stubble has shifted from being a burden to becoming a valuable asset in Uttar Pradesh's rural economy. As of last year, Uttar Pradesh led the country in CBG production, with ten operational plants. Currently, 24 CBG units are active, and another 93 are under construction. The state aims to have more than 100 CBG plants operational soon, a goal endorsed by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Singh Puri. During a March 2024 announcement, he highlighted the state's plan to double its bio-coal and biodiesel production by 2025. The success of CBG production in Uttar Pradesh has been bolstered by the Uttar Pradesh State Bio-Energy Policy 2022, which offers various incentives for establishing bio-CNG and CBG units using agricultural waste.

The policy aims to set up CBG plants in every district, providing local solutions for managing stubble while promoting energy self-sufficiency. A significant milestone in this journey was the inauguration of a CBG plant in Dhuriyapar, Gorakhpur, on March 8, 2023, by Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The plant, built for Rs 165 crore, processes 200 metric tonnes of straw, 20 metric tonnes of press mud, and 10 metric tonnes of cattle dung daily. It produces 20 metric tonnes of biogas and 125 metric tonnes of organic manure, contributing to higher agricultural yields while reducing dependency on chemical fertilisers. This initiative allows farmers to diversify their income sources and play

a crucial role in the energy sector. By reducing the practice of stubble burning, the state is making strides in environmental protection. The Yogi Adityanath government has expressed confidence that the enhanced production of bio-coal and biodiesel will help reduce air pollution in the region over the next five years.

The Supreme Court's critique of the CAQM underscores the urgency of finding a balanced approach to stubble burning that respects both environmental concerns and the practical challenges faced by farmers. Uttar Pradesh's model of converting stubble into a resource could serve as a blueprint for other states grappling with similar issues. However, the broader challenge remains: implementing such solutions at scale requires consistent policy support, adequate resources, and a willingness to engage with farmers directly. The court's directive for the CAQM to improve its approach and for state governments to fill vacant posts by 2025 is a step towards accountability.

Yet, the real test will lie in translating these directives into action before another winter brings the familiar, suffocating haze back to the skies of Delhi-NCR. The question remains whether the CAQM, in partnership with state governments, can adapt and adopt innovative solutions like those seen in UP. Without swift and sustained efforts, the region risks facing another year of deteriorating air quality, leaving millions to grapple with the health consequences of inaction.

(The writer is Associate Editor, The Pioneer; views expressed are personal)

Urbanisation and youth: Building a healthier future amid rapid growth

By 2050, with 70 per cent of the global population expected to live in cities, engaging youth in shaping sustainable urban future is more crucial than ever

Urbanisation, an engine for economic prosperity and resources, sits at the centre of modernity and impacts health outcomes. With rapid urbanisation, the UN projects that by 2050, 7 of 10 people will live in cities, and the youth will likely be the most dominant population. The future will be forged by the ever-increasing global youth, who are integral to playing a dynamic and revolutionary role in creating and building strong, prosperous, sustainable, and vibrant societies. In recent years, international organisations have emphasised the meaningful involvement of youth as vital to accelerating progress towards the SDGs while development continues to grow globally. The approach also coincides



ASHWAJIT SINGH

with this year's message of World Habitat Day, which focuses on "engaging youth to create a better urban future." However, while we work towards engaging the new generation in planning their urban present and future through participatory processes and local leadership opportunities, ensuring their healthy livelihood is imperative. Urbanisation's positive attributes also mask the inequalities

that exist within it. Not all city residents experience or can access these benefits equally. For instance, 40 per cent of India's population will reside in the urban setup by 2030, with 24 per cent being the youth (15-29), making it a relatively young country. Although rapid urbanisation will continue to improve India's average household socio-economic condition and child health status, it is expected to disproportionately affect the health of urban youth, who are likely to become more vulnerable to health challenges.

Urbanisation without accounting for the primary healthcare amenities results in significant health disparities. As gentrification grows with urbanisation, a large chunk of the youth is likely to reside in

urban slums and low-income areas. These areas carry distinct health challenges that are influenced by broader socio-economic determinants such as poverty, education and employment.

Youth from low-income families and areas are more likely to face barriers to accessing education, which in turn limits their job opportunities and perpetuates a cycle of poor health outcomes.

These informal settlements may sit adjacent to an affluent neighbourhood. Still, the people living there lack access to safe water and sanitation infrastructure, becoming hotspots for waterborne and vector-borne diseases due to flooding, open sewers, and overcrowding. With such poor hygiene, increased rates of malnutrition



among children and young adults worsen the burden of diseases.

In addition to infectious diseases, urban youth in lower-income areas are increasingly exposed to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension, which are often exacerbated by poor diet, stress, and lack of access to early diagnosis or regular health checkups.

These substantial regional disparities affecting urban youths

living and health conditions are also caused by the inequitable distribution of clinics and healthcare centres, which limits care options. According to NFHS-3, only 39.9 per cent of urban poor children get full immunisation compared to 65.4 per cent of urban non-poor children. Lower vaccination rates and a lack of awareness of ongoing health issues negatively impact school attendance and cognitive development.

The National Urban Health Mission (NUHM), launched in 2013, has been instrumental in meeting the regulatory, reformatory, and developmental public health priorities for urban settings.

Over the years, NUHM has improved access to healthcare, allowing the urban poor

to choose public over costly private services. Among the other initiatives to focus on urban youth health, the National Youth Policy (NYP) 2021 outlines a 10-year vision for youth development by 2030, aligning with the United Nations' SDGs.

The NYP prioritises youth health as essential for India's holistic growth and progress by addressing critical health components of urban youth and acknowledging mental health. Further, India's pioneering step towards building inclusive health that benefits all and focuses on the youth also found prominence in the recent G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration in 2023.

The report encompasses ways to eliminate hunger and malnutrition and advance with

more health collaborations, especially when facing challenging mental health. While policies like NUHM and NYP have made strides in addressing urban youth health, more needs to be done and implemented to improve primary healthcare.

Many urban healthcare centres still struggle with understaffing, lack of resources, and accessibility issues for slum-dwelling youth. To ensure that India's urban youth thrive, it is crucial to increase investments in health services, prioritise mental health care, and continue engaging youth in the decision-making process for urban development.

(The writer is the Founder and Managing Director of IPE Global; views expressed are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold hits fresh record high of Rs 78,900 per 10g

Gold prices touched a new all-time high of Rs 78,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, gaining Rs 250 due to sustained buying by jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had closed at Rs 78,650 per 10 grams in the previous session on Tuesday. Silver also followed the suit and surged Rs 1,000 to Rs 93,500 per kg due to fresh buying from industrial units and coin makers. On Tuesday, it had finished at Rs 92,500 per kg. Meanwhile, gold of 99.5 per cent purity jumped Rs 250 to hit a fresh record high of Rs 78,500 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 78,250 per 10 grams. Traders attributed the rise in gold prices due to strong demand by local jewellers. Besides, the decline in equity markets also aided the rally in the yellow metal as investors moved towards the safe haven assets like gold.



RBI passes condolence resolution in memory of Tata

The Reserve Bank's Central Board of Directors on Wednesday passed a condolence resolution in memory of industrialist Ratan Tata. Ratan Naval Tata died at a Mumbai hospital on October 9 at the age of 86 years. The Board passed a condolence resolution in memory of Shri Ratan N Tata, a former Director of the Central Board, the RBI said in a statement after the 611th meeting of its Central Board of Directors in Bhubaneswar. The central bank further said the Board reviewed the current economic and financial situation, including challenges posed by evolving geopolitical conflicts. It also discussed the functioning of various sub-committees of the Central Board, the Ombudsman Scheme and the activities of select central office departments. The Central Board members also took the Integrity Pledge in observance of the ensuing Vigilance Awareness Week 2024.



India to help Myanmar in setting up 5G mobile systems

India has offered to help Myanmar in setting up 5G mobile systems in that country, a government official said on Wednesday. In 2022, India had launched the 5G telephony services that promise to provide ultra high-speed internet on mobile phones. About 98 per cent of districts and 90 per cent of all villages were covered with 5G in a span of just 21 months in India. "In the field of 5G, we have offered to help Myanmar in setting up their 5G systems," Joint Secretary in the department of commerce Siddharth Mahajan told reporters here. The issue among others were discussed during the eighth India-Myanmar joint trade committee meeting here last month. Both the sides have also discussed cooperation in shipping sector. "We are looking at coastal shipping agreement," he said.

ISA Assembly to focus on solar adoption, technology: Joshi

The upcoming assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) will focus on empowering member countries for solar adoption, sharing technology and encouraging startups, besides having discussions on finances, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Wednesday. Joshi, who is also the President of the 120-nation alliance, was speaking at the curtain raiser event for the 7th ISA Assembly scheduled for November 3-6 in the national capital. The event will also see the election or re-election of ISA President and Co-Chair. It will also see the election of new Director General (DG).

While the new president and co-chair will take over the office immediately after the assembly, the new DG will assume the charge after the term of present DG Ajay Mathur ends on March 14, 2025. "I call upon members, signatories and prospective countries to unite on a 3-fold agenda empowering member countries to adopt solar energy as the energy source of choice, make energy access universal by supporting solar entrepreneurs to scale up local solutions and mobilise finance to speed up solar deployment," he said addressing the gathering which included delegates of member countries.

'Need to promote natural farming to improve soil health'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Minister of State for Agriculture Ram Nath Thakur on Wednesday stressed the need to promote natural farming to improve soil health.

He was addressing an event organised by Sulabh International, a social service organisation.

The minister asked Sulabh International to work in the areas of natural farming and also the creation of storage infrastructure in rural areas for agricultural crops.

According to a statement by Sulabh, Thakur said the government has given special attention towards the development of the agriculture sector and a huge amount has been allocated to boost storage of all kinds of agricultural produce, including vegetables and fruits. There is a vast possibility of work in this sector, he said.

Thakur further stressed the need for intensive research to improve soil conditions to ensure high yields and quality production.

With special reference to north Bihar, the minister stressed the need to max-



Thakur said the government has given special attention towards the development of the agriculture sector and a huge amount has been allocated to boost storage of all kinds of agricultural produce, including vegetables and fruits

imise the uses of availability of ponds in seven districts suitable for Makhana (fox nuts) and fish farming.

During this event, Sulabh gave an opportunity to women farmers from across India who have benefited from Sulabh's food programme, offering them a platform to showcase their produce.

Sulabh International, traditionally known for its pioneer-



ing work in sanitation and water, President Kumar Dilip said the decision to focus on food security emerged from its founder late Dr Bindeshwar Pathak's commitment to holistic development - one that addresses not just sanitation but also the underlying factors contributing to poverty and inequality.

"By empowering rural women through agriculture,

we aim to create sustainable livelihoods, improve household nutrition, and foster community resilience. This approach aligns with our broader mission of social justice and upliftment of marginalised communities," he added. On Sulabh Food programme Vice President of Sulabh International, Sutirtha Sahariah said, "Our programme has since empowered over 2,500 rural women by helping them cultivate climate-resilient indigenous crops."

'China emerges as India's top import source'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

China has emerged as India's top import source with USD 56.29 billion worth of inbound shipments during the April-September period of this fiscal, according to the commerce ministry data.

During the period, the US emerged as the top export destination for the country with outbound shipments increasing by 5.62 per cent to USD 40.38 billion.

The imports from China rose by 11.5 per cent during the first half of this fiscal. The imports stood at USD 50.48 billion during April-September 2023.

During the period, the top 10 import sources of India were China, Russia, the UAE, the US, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, Korea, Switzerland and Singapore, the data showed.

Imports from Russia rose to

USD 32.18 billion during April-September this fiscal from USD 30.43 billion a year ago.

Similarly, the inbound shipments from the UAE rose to USD 31.46 billion from USD 20.70 billion in the first half of the last fiscal.

During the period, the top 10 export destinations of the country were the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, the UK, China, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Germany and South Africa.

Exports to the UAE rose from USD 15.47 billion during April-September 2023 to USD 17.24 billion during April-September this fiscal.

Similarly, outbound shipments to China increased to USD 6.91 billion from USD 7.63 billion in the first half of the last fiscal.

In 2023-24, the US was India's largest trading partner, followed by China.

India, Uzbek to ensure quality in pharma

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A delegation from Uzbekistan met officials from India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation and discussed areas of collaboration, including the development of a pharmacovigilance system and reducing adverse effects of pharmaceutical products, officials said on Wednesday.

The delegation led by Alisher Temirov, Director of the Center for Pharmaceutical Products Safety, Uzbekistan had detailed discussions with Ranga Chandrashekar, Joint



Drugs Controller of India's regulatory body for drug control, regarding the quality and safety in the pharma sector,

they added. "Several important issues were discussed during the meeting, including the development of a pharmacovigilance system, reducing the adverse effects of pharmaceutical products, and identifying ways to prevent potential risks. It was emphasised that strengthening international cooperation in this area is crucial for ensuring public health," an official statement said.

Temirov stressed the importance of developing effective mechanisms to prevent the

entry of low-quality and counterfeit drugs into Uzbekistan's pharmaceutical market.

"He emphasized the need for specific measures and close cooperation in verifying the authenticity of regulatory documents.

The Indian officials expressed readiness to further improve internal control mechanisms and enhance cooperation with the Center to prevent the entry of pharmaceutical products that have not passed quality control into the Uzbek market," the statement added.

BharatPe Group narrows losses

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BharatPe Group on Wednesday said it has narrowed its consolidated losses before tax by about 50 per cent to Rs 474 crore in 2023-24. It had reported losses of Rs 941 crore in FY23, according to a company statement. The

firm's consolidated revenue from operations rose by 39 per cent to Rs 1,426 crore in FY24 compared to Rs 1,029 crore in the previous financial year. "FY24 was a milestone year for us as BharatPe turned EBITDA positive in October 2024. Also, we considerably slashed our cash burn in

FY24 and are on track to build a sustainable and profitable business. Over the last year, we have been able to partner with renowned financial institutions to extend credit access to merchants, which is a great validation for our business," BharatPe CEO Nalin Negi said.

ACs in India to consume more power than entire Mexico: IEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will over the next decade add more than 12,000 cars a day, expand built space equivalent to the built space in South Africa, and its air-conditioners will consume more electricity than entire power consumption in Mexico, the IEA said.

It is likely to see a rise in demand for all forms of energy -- from oil and gas to coal, electricity and renewable energy -- through 2035, making it the growth engine for energy demand globally, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its World Energy Outlook 2024.

India, the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation, will see its demand for oil rise by almost 2 million barrels per day by



2035 and become the main source of oil demand growth in the world. According to IEA projections, the country is on track to become the third-largest economy in the world by 2028. It was the world's fifth

largest economy and the fastest growing major economy in 2023, with output increasing by 7.8 per cent.

India overtook China in 2023 to become the most populous country in the world, even as its fertility rate dropped below replacement level.

"The population size and the scale of rising demand from all sectors mean that India is poised to experience more energy demand growth than any other country over the next decade," IEA said.

In stated policies scenario (STEPS), "India is on track to add over 12,000 cars every day to its roads over the period to 2035. Built space is set to increase by over 1 billion square metres annually, which is larger than the total built space in South Africa today," IEA said.

'Operate at full capacity till Dec 31'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The power ministry has asked all thermal plants using imported coal to operate at full capacity for another two and a half months till December 31 to avoid electricity shortage amid rising demand in the country.

Earlier this year, the ministry invoked Section 11 of the Electricity Act to mandate imported coal-based plants to run at full capacity. "In view of the power demand scenario in the country, it has been decided to extend the time period for the Section 11 directive to generating companies having Imported Coal Based (ICB) plants till 31.12.2024," the Ministry of Coal said.

Musk thanks Scindia for not agreeing with Ambani, Mittal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tech billionaire Elon Musk thanked Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia for not agreeing with Indian tycoons Mukesh Ambani and Sunil Bharti Mittal on auctioning spectrum for satellite services, saying he is looking forward to serving Indians.

Reacting to Scindia's statement that satellite spectrum will not be auctioned, Musk, in a post on X, said, "much appreciated! We will do our best to serve the people of India with Starlink".

Elon Musk and Indian tycoons Ambani and Mittal are locked in a standoff over satellite spectrum and nuances of its allocation.

Jio recently sought a revision of a consultation paper on recommending norms for "terms and conditions for the assignment of spectrum for certain satellite-based commercial Communications services".

"We have received a reference from the Telecom Department and we have initiated a consul-

tation process in response to the reference that has been received from DoT, and it covers issues that have been referred to Trai by the DoT...the consultation process is on, we will consider all inputs and views that are received during the consultation process and we will come out with our considered recommendations," Trai Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti told reporters on the sidelines of IMC on Tuesday.

Asked about the demand by Reliance Jio that the Trai consultation paper be revised to ensure a level playing field between terrestrial and satellite players, the Trai chairman said, "Different stakeholders raise different demands on the consultation process, and we consider all these viewpoints and inputs and take a considered view". The world's richest man Musk has taken on Indian billionaires Ambani and Mittal over the allocation of spectrum used in wireless communication using satellites, calling their demand for the auction of such airwaves "unprecedented".

'Awareness about retirement planning rising'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Awareness about retirement planning has been rising in urban India with growing number of people feeling the need to start planning for their post-work life early, a report said.

As much as 44 Indians consider the right age to start planning for retirement is before 35 years, as per the India Retirement Index Study (IRIS) released by Max Life Insurance.

Encouragingly, 63 per cent respondents have already begun investing for retirement, leading to reduced concerns about meeting both basic and luxury needs, as well as securing their children's futures, it said.

A notable 68 per cent of



urban Indian working women have begun investing for retirement, it said.

The study also highlights regional opportunities in retirement planning across India, with the east zone lead-

ing in overall preparedness, the west zone showing financial and health progress but needing emotional focus, and the north and south zones improving in health preparedness index, it said.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 NIT No. 16ER-36/SD2/GHMC/2024-25, Dt: 16-10-2024 published on 'E' procurement platform. The details can be seen by logging @ <https://tender.eprocurement.gov.in>. The date of events is detailed below: Name of the Work: 1. CC Road Work-1 work, 2. VDC Road & Paving, 3. Repairs to Compound Wall of GHMC Nursery-1 work, 4. Construction of new toilet room-1 work, 5. Construction of ramps, installation of subsoil de-watering pumps-1 Work, 6. Demolition of Existing damaged Urinal Bricks and Construction of new urinals blocks-1 Work, 7. Construction of First Floor to Existing Community Hall-1 Work, 8. Construction of Stone rooves- 1 work, 9. Cutting and clearing of Tree, Bushes, Jungle Waste and leveling the Ground at Hindu Graveyard-1 Work, 10. Making arrangements for chhath puja 2024 - 2 works. Estimate Amount: Rs. 134.78 lakhs. Bid Document Download Start Date & Time: 17-10-2024 10.30 AM. Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 25-10-2024 10.30 AM. Name & Address of officer: Cell No.: EE, Circle- 30, GHMC, Secbad, Cell Nos.: 9649903953 | 9649606750. Address of the officer concerned: Sri. Sudarshan, Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, Sec-bad Zone, GHMC. Further details can be seen at e-Procurement <https://tender.telangana.gov.in> Sd/- Executive Engineer, Circle-30, Begumpet, GHMC, Dt: 16-10-2024

Kalari-fying Hyderabad streets!

PNS| HYDERABAD

In a world increasingly captivated by flashy combat sports and fitness trends, an ancient martial art form is quietly gaining ground in the heart of Hyderabad—thanks to a passionate instructor, Hari Krish, who has dedicated his life to reviving Kalaripayattu, often referred to as the mother of all martial arts.

When asked about his journey into the world of Kalari, the ancient Indian martial art, the practitioner smiled and said, "It all started with Taekwondo." His story is not uncommon for martial artists who begin their journey in one discipline and eventually find their true calling in another. For him, it was an unexpected encounter that changed everything.

In the eighth grade, he embarked on a nine-year-long Taekwondo journey. However, curiosity led him to explore something more—a deeper connection with traditional weaponry. It was during a casual visit to buy some items when fate introduced him to Kalari. "I saw a training group practicing nearby and it piqued my interest. I didn't know much about it back then, but when I saw the weapons, I knew this was something I had to learn."

This discovery led him to Ayodhanak Kalari, a renowned Kalari school under the guidance of his guru. He began training under experienced gurus who guided him through the rigorous curriculum. "I started with basic training and continued through the lockdown, attending online classes. I even advanced to training with metal weapons, which involves camps every few months," he explained. But why bring Kalari to Hyderabad? "Initially, I was content with my own training. But as I delved deeper, I realised how intertwined Kalari is with our traditions. When I spoke to my friends



In the heart of Hyderabad, Hari Krish is bringing to life the forgotten art of Kalaripayattu, a martial art form born in India over 2,000 years ago. With every swift movement and precise strike, he discusses with The Pioneer about not only mastering a timeless discipline but also uncovering a piece of their cultural heritage

Kalari in empowering women, especially in a time of rising violence, he emphasised its importance. "Kalari is structured in four stages. By the time someone reaches the fourth level, they are proficient in barehanded defense techniques, both against armed and unarmed attackers. The confidence and awareness that comes with Kalari training can be transformative for women."

Interestingly, Kalari is not just for men. "Yes, we have several female students. The ratio is growing and we're seeing more and more women taking an interest in this martial art," he shared.

Although his students haven't yet participated in national championships, he has ambitious plans for them. "The championship syllabus comes after about two years of training. But Kalari has recently been recognised as an official sport, so there's a growing platform for national and even international competitions."

Looking forward, his vision for Kalari in Hyderabad is expansive. "With the support of my gurus, we aim to open more branches while maintaining the highest standards. We're also preparing students for upcoming championships and organising demonstrations to raise awareness. We've even trained a few actors in Kalari. We believe in reaching as many people as possible."

His ultimate goal is to see Kalari gain international recognition. "We want to take this martial art to a global stage. Kalari has so much to offer, not just as a martial art but as a cultural heritage. And we are committed to keeping that tradition alive."

As our conversation wrapped up, it was clear that his journey wasn't just about mastering Kalari—it was about reviving and sharing ancient art, one student at a time, and creating a lasting legacy in Hyderabad.

about it, most had never even heard of it. That was the spark. Kalari, the mother of all martial arts, was practically unknown in Telangana."

This lack of awareness, combined with his passion for the art, drove him to establish Kalari training in Hyderabad. "I wanted to reach as many people as possible and ensure they knew about Kalari's rich history and relevance."

Starting out was far from easy. "I

remember the first six months were tough. I'd sometimes have only two or three students, and on some days, none at all." But he never gave up. He used the time to practice alone, honing his skills. Slowly, things began to change. The real turning point came when he shifted to Hyderabad's high-tech city and started holding classes in public parks, which attracted more attention. With time, his academy grew. "Initially,

we were training outdoors, but recently we've set up a more traditional space, complete with a Kalari dias. It's still on the second floor, but in the future, I plan to create a more authentic setup like the ones in Kerala, where the ground itself becomes part of the practice."

One of his key motivations is preserving and spreading the tradition. "Our gurus always emphasised the importance of passing down the knowledge to

the next generation. That's when I decided that I needed to open a Kalari center in Hyderabad."

Kalari's influence has been steadily growing over the past few years, thanks to social media and support from prominent actors. "Even now, I get calls from people across the city, some of whom are willing to travel long distances just to train."

When asked about the potential of

Where visuals meet vital narratives



With a passion for storytelling and an eye for detail, Vandana Kataria has emerged as a leading light in Indian cinema. In an exclusive interaction with The Pioneer, the visionary director speaks to us about her latest venture Love Sitara, bringing a unique voice to her work and more

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In an industry where the spotlight is often coveted, Vandana Kataria shines brightly, not as a star on the screen but as the visionary behind it. Having carved her name as one of India's finest production designers, her creative fingerprints are all over films like *Oye Lucky! Lucky Oye!*, *Shanghai*, and *Detective Byomkesh Bakshi!* But Vandana is more than just the magic behind the sets; she's a filmmaker whose directorial debut, *Nobleman*, left critics and audiences both stirred and spellbound.

If Shakespeare himself could applaud from the afterlife, he'd have been clapping for *Nobleman*, a dark twist on *The Merchant of Venice* set in a boys' boarding school, an unexpected adaptation that added yet another feather to Vandana's cap. "Making films was always my dream," she reflects. "I studied film and visual communication at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad from 1994 to 1999. Becoming a filmmaker has always been my goal; I just chose to carve my path through production design instead of the traditional assistant director route."

Now, *Love Sitara*, backed by the renowned Ronnie Screwvals RSVP, is a film that promises to deliver her signature blend of depth, drama and visual storytelling.

For years, she has been a master of crafting worlds, meticulously designing spaces that not only look beautiful but serve as rich, visual backdrops to the human stories unfolding within them. It was a natural evolution from these artistic roots to her work as a director, though the journey was far from linear.

"I've been a production designer on three feature films and worked in the

industry since 2005," she shares, modestly glossing over her critically acclaimed resume. "I even served as the second unit director on *Gully Boy!*"

But directing *Nobleman* in 2017-18 marked a turning point. The transition from crafting the visual to leading the narrative gave her a platform to explore stories closest to her heart. "The inspiration often comes from a personal place. If something's troubling me, I use the writing process as a kind of exorcism," Vandana reveals. "Sometimes, it's about exploring a subject that piques my interest—whether in my own life or something striking I've read." Her upcoming film *Love Sitara* is a poignant reflection of this philosophy. The story, told through the eyes of Sitara, examines the complex dynamics within a matriarchal household, a world she dove into after immersing herself in a Hindu matriarchal family. "I wanted to explore the complexities of relationships within this setting. It was so different from my own patriarchal Malu Christian home," she says with a laugh.

The title *Love Sitara* holds special meaning for her. "The original working title was just a placeholder," she admits, smiling. "But as the story evolved, I wanted the title to resonate deeply with the narrative. It felt like a letter she's writing to all of us—intimate, personal, yet universal."

She believes that it's in the personal details where a story finds its universality. "The more specific and detailed a narrative is, the more universal it becomes. Writing something intended to be universal is tricky," she reflects. "You have to write from a personal place. Even if you're telling a story about a bank heist, you bring in your perspective."

For her, filmmaking is an ongoing



dance between inspiration and execution, where the initial spark of creativity is continuously reshaped. "Once the script is complete, it's still evolving," she shares. "I find myself rewriting scenes in the editing room, reshaping the entire structure if needed."

Directing *Love Sitara* presented more than just creative challenges. "One of the biggest hurdles was getting the cast's schedules to align with our shooting timeline," she recalls. Shot over 34 to 36 days, the film faced its share of logistical headaches, made even trickier by the COVID-19 pandemic. "We kept that under wraps for a while," she adds, not wanting the film to feel "old and stale" before its release. But scheduling wasn't her only challenge. The film's song sequences—a new frontier for her—required her to embrace the complexities of choreography, something she had never done before. "It was exciting but daunting," she admits. And then there was the balancing act of managing an ensemble cast. "When you have seven or eight characters to manage, it can feel like trying to juggle flaming swords!" she laughs.

Yet, despite the challenges, her meticulous approach to filmmaking

shines through. Every visual, from the lighting to the colors on the walls, was carefully considered. "In fiction filmmaking, nothing is arbitrary. Every element is designed to immerse the audience in the story."

The location, too, was a key part of the film's storytelling. After an exhaustive search, they found the perfect house for filming—a traditional Malu Tharavad that perfectly reflected the characters' cultural nuances. "We chose to shoot in Kerala during November and December, when the rains had washed away the dusty greens, leaving vibrant colors for the camera to capture," she shares.

As one of the few female directors in Indian cinema, she recognizes the importance of her perspective. "As a woman, I bring a unique voice to my work. My storytelling would be very different if I were a man," she notes. And this voice is more than just her gender—it's her lived experience. "Your socioeconomic, psychological, and cultural background influences your art. If I'm insecure, that will show in my work. If I'm confident, that boldness will come through."

Her passion for telling women's stories continues with her future projects. "All my films center around female protagonists. I believe I can write women more authentically than men," she explains. "My upcoming scripts also feature strong female leads, like a horror story I'm developing with a female protagonist."

Her dedication to elevating women's voices goes beyond her own work. "The industry needs authentic stories from women. Your perspective is invaluable," she advises aspiring female directors. "Stay true to yourself and don't be afraid to take up space." With *Love Sitara*, she hopes to spark conversations, especially among women. "I'm hoping it resonates with women in their 30s to 60s. My dream is for this film to serve as a catalyst for dialogue—between mothers and daughters, sisters—about the complexities of their relationships."

Though *Love Sitara* has garnered mixed reviews, she remains unfazed, even embracing the polarized reactions. "It's encouraging to see older men offering warm reviews. But the critics and journalists have embraced it more than the general audience, which is something I expected."

As she reflects on the journey of *Love Sitara*, she is already looking ahead to her next projects, a family thriller and a sci-fi horror script. "Each project offers a different avenue to engage with audiences," she says excitedly.

For her, every film is a new adventure, a new challenge. But one thing is certain: whether she's crafting sets or calling the shots, Vandana Kataria is a force to be reckoned with in the world of Indian cinema.

Smart credit card strategies for secure financial future

Over the last few years, credit cards have wormed into our lives to become a mainstay of personal finance. Cards have become an indispensable financial tool that one relies on as the safety net. We often use credit cards to tide over unplanned, unexpected expenses or expenses that we would like to postpone payments on. Credit cards can be a double-edged sword—an asset when used wisely but a liability when mismanaged. Therefore, it's crucial for consumers to understand how to use them effectively and responsibly. If not managed carefully, they also come with the risk of high-interest debt.

ADVICE TO THOSE CONSIDERING GETTING A CREDIT CARD OR LOOKING TO IMPROVE HOW THEY MANAGE THEIR CURRENT CARDS:

1. SET CLEAR SPENDING LIMITS

Swiping your card is easy, but the consequences will always come around 30 days later. Responsible credit card use starts with self-discipline. Even before applying for a card, set strict spending limits for yourself. This is not just a suggestion, but a powerful tool that puts you in control of your finances. Ideally, the limit should be well within what you can afford to pay off in full each month—a sound strategy to avoid the stress of mounting debt. Always ensure that your spending remains in line with your budget. Setting personal spending limits well below your actual credit limit can also help you stay on track.

2. PAY OFF BALANCES IN FULL

One of the most important habits to cultivate is paying your credit card bill in full each month. An approach that prevents interest from piling up and contributes positively to your credit score. Credit cards should never be treated as long-term loans; instead, they should be a tool for managing short-term expenses. By consistently paying off your balance, you'll keep your financial health intact and avoid the costly mistake of carrying a balance that can quickly grow due to high interest rates.

3. KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON YOUR SPENDING

With digital banking, monitoring your spending in real time is easier than ever. Review your credit card statements regularly and track your transactions. This practice delivers two-pronged benefits: one helps in the timely identification of unauthorised charges that you can dispute, and the second gives you a clear picture of your spending habits. Using financial management apps can further simplify this process, providing alerts and insights that help you stay in control of your finances.

4. UNDERSTAND YOUR INTEREST RATES

Understanding the terms, particularly the Annual Percentage Rate (APR), is a critical step in applying for a credit card. This rate determines how much interest you'll pay if you carry over the outstanding balance to the next month. Choose a card with a lower APR, as it can save you money in the long run but remember that the best strategy is to avoid paying interest altogether by settling your balance in full each month.

5. STEER CLEAR OF CASH ADVANCES

While it might be tempting to use your credit card for a cash advance in a pinch, this option should be avoided or kept as a last resort. Cash advances often come with high fees and start accruing interest immediately, making them an expensive way to access funds. It's important to note that cash advances are different from regular purchases, and they usually have higher fees and interest rates. If you find yourself in need of cash, consider other alternatives, such as a personal loan, which is typically available at lower interest rates and more favorable repayment terms.

6. USE REWARDS WISELY

Most credit cards offer rewards programs that can be highly

beneficial when used correctly. However, it's important not to let the pursuit of rewards tempt you into unnecessary

spending. Instead, focus on using your credit card for regular, planned purchases that you can easily pay off.

This way, you can enjoy the rewards without falling into the trap of overspending, feeling savvy and strategic in your financial decisions.

7. SET UP PAYMENT REMINDERS

Missing payments can result in significant fees and harm your credit score, so it's essential to keep track of your payment due dates. To stay on schedule and avoid missed payments, set up automatic payments or reminders. Staying organised with calendar reminders or financial tools can prevent the stress and financial consequences of missed payments.

8. LIMIT NUMBER OF CREDIT CARDS YOU HOLD

While opening multiple credit cards for the advantage of their various rewards programs might be tempting, managing multiple accounts can quickly become overwhelming. Keeping the number of credit cards you hold to a minimum simplifies your financial life and reduces the temptation to overspend. It's easier to track your spending, manage payments, and monitor your financial health when you have fewer accounts to juggle.

9. MONITOR YOUR CREDIT UTILISATION

Your credit utilization ratio—the percentage of your available credit that you're using—is a key factor in your credit score. It's important to keep this ratio below 30% to maintain a healthy credit score. Regularly checking this ratio and adjusting your spending habits to stay within a safe range is a good practice. A healthy credit score requires utilization below 30%. Check this ratio regularly and adjust your spending habits to stay within a safe range.

10. USE CREDIT FOR EMERGENCIES ONLY

Credit cards can be a lifeline in emergencies, such as unexpected medical expenses or car repairs. However, it's important not to rely on them as your only source of emergency funds. Building an emergency fund is crucial to cover unexpected expenses and avoid high-interest credit card debt. When you do use your credit card for an emergency, have a repayment plan in place to pay off the balance as quickly as possible.

11. STAY INFORMED ABOUT YOUR CARD'S TERMS

Credit card terms can change, so it's important to stay informed. Ensure you understand the fees, interest rates, and rewards program details associated with your card. Keeping up with any changes ensures you're not caught off guard by unexpected costs, making you feel knowledgeable and prepared for your financial decisions.

what's brewing?

HilLife Brides Exhibition, Hyderabad's most awaited bridal showcase, is set to take place on 22, 23, and 24 October 2024 at HICC, Novotel, Hitech City. The event will bring together top models, fashion enthusiasts, and brides-to-be, featuring a stunning collection of wedding jewelry, bridal dresses, festive wear, and lifestyle products from India's leading designers and labels, all under one roof, just in time for the wedding season.

Urimila, Bindu, Priya, Vrinda, Katayani, Vandana

PARTY

From October 16 to 20, 2024, Sri Potti Sreeramulu University in Hyderabad will host the **New Beginnings** art exhibition, featuring a diverse collection of 64 artworks created by 16 final-year students. This exhibition celebrates their artistic journeys and marks the culmination of their studies, providing a platform for these emerging talents to showcase their creativity and connect with the community. Join them in supporting these young artists and experiencing their remarkable expressions of art.

Photos by - SV Chary

TELETASK, unveiled its India office and product experience center at Road No.2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad

Antar-Agni, after a tremendous response in New Delhi at the Lakmé Fashion Week in partnership with FDCI with their festive collection at Gaurang's in Hyderabad. Unveiled in a trinity of interconnected segments - Render, Wander and Surrender that represented facets of human experience, the looks were varied in treatment.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBS

GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

NANCY

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5
6		7		8
9	10	11		
12		13	14	
16	17		18	
		19		

GINGER MEGGS

SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

ACROSS

- Squirmed about
- Tidy
- The cold ocean at the North Pole
- Perhaps
- A gloved fighter
- Permitted by law
- The remains of a fire
- Become smaller
- A fruit with a stone
- Always ready to give or share

DOWN

- Dutch buildings with spinning blades attached
- Country with capital Rome
- Jump over
- Health professionals
- 7 in Roman numerals
- An annual festival for Christians
- Burning strongly and flaming brightly
- A greeting
- The body's covering
- Cured meat from a pig

SOLUTION

S	R	O	S	S
D	O	N	A	D
U	G	M	L	R
A	R	R	O	N
U	R	R	O	N
G	O	O	M	N
H	E	D	E	E
T	E	A	R	T
R	E	A	T	I
R	E	C	O	V
S	H	E	E	G

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.

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Rajinikanth starrer *Vettaiyan* director TJ Gnanavel talks about his experience with the Superstar and the inspiration for his film, upcoming project and more

I WANT TO MAKE PREQUEL OF VETTAIYAN: DIRECTOR TJ GNANAVEL

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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Rajinikanth's latest film *Vettaiyan*, directed by the critically acclaimed TJ Gnanavel, is poised for blockbuster success. Gnanavel's previous film, "Jai Bhim," garnered widespread acclaim for its socially relevant narrative inspired by real events and premiered directly on OTT platforms. "If you speak to people in your surroundings and look at society, you will get a number of stories. I do the same. I would like to tell these stories only," said TJ Gnanavel.

Coming to the story of his latest project, is it taken from a fake encounter that happened in Chennai? "It's not one particular encounter; I have taken so many of these incidents and inspirations. I would not only want to talk about these encounters but also educate people with my stories," he said.

About the education part also, he said that he doesn't want to name any particular one. "In Chennai only there are many coaching centers, and many students are suffering," he said. Talking about how he met Rajinikanth for this film, it was Rajinikanth's daughter Soundarya, who had called Gnanavel.

"Soundarya Rajinikanth called me and asked me a story for Rajinikanth, sir. When I met him, I told him that I can come up with story-driven films and can't do a typical commercial film like *Jailer* or *Coolie*. Then Rajini sir replies, 'If I want to do a commercial film, I can call directors Nelson or Lokesh Kanagaraj, so I want to do a serious film with you,'" said Gnanavel. It was then that he wrote *Vettaiyan* and later narrated it to him.

Gnanavel said that if you look at Thalaiva's career, he has done many story-driven films in the 80s and 90s. "Since the last decade onwards, his films changed a bit, with most of his characters shown in a slow-motion kind of scene with more commercial value. He knows how I am going to show him, and after his



assurance, I have the clarity," she said about the film. Meanwhile, talking about Fahadh Faasil's character, he revealed not having anyone else in his mind but Faasil. "When I wrote the script, I had Fahadh only in my mind, and he was my first choice," said Gnanavel. He revealed it was the same for Rana Daggubati's character too.

TJ Gnanavel always goes with a bound script for the shoot. "After I wrote my complete script, it is then that I go for the star cast," he said. Sathyadev had no choice except for Amitabh Bachchan.

"I never feel pressure, but I want to satisfy his fans too, so I have shown his character that completely matches Rajinikanth's aura and style," said Gnanavel.

The film was released in Telugu with the title in Tamil, and the director says that for him, the content is important and not the title. "If you look at some of the Telugu and Hindi films, they are released with the same title everywhere. For example, *Devvara* was released with the same title in Tamil, but there is no meaning in Tamil; even *Dangal* and *Jawan* were released with the same titles. I believe in content, not in the title," said the director.

He is now enjoying the success of this film. "I am not thinking about my next project; I want to enjoy the success of this film till Diwali," he said. He added that he always wanted to tell stories based around society. "If you are meeting and talking with people and watching your surroundings and society, you will definitely get stories. I want to tell our stories, Indian stories; I don't want to remake or take from any other film. I want to inspire society with my stories," he said, and he wanted to continue the same in the near future for all his films.

When asked about, is there any sequel to this film? "I want to do a prequel to this one. Because I didn't show much background about Fahadh Faasil, like how he became a thief and what did he do? Same like Rajinikanth's character too. How he became popular as an encounter specialist and what is his background? So, there is a chance to do a prequel to do this *Vettaiyan*," said Gnanavel.

So many Telugu production houses also approached Gnanavel for making films. "Yes, I am getting calls from Telugu production houses and letting them know if I have a story that they want to produce," said the director.

Music should not overpower lyrics: Sekhar Chandra

Sekhar Chandra is one of the busiest music directors, with many small filmmakers seeking his expertise. Several of his songs have become popular on YouTube, amassing millions of views, and now he is providing the music for the upcoming film *Pottel*. "The film has a completely rural backdrop, and when director Sahith narrated the story to me, I got emotional. It tells the story of how some parents struggle to educate their children," said Sekhar Chandra. He added that composing music for a film like this is a challenge.

"Previously, I worked on a film called *Amabijpeta Marriage Band* with a rural setting, but this project is entirely different. There are many natural scenes, so it took time to adapt to that organic process. I took on this film as a challenge because the story of *Pottel* is very emotional, and I had to create music that would elevate those scenes," he explained.

These days, many songs tend to overshadow the lyrics, making it difficult to catch the words even after listening multiple times. However, Sekhar Chandra emphasized that he always prioritizes lyrics. "Many lyricists have shared their appreciation, saying they are happy to hear their lyrics clearly in my compositions. I never

want the music to overshadow the lyrics, so I compose with a focus on highlighting the words," he said.

Another challenge in this film is the richness of its content. "Kasarla Syam has penned the lyrics, and they carry a lot of depth. One particular song is filled with emotions and meaning, so I had to tailor the music accordingly and even did re-recordings to match those emotions," shared Sekhar Chandra.

The songs from *Pottel* have already gained popularity online. The music director also mentioned his commitment to staying updated in the industry. "I watch both mainstream and world cinema, listen to various songs, and keep an eye on new trends in music," he said.

Sekhar Chandra is the son of renowned cinematographer Hari Anumolu, making his entry into the music world unexpected. "Even I didn't see this coming, as I always felt a certain energy pulling me towards music. My father was surprised when I chose this path, saying it was not our domain. But with God's grace, I've found success and continue to thrive in this field," said Sekhar Chandra. He studied music extensively, earning grades in piano, and took classes in Carnatic classical vocals and violin. "Once I felt ready, I stepped into the music world," he added.



First look of Prithviraj Sukumaran in *L2*: *Empuraan* unveiled



The Malayalam film *Lucifer* was a massive hit in 2019 and was also successfully remade and dubbed into Telugu. With Mohanlal in the lead, the film featured Prithviraj Sukumaran, Tovino Thomas, and others in pivotal roles. Now, a sequel is underway, directed by Prithviraj Sukumaran himself, with Lyca Productions backing this high-budget project. The sequel continues the story with Mohanlal reprising his lead role. After Mohanlal's look was released earlier on his birthday, which received a great response, the first look of Prithviraj's character, Zayed Masood, was recently revealed on his birthday. He plays the trusted right-hand man of Qureshi Abram.

Most of the original cast, including Tovino Thomas, Manju Warrier, Nandu, and Saniya Iyappan, return for the sequel. The film is being shot in multiple locations like Chennai, Kottayam, the US, and the UK, with the current schedule in Thiruvananthapuram and upcoming shoots in Gujarat and the UAE. *L2: Empuraan* is set for a 2025 release across multiple languages.

BALAKRISHNA AND BOYAPATI'S AKHANDA 2 LAUNCHED

Nandamuri Balakrishna and director Boyapati Srinivas combination has been a superior duo. Both had earlier delivered films like *Simha*, *Legend*, and *Akhanda*. Now, they have joined hands together for their fourth film.

The film was officially launched on Wednesday at a private studio. The title of this film is *Akhanda 2* and the tagline is *Thanadavam*. Balakrishna's elder daughter gave the clap to this film at the launch, and his younger daughter also joined in the production of this film.

The interesting part about this film is that Miriyala Ravinder Reddy produced *Akhanda*, but the sequel to this film is produced by Raam Achanta and Gopi Achanta. Thaman, who provided music for *Akhanda*, is providing the same for *Akhanda 2* also. Balakrishna rendered a lengthy dialogue in his style at the muhurat launch, which is now going viral on social media and the internet.



VIJAY ANTONY'S NEXT VENTURE IS A GRIPPING MURDER MYSTERY

Tamil actor Vijay Antony, well-known in Telugu cinema, is taking on a new challenge with his upcoming project, a gripping murder mystery-crime thriller that dives deep into the world of detective fiction. The film is titled *Gagana Maargan*, which translates to "one who travels through air" in the Siddhar dictionary, hinting at the film's unique storyline. The first look poster has also been released.

Leo John Paul, a renowned editor known for his work on many successful films, is making his directorial debut with *Gagana Maargan*. He previously won the Tamil Nadu State Film Award for Best Editor for *Idharkuthane Aasaipattai Balakumara* in 2013. The film features a talented cast including Samuthirakani, Mahanadhi Shankar, Prithika, Brigida, and Anthagaram Natarajan. Vijay Antony himself is composing the music for the film. Notably, the project includes underwater sequences shot in Mumbai and impressive visual effects. The film is produced by Vijay Antony's own production house, Vijay Antony Film Corporation.



Massive set for Sharwanand, Sampath Nandi

Film Actor Sharwanand is occupied with multiple projects, and one of his upcoming films is directed by Sampath Nandi. The film is tentatively titled *Sharwa38*, with KK Radhamohan as the producer. It is a gripping period action drama set in the rural backdrop of North Telangana, along the Telangana-Maharashtra border, during the late 1960s. The story unfolds in a world ruled by fear, where bloodshed resolves many conflicts.

The makers commenced the set work after a traditional Bhoomi Pooja. A massive, meticulously crafted set designed by Art Director Kiran Kumar Manne is being built on a sprawling 15-acre area on the outskirts of Hyderabad.

The team is investing significantly in the set to authentically capture and recreate the look, feel, world, and culture of the North Telangana-Maharashtra border during the 1960s.

This extensive set will embody the essence of the heartland, with intricate details and nuances of the bygone era, bringing this gripping period action drama to life and transporting viewers back to a pivotal yet unexplored time in history. Key sequences will be filmed on this remarkable set. Sharwanand is taking on a role unlike any he has played before, undergoing a complete transformation for this film. The makers plan to release the film in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and Hindi.



AUSTRALIA START OVERWHELMING FAVOURITES AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA

PTI ■ DUBAI

Australia will start as overwhelming favourites in their quest for an unprecedented eighth final appearance when they take on South Africa in the semi-final of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup here on Thursday. Australia have now made it to the semi-finals of the global T20 tournament in all its nine editions held so far since 2009 in England. The six-time champions take on the Proteas women in a last-four clash in what seems to be a repeat of the summit showdown during the 2023 edition in South Africa, which the Southern Stars won by 19 runs. Going by pure statistic, South Africa are no match for Australia who have won nine out of the 10 WT20I games, with the former's only win coming in January this year. The head-to-head record at



Women's T20 World Cup is even more intimidating as Australia have won all the

seven encounters. The best part about the current Australian team is the core

which has remained intact for years now with only Meg Lanning retiring from

international cricket. All the 10 others, who played in the 2023 final are here with the likes of Alyssa Healy, Beth Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Megan Schutt, Ashleigh Gardner being the pillars of the team. On a slow Dubai track, the depth in batting has been Australia's biggest strength, with Phoebe Litchfield and Annabel Sutherland capable of muscling the balls to the fence. For South Africa, one of their biggest assets has been slow left-arm orthodox Nonkululeko Mlaba, who has so far taken 10 wickets in four group league games. Skipper Laura Wolvaardt, her opening partner Tazmin Brits and the seasoned Marizanne Kapp are all match-winners in their own rights but they have always come up short against Healy and company. Hopefully, the Proteas women would be eighth time lucky against familiar foes in their bid to win the maiden global T20 trophy.



Day 1 of first Test between India and NZ called off due to rain

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Unrelenting rain wiped out play on day one of the opening Test between India and New Zealand here on Wednesday. The play was called off at 2.34 PM as heavy rain lashed the M Chinnaswamy Stadium after relenting for about half an hour earlier. The match officials came out to inspect the pitch around 2 PM after outfield and first layer of covers were removed around 1.50 PM. But there were large damp

areas on either side of the pitch as hessians were brought out in a last-ditch attempt to get some game time. However, it was a futile effort as extensive damage was already done by rains of varying intensity from early morning. Earlier, even the toss, which was scheduled at 9 AM, could not take place as rain came down relentlessly over the city from morning. There was a smattering of spectators at the stadium despite the inclement weather. But the only moment of

excitement for them was the sighting of star batter Virat Kohli and opener Yashasvi Jaiswal, who went for an indoor net session along with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar. They might have to wait further for action even on the second day as the current forecast is for more rain on Thursday at least till noon. It may be recalled that even the training sessions of both teams were washed away by heavy downpour on Tuesday. Play on day two is scheduled at 9.15 am and toss at 8.45 am.



When Rohit Sharma explained "significance of Gabba" to young Pant

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

For some time, Rishabh Pant couldn't understand why fans had gone hysterical after his unbeaten 89 against Australia at the Gabba in 2021 until Rohit Sharma stepped in to tell him that his knock was not just another match-winning effort in an epic Test. A second string India, without its then regular skipper Virat Kohli, senior player KL Rahul and three main bowlers, had beaten Australia by three wickets at a venue which was considered a fortress for the home team which hadn't lost a single game there since 1989. It was a chase of 328, and Pant's counter-attacking knock was not just a match-defining one. It was to find a place among the greatest innings by an Indian in adverse overseas conditions. "Sometimes, there are performances that you remember for a lifetime, and one of them for me is the Gabba Test," the 27-year-old told Star Sports' 'Star Nahi Far' event. Initially, it was just satisfaction of winning a tough Test for India but as time went by, Pant understood the magnitude of his achievement, something that Rohit had told him about. "At the time, I didn't realise how significant it was. Rohit bhai was there, and he told me, 'You have no idea what you've done.' I was like, 'What have I done?' My aim was just to win the match." Rohit bhai said, "Later, you'll understand what you've done," he recalled. "Now, whenever I hear people

talking about that Gabba match, I understand what he meant and how important it was," the Delhi player said. No greater feeling than beating Australia Pant has commanded the cricketing world's awe and respect for coming back after recovering from a life-threatening car accident in 2022. This was after he made a name for himself Down Under for being a significant contributor to India's back-to-back Test series wins. His career-best 159 came in Sydney during the 2018-19 series. In the 2021 series, he scored 97 in Sydney and an epic 89 not out in Brisbane to earn respect and adulation from both the fans and the opposition team. "When you go to Australia, you have to work more on handling the bounce and short balls because the wickets are different there, and the atmosphere is different," he explained. "They don't want you to win, which makes it more fun. There's no greater feeling than going to Australia and beating them in their home." What impresses Pant about Australia is their strategy to always hunt in a pack and the gutsy keeper-batter is a firm believer in counter-punching. "In general, Australia fights as a team. They don't give you anything easy, and they play aggressive cricket. I won't throw the first punch, but if someone throws the first punch at me, I won't hold back. "That's the kind of mentality you need to have when playing against them," he said.

Neetu David becomes second Indian woman to be inducted into ICC Hall of Fame

PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India spinner Neetu David, who still holds the record for the best figures (8/53) by a woman in an individual Test innings, on Wednesday became only the second female cricketer from the country to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame. David, the current chairman of selectors for Indian women's team, enters the ICC Hall of Fame a year after the induction of former captain Diana Edulji. David made more than 100 appearances (10 Tests and 97 ODIs) for India as a prolific left-arm spinner and was inducted alongside South Africa and England legends AB de Villiers and Alastair Cook, joining a long list of great cricketers. The 47-year-old David is the second-highest wicket-taker for India in ODIs cricket with 141 scalps and was also the first female player from the country to claim 100 wickets in the 50-over game. Topping the wicket-taking list at the World Cup in 2005, to inspire her country to their first-ever final, is also among her standout achievements. David said in an ICC release: "It is truly an honour to be inducted into the ICC Hall of Fame, something that I consider to be the highest recognition available to anyone who puts on their national team jersey. "This comes after a lifetime of dedication to this great sport, and it caps a very special journey for me to get to this point. "To be considered a Hall of Famer alongside the greatest players that ever lived is humbling, and I am thrilled to be part of this exclusive club." Following some impressive performances with the ball at domestic cricket for Uttar Pradesh, David won a first international appearance for India as a 17-year-old in a



Test against New Zealand in Nelson in 1995. She impressed with four wickets in that contest and was again selected for the ODI leg of that tour as India claimed the New Zealand Women's Centenary Tournament. In late 1995, David truly rose to prominence as she recorded sensational figures of 8/53 — still the best individual bowling spell in a single innings of a women's Test — against England in Jamshedpur as India fell to a narrow two-run loss. While David excelled at Test cricket with 41 wickets from 10 matches, it was in ODI cricket that she performed best with 141 scalps from 97 matches at a miserly bowling average of 16.34. David retired from international cricket in 2006, only to reverse that decision two years later for a brief return in ODI cricket at the Asia Cup and on India's tour of England. She played her final domestic match in 2013, calling time on an illustrious career by helping Railways to the 2012-13 Senior

Women's T20 League title. Cook represented England over 250 times in international cricket, making his most significant impact in the longest format. He retired from international cricket in 2018 as England's highest Test run-scorer and century-maker, spearheading notable successes both home and away with the bat and as captain. In his 14-year-long career, de Villiers hit over 20,000 international runs across all three formats. De Villiers, fondly known as "Mr 360", excelled in Test and T20I cricket while setting South African records for the fastest fifty, century and 150 in ODI cricket to earn a reputation of being one of the most feared, destructive batters in the history of the game. The ICC Hall of Fame was launched in January 2009 as part of the global governing body's centenary celebrations. The Class of 2024 will be celebrated in a special series of engagements in Dubai this week, coinciding with the conclusion of the Women's T20 World Cup.



Handling pressure will play a big part in Jaiswal's success in Australia: childhood coach

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Yashasvi Jaiswal was oblivious to the cheers of a handful of spectators as he walked across a soaked M Chinnaswamy Stadium turf on Wednesday, chatting intensely with assistant coach Abhishek Nayar. There was no pressing demand for him to spend an hour at indoor nets as rain held up the first day's play of the opening Test between India and New Zealand. After all, he is going through a roseate phase in Test cricket for over a year now. But that deep caring for his craft and a focused mind will come handy when Jaiswal crosses over to Australia next month for the biggest challenge yet in his fledgling career, feels his childhood coach Jwala Singh. "At this level, it is more about how you handle pressure. You can always work on technique, but if you don't have the right attitude and mindset then you will end up as a failure. But fortunately, Yashasvi has a mature head on his shoulder," Jwala told PTI when he was informed about skipper Rohit Sharma's high evaluation of his younger colleague. "It is even more true when you go and play in Australia because they play some hard cricket there and put a lot of pressure on opposition," he added. As someone who saw Jaiswal from a very young age, Jwala feels that the 21-year-old has grown as a batsman since making his debut in 2023 against the West Indies. "I think being around players like Rohit and Virat has helped him a lot. After all, there is nothing like learning from such masters," he said. Since his baptism in international cricket, Jaiswal has made 1217 runs from 11 Tests at an average of 64.05 and has three daddy knocks - 171, 209 and 214. So, what are the changes that he has observed in the left-hander in the last one year or so? "He always has been aggressive as a batsman. Earlier, he had a tendency to attack almost every ball, especially fast bowlers, but now he uses aggression more judiciously. "Yashasvi now has more awareness of his game. He has

better awareness about which ball to attack and which one to let go. Of course, he has also become a very good fielder now, especially in slip region," Jwala noted. The trait was visible in Jaiswal's batting while going through a breakout series against England earlier this year. The way he handled English legend James Anderson was impeccable. At Rajkot, Jaiswal respectfully patted a fuller length delivery from Anderson back to the bowler in the 85th over. But once the pacer erred in length, Jaiswal creamed the Lancastrian's next three balls for sixes — a sweep over square leg, a loft over mid-wicket and straight mousse over the bowler's head. Jaiswal was highly effective against Anderson throughout the series — extracting 98 runs from 150 balls that he faced off the quick and getting out twice. It was not entirely surprising then that he became only the second Indian batter after the legendary Sunil Gavaskar to score over 700 in a series. But then it is always easy to play down that wonderful run citing home advantage, as Australia offers a vastly different challenge. What are the challenges a sub-continent batter will face Down Under? "First thing first, what India did in Australia during their last two visits here has been fantastic. Not many teams have managed that (winning back-to-back series). So, the Aussies will go hard at Indians to overturn it. "I am sure they are going to pepper them with some short stuff and I guess the pitches too could offer some more spice. "In that sense, I think the batters coming here should be well-prepared to play a few more cuts and pulls," former England pacer Alan Mullaly, who is now settled in Perth, told PTI. India skipper Rohit Sharma had little doubt about the skill level and adaptability of Jaiswal. "He has got the game to play in all sorts of conditions. You can bet on him and expect him to do wonders for the team. We've found a great player. "Now, it is just about how he manages himself in the next couple of years," said Rohit.

Cricket Australia says 2025-26 Ashes series will begin in Western Australia

AP ■ SYDNEY

Cricket Australia said on Wednesday that the five-Test Ashes series between Australia and England in 2025-26 will begin in Perth, Western Australia. That first Test is scheduled for November 21-25, 2025 with the second a day-night Test at the Gabba in Brisbane from December 4-8. Adelaide Oval will host the



third Test from December 17-21. The Melbourne Cricket Ground will host its traditional Boxing Day Test beginning December 26, with the Sydney Cricket Ground also maintaining its usual time slot for the January 4-8 fifth and final Test. Australia currently holds the Ashes, having retained them with a draw in the 2023 series in England.

WKL unveils plans for women's Kabaddi in upcoming season

RISHABH MALIK ■ NEW DELHI

Women's Kabaddi League (WKL) on Tuesday announcing updates for the upcoming season. This event marked as a significant step toward establishing women's kabaddi as a national sport and creating a thriving ecosystem for female athletes across India. The league will feature several teams, including the Bengaluru Hawks, Delhi Durgas, Gujarat Angels, Haryana Hustlers, Great Marathas, Rajasthan Raiders, Telugu Warriors, and UP Ganga Strikers. The selection trials for WKL are set to be a major highlight of the upcoming season, as they will open doors for thousands of aspiring female players nationwide. The league aims to identify the most talented athletes who will then be selected for the auction process and logically segmented for the

playing. The WKL's structure follows a round-robin & Home-away format during selection trials, promoting an exciting and competitive atmosphere that is crucial for player development. This format allows teams to face each other multiple times, fostering not just competition but also camaraderie among players. The league seeks to instill a sense of unity and collaboration, essential elements in building a robust sporting community for women. WKL is not just focused on the present; it is actively laying the groundwork for future generations of female athletes. By emphasizing inclusivity and providing resources for training, mentorship, and exposure, the league is cultivating an environment where young women can thrive in sports. WKL's initiatives will include



workshops, coaching clinics, and partnerships with schools to inspire and engage the next generation of kabaddi players. HARSHIT MANAV, COO, WKL expressed his excitement for the future of women's kabaddi, stating, "We are committed to creating a strong platform for women athletes, ensuring they receive the recognition and respect they deserve. This is about building a legacy—a national game for women that encourages participation at all levels." As WKL prepares for the upcoming season, the anticipation builds not only for the matches but also for the numerous initiatives aimed at supporting female athletes. With plans for international participation and more exciting announcements in the pipeline, the WKL is poised to elevate women's kabaddi to new heights.