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HINDUSTAN
ZINC TO DOUBLE PRODUCTION CAPACITY: CEO



QUOTE OF THE DAY
The pioneer

After receiving reliable information, the SOT and Excise officials raided the farmhouse. The officials were conducting routine searches. No event permission was taken from the Excise Department for holding the party at the farmhouse. Officials found that the liquor party was held without permission. Non-duty-paid liquor (foreign liquor) was seized by the SOT and Excise officials. Duty-free bills were not shown for the imported liquor

- Jupally Krishna Rao, Prohibition and Excise Minister

DON'T MISS...

Top cops believe 'Ek Police System' ...

A promise made during BRS regime is the new fight for the Battalion of Telangana State Special Police (TSSP) in Telangana. They demanded 'Ek Police System' like in the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab where Battalion police are transferred into Armed Reserve or Civil Police after a certain period. However, the top cops see 'Ek Police System' not feasible in Telangana. Speaking to The Pioneer they said, "It is a government policy-maker's decision and there was a study conducted on the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab which ...

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15 Gurukul students take ...

Fifteen students of Kasturba Gandhi Gurukula in the district have been admitted to government hospital after they took ill due to suspected food poisoning. Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha visited the students at the government hospital and inquired about their health. The students studying at the Kasturba Gandhi School in Nyalkal Mandal fell ill, leading to their hospitalisation at Sangareddy Government Hospital. Upon learning about the situation, the Minister visited ...

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Regulatory changes to provide...

Regulatory changes like amendment in the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code and standardization of bond wordings would give a fillip to newly introduced product underwritten by general insurance companies, called surety bonds, experts said. This product launched in 2022 is going to play a crucial role in supporting India's infrastructure development and heavily reduce reliance on bank guarantees for project finance. As a result, banks can focus on other productive sectors for lending...

-PAGE: 8

Indian batters were exposed...

Former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull attributed India's shocking series defeat to their batsmen's inadequacies against spin bowling but he was not ready to write off underwhelming star batter Virat Kohli. Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner grabbed 13 wickets as the Kiwis walloped India by 113 runs in the second Test here on Saturday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. "There's a misconception that Indian players are better players of spin. I think they've had better spinners and they've..."

-SPORTS

'MISCONDUCT, INCITEMENT OF AGITATION'

39 TG Spl Police personnel suspended

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

As many as 39 personnel of the Telangana Special Police (TGSP) have been suspended for alleged misconduct and incitement of agitation.

Some TGSP personnel (constables) held agitations inside the Battalion campus in Telangana as well as on the streets of several places, including Hyderabad, and the families of the constables held sporadic protests in the state, demanding uniform policies for all police personnel and better working conditions.

"With a view to upholding discipline and integrity within the Telangana Special Police, the 39 personnel involved in misconduct are placed under suspension for unbecoming of government servants, including incitement of others for agitation among Battalion personnel," a release from Telangana Police said.

The suspended personnel were found to have acted in violation of conduct rules and have engaged in behavior contrary to the one expected from govern-



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ment servants and they allegedly instigated unrest within the Battalion, adversely affecting morale and operational efficiency, it said.

Such actions not only undermine the disciplinary framework but also tarnish the image of the uniformed force dedicated to maintain peace

Continued on Page 5

BRS blames CM for false cases on KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that consuming liquor at home is a Telangana tradition, BRS MLAs said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is engaging in attention-diversion politics.

Quthbullahpur BRS MLA KP Vivekananda criticized Chief Minister Revanth Reddy for starting another drama and said that the CM is trying to implicate KTR in a false case.

Speaking to the media on Sunday, Vivekananda criticized the Congress government and the CM. He said the government is levelling charges as they can't stomach the support KTR is getting from the public.

He said that Revanth's popularity is decreasing and that the CM personally insulted KTR due to envy. "KTR's brother-in-law arranged a party with his family at his house. Revanth is having KTR phobia," he said.

He said the police and excise officials went to Raj Pakala's house and raided the place. Vivekananda said the police harassed the family of Raj Pakala without any search warrant.

Vivekananda said the authorities are now doing what they like. He warned the officials that once the BRS returned to power they would not let them go even if they had retired. He asked why one should not have a party at his own house.

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Cops raid house of KTR's brother-in-law, book case

Foreign liquor seized, drug test conducted

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Special Operations Team, Excise officials and Narsingi Police personnel raided a farmhouse in Janwada belonging to BRS working president KT Rama Rao's brother-in-law Raj Pakala late on Saturday night, acting on a tip-off.

The 30-strong raiding party found 21 men and 14 women at the farmhouse. They seized a substantial quantity of alcohol, seven bottles of foreign liquor and 10 loose bottles of India-made liquor from the farmhouse premises, which was found to be "beyond permissible limits". Casinos chips and playing cards were also recovered.

The men underwent 12-panel drug testing. Vijay Madduri, one of the guests, tested positive for cocaine. He was taken to a hospital for additional blood tests to confirm the finding. A case was registered against him under Sections 25, 27, and 29 of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

Charges under Sections 3 and 4 of the Telangana Gaming Act were also filed against both Madduri and Pakala at the Mokila Police Station.

According to the authorities, the party host, Raj Pakala, did not possess an Excise licence to serve alcohol at the venue. He was booked under Section 34 A and Section 34 (1) and

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Order probe into party: Sanjay

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TG government should order a thorough investigation into the rave party held at BRS Working President KT Rama Rao's brother-in-law Raj Pakala's farmhouse and ensure that evidence like CCTV footage is not destroyed, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar said.

In a video message issued on Sunday, Sanjay asked KTR after terming him 'Suddpusa' (ignorant), to explain what he will say now as rave parties are being held at his brother-in-law's farmhouse.

KTR may reject all charges even if he is caught red-handed while taking drugs. Reports coming out indicate that the government is protecting KTR in this case, he said.

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Foreign liquor seized from Raj Pakala's house: Jupally

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Responding on the Janwada farmhouse rave party issue, Prohibition and Excise, Tourism and Culture Minister Jupally Krishna Rao said that it is common for enforcement officials to conduct searches if someone files a complaint. The law is not anyone's relative, he added.

"After receiving reliable information, the SOT and Excise officials raided the farmhouse. Officials conducted the search as a routine one. No event permission had been taken from the Excise Department to hold celebrations at the farmhouse. Officials found that the liquor party was held without permission. Non-Duty Paid Liquor (foreign liquor) was seized by the SOT and Excise officials. Duty-free bills were not shown for the imported liquor," he said.



Will improve living standards of residents along Musi, says CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said the Congress government will improve the living standards of Musi River catchment area residents. The Chief Minister said the Congress is responsible for developing Hyderabad as per global standards.

The CM was speaking while attending the Sadar Sammelan (festival) at the NTR Stadium in Hyderabad on Sunday.

He said that Yadavs should stand by the development of Hyderabad and that the role of Yadavs in the development of Hyderabad is significant. It is a delightful moment for the state that the Sadar festival is organised in Hyderabad, the CM said.

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As already announced the Sadar Sammelanam is being organised officially by the state government, the CM said and added that it will be organised every year.

"Sadar means Khadar of Yadavs. It must be organised in villages too. The Congress nominated Anil Kumar Yadav as a Rajya Sabha MP to empower the Yadav community politically in Telangana. The

Congress will provide more opportunities to the Yadav community in the coming days," he added.

The CM said that Yadavs nurtured livestock in the city of Hyderabad. The community used to raise cattle fodder on the banks of the Musi. Let us rejuvenate the Musi River which has now become a pile of trash, he said.

Appealing to the Yadav community to support the government in

developing Hyderabad, the CM said that despite the hurdles created by some forces, the Congress has taken up the responsibility for developing Hyderabad as per global standards.

He said that Yadavs should also use the opportunities available. Anjan Kumar Yadav would have been a minister in the cabinet if he had won the election from the Musheerabad Assembly constituency. Although Anjan Kumar Yadav lost the elections the Congress gave an MP post to him, he said.

The CM said that Lord Krishna always stood on the side of righteousness (dharma). That is the reason why evil was defeated and dharma emerged victorious, he said. The CM appealed to the Yadavs to always stand by righteousness.



At least 50 flights receive bomb threats; 2 diverted

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 50 flights operated by Indian airlines received bomb threats and two of them were diverted on Sunday, according to sources.

In 14 days, more than 350 flights operated by the Indian carriers have received hoax bomb threats.

Most of the threats were issued through social media.

Akasa Air on Sunday said 15 of its flights got security alerts and after thorough inspections, all aircraft were released for operations.

The sources in the know said IndiGo received threats for 18 flights and

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TTD cancels VIP break darshan on October 31

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has cancelled the VIP break darshan on October 31, except for protocol VIPs, due to the Deepavali Asthanam at the Tirumala Temple.

In light of this, recommendation letters for VIP darshan will not be accepted at Tirumala on October 30. Devotees are requested to take note and cooperate with TTD.

Lokesh unveils AP's focus areas

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education, IT, and Electronics Minister Nara Lokesh announced that the Andhra Pradesh government is actively promoting development decentralization and enhancing the Speed of Doing Business (SoDB), aiming to create 20 lakh jobs for youth in the next five years. He noted that Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu recently unveiled six new policies aligned with this vision.

Minister Lokesh, who attended a roundtable with industrialists organised by the Consulate General of India in San Francisco, shared AP's rapid strides in investment and industrial growth. Highlighting recent developments, he pointed to the successful launch of Kia Motors as an example of AP's investor-friendly climate. The state, he said, benefits from India's second-largest



coastline and has plans for four new ports, positioning it strategically for business and trade.

The government's regional development plans include designating the Kurnool district as a "Drone Valley" and transforming the Chittoor and Kadapa districts into a major electronics hub. Currently,

AP produces 25% of India's cell phones and half of the country's air conditioners. A biofuel ecosystem is also being developed in Prakasam district as part of the broader decentralization strategy.

In the capital region, development projects worth \$5 billion will begin, with

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3 IAS officers joining AP cadre from TG get postings

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Three IAS officers from the Telangana cadre, who recently joined the Andhra Pradesh cadre, received their postings on Sunday. Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad issued orders confirming these appointments. K Amrapali has been designated as the Vice Chairperson and Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation, and she will also take on the full additional responsibilities of CEO of the AP Tourism Authority.

A Vani Prasad has been appointed as the Principal Secretary

Continued on Page 5

Monday Mirchi

MINISTERS' PATIENCE RUNS THIN AS CS PLAYS BUDGET CARD TO DELAY PROJECTS

When the cash-strapped chief is perforce counting small change to run the state administration, won't his lieutenants be scared to put up before him spending proposals related to hastily announced schemes? The trickle-down effect will in fact blight the chances of even less intimidating proposals. The grapevine has it that Telangana Ministers are growing increasingly frustrated with the Chief Secretary, who seems to have made a habit of citing budgetary constraints even for projects that do not require immediate funding. According to insider whispers, the Chief Secretary has been dipping into budget estimates in such a manner as to spook Chief Minister Revanth Reddy with potential financial implications, thus throwing cold water on several initiatives. Ministers, having lost hopes of smoother coordination with her, are understood to be counting down the days left for her tenure to end. And, that *manchi roju* (for them) would be in April. Some of them are suggesting that her reluctance perhaps stems from her approaching retirement.

NONE IN BABUDOM DREADS THE RED BOOK THESE DAYS

There was a time in the recent past, particularly just before and immediately after the elections, when babus dreaded being listed in the 'Red book' professedly maintained by powerful politicians to exercise influence or subtle pressure over 'partisan' officials (read it as those not supporting their party). In fact, it was trendy to refer to the 'Red book' during the campaign pitch. But the overuse of the intimidating phrase currently in Telangana's political circles, with Congress and BRS leaders now going tit for tat, seems to have taken the sting out of it. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, taking a leaf out of Telugu Desam Party national general secretary Nara Lokesh's campaign tactics, recently declared that he had been jotting down the names of certain officials for future reference -- a move that seems to have spurred Bharat Rashtra Samithi working president KT Rama Rao to urge citizens to 'take note of the officials'. Congress leaders, however, were quick to counter, pointing fingers at officials like Prabhakar Rao, Bhujanga Rao, Tirupathanna, Radha Kishan Rao,

and Praneeth Rao, while drawing attention to the infamous phone tapping case. What about the responses of listed bureaucrats? Well, they are not exactly quaking in their boots. Insiders laugh it off, saying 'Red book antics' have lost their shock value. These days the 'identified' officials crack jokes over entries in the once-dreaded book. Seriously, no official takes these threats seriously.

HAVING TIGHTENED GRIP OVER IPS, REVANTH EYES IAS AMID BABUDOM RUMBLINGS

With the recent public display of disaffection by a section of the uniformed gentry reflecting Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's tightening grip over IPS officials, a birdie has suggested to yours truly that the Chief Minister may not take long to see IAS circles also fall in line. This probability is no longer whispered in bureaucratic corridors, but articulated with appreciable vehemence. For, many of them are simmering over the curious silence of the IAS Association over the recent controversial remarks by some Congress leaders. This silence, they aver, speaks volumes. Some see this as an early warning sign of shifting loyalties on the part of those who cannot resist Revanth's sway. Others, having witnessed many bureaucrats being questioned in the Kaleshwaram or other probes, are looking helplessly at the broader IAS community, which is watching closely, wondering if the wind is about to change direction or will they be swept along.

WILL DRAMA OVER CROSS-BORDER POSTINGS UNFOLD POST DIWALI?

In bureaucratic circles, the buzz currently is all about those officials who recently landed in Telangana from Andhra Pradesh, courtesy Department of Personnel and Training's directive. These officials are right now sitting pretty without postings, whetting curiosity and wearing resentment on their sleeves. It is understood that their appointments might materialize after Diwali. But there is a twist in the tale. The larger question for the powers that be is: Can these officials be entrusted with plum assignments, considering they are here against their wishes? Let us wait for the drama to unfold; it is bound to be a hit beyond borders.

--Yours truly

We won't stop fighting for people, even if it costs our lives: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"We will not stop fighting for the people even if it costs our lives," BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said.

Speaking to the media on the police raids on his brother-in-law Raj Pakala's farmhouse on Sunday, KTR said that they launched the movement for Telangana braving death.

KTR said that cases and government conspiracies are nothing new to them and that false cases are a result of pointing out Revanth's corruption, illegal acts and failures.

"Despite no illegal acts on our part, there is a malicious campaign and political conspiracy against us. Since the last 11 months, there has been chaos in the state," he said.

He said that BRS leaders are fighting without compromise and walking the path shown by KCR. They are being charged with 'false' cases for exposing Revanth's corruption and failures, like the civil supplies scam and the Musi scam.

"Unable to confront us politically, they are conspiring

against us. We have braved challenges and have been in this struggle. We are not afraid of Revanth Reddy's conspiracies. Since Saturday, there is an absurd attempt against us," KTR said.

"In Telangana, is it wrong for a family to have a gathering at home for Diwali? Should we even seek permission for that," he asked.

He said that Raj Pakala had built a house and had held a housewarming ceremony with his family and friends. Some

people are maliciously labelling this family gathering as a rave party, he added.

"Even though I wasn't there, they are spreading baseless things against me. If you are in public life, does that mean anyone can spread lies about you? That was Raj Pakala's house, not a farmhouse. They are speaking recklessly and calling family members 'men and women,' he said.

"After 21 hours of investigation, what did they find? The officials clearly stated that no

drugs were found. So why this malicious campaign," he asked. "Initially, they said it was an excise case for possessing excessive alcohol, but then they started calling it a narcotics case. They are calling it a narcotics case as per orders from above," he said.

After testing many people at the party, Raj Pakala's test came back negative. But the BJP and the Congress are spreading rumours about him, he said.

"How can they file an NDPS case? Why was there a difference between the morning panchanama and the FIR," KTR asked. They dug a mountain, claiming there were bombs, but not even a mouse was found, he said.

"No matter how many obstacles they put in our way, we will not stop fighting and will continue to expose Revanth Reddy," he said.

"We will pursue the Congress and expose their unfulfilled promises, deceptions and failures even if they hunt our families instead of focusing on public issues," KTR said.

Janwada party held to celebrate construction of new houses: Talasani

Criticising the raid on Rayadurgam Orion Villas, former minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav asked the police to explain the link between the Janwada Farmhouse and Orion Villas? Why are the police raiding the gated community Orion Villas leaving the Janwada Farmhouse where the party was held?

Speaking to the media along with former Ministers Vemula Prashanth Reddy, Srinivas Goud and Sabita Indra Reddy on Sunday, Talasani said that KTR's brother-in-law constructed a new house and started living in it.

He said that family members met there to celebrate the event.

Everything in the FIR is wrong, says Vijay Madduri

Vijay Madduri, who attended Raj Pakala's party, said that there were many false rumours about him on social media.

In a video message released on Sunday night, he said, "Every sentence in the FIR having my name is wrong. I have made my arguments very clear. All propaganda

about the FIR is wrong. It is written in the FIR that I have said things which I did not say. I am not only a US citizen but also an investor with a clean record of doing business in several countries. I recently went abroad. I have also shown proof of that. I have not consumed any illegal substance in India."

Tension grips Raj Pakala's Rayadurgam villa

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tension gripped Rayadurgam Orion Villas when BRS leaders picked up an argument with Excise officials during the searches conducted by the Excise at the houses of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao's brother-in-law Raj Pakala and his brother Sailendra Pakala.

The BRS MLAs and MLCs tried to block the Excise officials when they tried to enter the villas. The BRS MLAs asked Excise officials to explain how they can conduct

searches without a search warrant. However, the police arrested MLAs Maganti Gopinath, KP Vivekananda and former MLA Balka Suman.

The Excise police went to Orion Villas after coming to know that Raj Pakala was there. However, the Excise police had to wait for some time as the villa was locked. They went to another Villa after realising that Raj Pakala was there.

Meanwhile, BRS leaders and cadres gathered in huge numbers there and staged a protest.

KTR must explain about rave party, says Adi Srinivas

Balmoor Venkat asks cops to release Janwada farmhouse CCTV footage

Telangana ashamed of rave party: Dayakar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao who had earlier said that he is against the drug culture must explain the Janwada farmhouse rave party, Government Whip Adi Srinivas said.

KTR's brother-in-law Raj Pakala has links with drug dealers who have destroyed the lives and families of many by

making them drug addicts, he said and requested the government to arrest everyone found at the rave party.

MLC Balmoor Venkat appealed to the police not to let go of anyone who attended the rave party. The police should reveal the details of everyone who attended the party and also release the CCTV footage.

Senior Congress leader

Addanki Dayakar said that Telangana is ashamed of KTR's brother-in-law Raj Pakala's farmhouse rave party and other anti-social activities. He said that he got information that around 20 people left the farmhouse before the police raids.

TPCC Media Committee Chairman Sama Rammoan Reddy asked KTR to respond about Raj Pakala's rave party.

Find out whether Janwada rave party was factual: Kishan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There is a need to investigate and find out whether the Janwada rave party was real or not, Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy said.

Speaking to the media at the State BJP office on Sunday, Kishan said, "There is a need to investigate whether the Janwada rave party was real or not. The investigation must be held whoever might be the owner of the farmhouse. Now BRS leaders are saying that the government is filing false cases in the name of drugs. BRS leaders forgot that during their rule they sent fake videos to judges and engaged in phone tapping. The police themselves said that it was a conspiracy. Both the BRS and the Congress should investigate such incidents."



Rave & Raos' parties going on in Hyd: Raghunandan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, said that although the TG government is saying that it will make the state drug-free, the drug business is going on smoothly through rave parties and Raos' parties on Saturdays and Sundays.

Some are doing drug business in Hyderabad and also bringing foreign liquor and cocaine. He said that there were reports that a rave party was held at a farmhouse on Hyderabad's outskirts and that it was attended by VIP children.

"If Chief Minister Revanth Reddy had not compromised with the farmhouse owner then the DGP should release the CCTV footage immediately. The CM and the DGP should release CCTV footage in and outside the farmhouse recorded before 12 midnight on Saturday.

Ram temple gears up for its first Diwali

28 lakh diyas to be lit along Saryu

PNS ■ AYODHYA (UP)

The Yogi Adityanath government is all set to host its eighth Deepotsav in Ayodhya this year, with grand

TODAY ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Ekadashi: Oct 27 05:24 AM to Oct 28 07:51 AM
Dwadashi: Oct 28 07:51 AM to Oct 29 10:32 AM
Nakshatram: Purva Phalguni: Oct 27 12:24 PM to Oct 28 03:24 PM
Uttara Phalguni: Oct 28 03:24 PM to Oct 29 06:33 PM
Rahukalam: 7:42 AM to 9:08 AM
Yamagandam: 10:34 AM to 11:59 AM
Varjyam: 11:33 PM to 01:21 AM
Gulika: 1:25 PM to 2:51 PM
Amritakalam: 08:12 AM to 10:00 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:37 AM to 12:22 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Mostly Sunny
Temp: 31°C
Humidity: 54%
Sunrise: 6:13 AM
Sunset: 5:46 PM
Updated: October 27, 2024 5:00 PM

and "environmentally conscious" preparations underway for the first Diwali at the newly built Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple.

The Uttar Pradesh government said it aims to create a new world record this Diwali by lighting 28 lakh lamps along the banks of the Saryu river, while special eco-friendly lamps will illuminate the Ram temple. These lamps are designed to prevent stains and soot from affecting the temple's structure and will remain lit for extended periods.

Environmental protection is also a key focus for this Deepotsav, the government said in a statement. Special wax lamps will be used to minimise carbon emissions and protect the temple from soot damage, it said.

The Ram temple complex, which will be adorned by special floral decoration, has been divided into various sections for decoration, with each section assigned specific responsibilities, the statement said.

The overall supervision of lighting, entrance arch decorations, and thorough cleaning have been entrusted to Ashu Shukla, a retired IG from the Bihar cadre.

The temple trust aims to Ayodhya not just a centre of religion and faith this Diwali, but also a symbol of cleanliness and environmental consciousness, the release said.

To ensure that the Deepotsav grandeur leaves a lasting impression, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has decided to keep the temple open for 'Bhavan Darshan' from October 29 to November 1 until midnight, it said.

Visitors can see the temple from Gate No 4B (luggage scanner point) to marvel at its grand decorations. This festival of lights will convey a message of faith, environmental stewardship, and beauty, making Ayodhya's Deepawali a truly global spectacle, the statement added.

Meanwhile, as the preparations for Deepotsav 2024 near completion, Professor Pratibha Goyal, Vice Chancellor of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Avadh University, has mobilised a large team for the event, the government said.

Group-I Mains: 67.17 % attendance recorded

Medchal-Malkajgiri highest, with 10,869 candidates

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC) has said that the statistical attendance summary for the Group-I Mains Examinations, held from October 21 to October 27, was 67.17 per cent.

The release of notification was on February 19, 2024. The examination was conducted to fill 563 vacancies under the Group-I Services.

A total of 4,03,645 applications were received, leading to the Preliminary Exam conducted on June 9, 2024, in 897 centers across the state. Of these, 31,382 candidates were

shortlisted based on merit, ensuring representation for reserved categories. After the addition of candidates permitted by the Court under the Sports Quota, a total of 31,403 candidates were issued hall tickets for the Mains examination.

Statistical findings revealed that attendance for all seven papers was 67.17%, with a total of 21,093 candidates appearing. The district-wise breakdown showed that Medchal-Malkajgiri had the highest attendance, with 10,869 candidates out of 17,779 allotted, followed by Ranga Reddy (5,505 out of 8,011) and

Hyderabad (4,719 out of 5,613).

The attendance report also highlights the performance across various categories with 2,384 candidates from the general category appearing for the exams, while the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe categories had 3,503 and 1,983 candidates, respectively.

Dr E Naveen Nicolas, Secretary of TGPSC, hailed the completion of the examinations as a significant milestone in the recruitment process, paving the way for the establishment of a competent workforce for Telangana's administrative needs.

PM to launch health cover for senior citizens

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The health coverage for all citizens aged 70 years and above irrespective of their income status under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) is likely to be rolled out by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 29, an official source said.

The U-WIN portal developed for maintaining an electronic registry of routine immunisations, which is currently operational on a pilot basis, will also be launched by the prime minister on the same day.

Besides the two, some other projects will also be launched on Tuesday, the source said.

The U-Win platform, which is a replication of the COVID-

19 vaccine management system Co-WIN, has been developed to keep a permanent digital record of vaccination of pregnant women as well as children from birth up to the age of 17 under the Universal Immunization Programme.

"The PM is likely to launch the expanded scheme under the Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme for those aged 70 years and above. It will benefit an estimated six crore citizens in about 4.5 crore households," the source said.

Be it poor, middle class, upper middle class or rich, every individual who is 70 years and above is eligible for getting Ayushman card and will receive free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh at any of the AB PMJAY empanelled hospitals once the expanded scheme

gets launched.

Till September 1, 2024, a total of 29,648 hospitals, including 12,696 private hospitals, have been empanelled under the PMJAY.

The scheme is being implemented in 33 states and Union territories currently except for Delhi, Odisha, and West Bengal.

Anyone aged 70 or above as per Aadhar card, will be eligible for applying for the scheme, the source said.

It is an application-based scheme and people will need to register on the PMJAY portal or on the Ayushman app, official sources said.

"Those already having the Ayushman card will need to again apply for a new card and complete their eKYC again," the source said.

'Doctors struggle to treat long Covid patients in India'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Doctors in India are grappling to diagnose and treat unexplained and persistent symptoms of long Covid patients due to limited guidelines, whereas researchers have flagged inadequate studies on the condition.

With the World Health Organization declaring an end to Covid as a global health emergency in May last year, focused efforts are underway around the world to estimate the burden of long Covid among the population.

The condition refers to the set of lingering symptoms affecting varied body parts and persisting well beyond the acute Covid infection period,

including cough, muscle and joint pain, fatigue, brain fog and difficulty in focusing. The viral disease is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. While studies have suggested that about a third of those moderately or severely infected are likely to suffer from long Covid, region-wise though, incidence could vary.

A study by researchers, including those from Harvard Medical School, US, estimated that 31 per cent of the once-infected people in North America, 44 per cent in Europe, and 51 per cent in Asia, have long Covid, which is "challenging the healthcare system, but there are limited guidelines for its treatment."

CITY EVENTS

Cyber Security Training

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Venue

Firewall-zone Institute of IT, Humayun Nagar, Hyderabad
Oct 28 - Nov 25; 8 am.

Standup comedy

Open mic is organised by Silly South Comedy. Silly South Comedy is India's first Telugu standup comedy collective. Silly South Comedy has been pivotal in the introducing Telugu standup comedy to Hyderabad audience.

Venue

The Hashtag Cafe, KPHB, Hyderabad

Miss Hyderabad Glamfest 2025

Do you have what it takes to be the next Pageant Queen?

Venue

Online auditions at GVK Mall.

Toxic

By Abhishek Upmanyu

Venue

Shilpakala Vedika November 2

Prateek Kuhad

Shouettes tour.

Venue

Hyderabad international convention centre November 8

Standup Comedy

Vivek Muralidharan brings in his signature show "Death by Laughter", where he brings his newest material to stage.

Venue

Multiple venues. till November 24

Arijit Singh Live in concert

HSBC presale is live for now. General sale on October 23, 1 pm. Get tickets only on insider.in and paytm.

Venue

Concert in Hyderabad on December 7.

City Pioneer



HYDERABAD | MONDAY | OCTOBER 28, 2024

03

Top cops believe 'Ek Police System' not feasible in TG

Three categories most suited for TG: DGP Dr Jitender

DEEPIKA PASHAM
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HYDERABAD

A promise made during BRS regime is the new fight for the Battalion of Telangana State Special Police (TSSP) in Telangana. They demanded 'Ek Police System' like in the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab where Battalion police are transferred into Armed Reserve or Civil Police after a certain period.

However, the top cops see 'Ek Police System' not feasible in Telangana.

Speaking to The Pioneer they said, "It is a government policy-maker's decision and there was a study conducted on the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab which did not draw consecutive results."

It is a different responsibility, expectations and training for each force. The training of the Battalion is very little on law, more on field craft, rioting and physical fitness. For Civil Police it is more of law as they are in the police station working with crimes and less outdoor and for Armed Reserve it is more of outdoor weapon, they



added. So, the protesting officers are not understanding the repercussions of the recruitment process.

The work profile is similar to Civil Police and benefits are more for Battalion. How can they be merged into one asks a police officer.

The study of the practices of other states were made and it was found out that Telangana recruitment process was one of the best,

said a police officer. Director General of Police Dr Jitender said, "The system of duties in the Telangana State Police (TGSP) has been in place since several decades and during the time of United Andhra Pradesh and continues after bifurcation."

This system is currently being implemented as well. During recruitment, police constables are selected into three categories: Civil Police, Armed Police and Special Police. Almost all states follow a similar system.

The Police department will consider the concerns of TGSP personnel on merits and with sympathy. At present, all police personnel receive surrender leaves and additional surrender leaves, a benefit not extended to other government departments in view of hard duties performed by the Police even during festivals and holidays. Since TGSP police operate under unique circumstances, this facility has been granted, said the DGP. Moreover, salaries and allowances to police personnel in the State are highest when compared to other states, he added.

Inter Board asked to withdraw exam fee hike proposal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Student Federation of India has urged the Intermediate Board not to increase the exam fee from Rs 500 to Rs 1,400.

"According to our information, a proposal has been submitted, but we are representing the students' and demanding to not hike it," said the organisation, in a statement. The proposal to double the exam fees for the upcoming exams in March should be reconsidered. The board has proposed increasing the current fee of Rs 500 to Rs 1,400 or Rs 1,500, which would place a heavy financial burden on around 9 lakh students in the State.

The SFI requests the government to act immediately and ensure no increase in fees. One of the officials said that the Intermediate Board is not keen on increasing the fee. If it has to do also, a study they had made because of board expenses.

Tracking musculoskeletal health 'Fit-Knees' unveiled



Physiotherapist Bhairavi demonstrating 'Fit-Knees' device at the two-day IKMC 2024 millennium conference in Hyderabad on Sunday

SAMUEL JOSHUA
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HYDERABAD

The first-of-its-kind Artificial Intelligence (AI)-sensor clinical wearable technology for tracking Musculoskeletal Health, 'Fit-Knees' was unveiled by Ashva's founder Anmol Saxena. Inspired by her mother's struggle with osteoarthritis, Saxena, an engineer, developed this device to provide regular knee joint tracking and reporting. The device, designed with the help of physiotherapists, targets orthopedic and physiotherapy doctors and includes both functional and clinical parameters. It can also be used by young athletes prone to anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injuries.

At the IKMC 2024, physiotherapist Bhairavi demonstrated the 'Fit-Knees' device and noted that sensors are placed above and below the knee, with real-time data shown on

an app. These motion sensors collect data using an accelerometer and gyroscope. Python processes the data, providing a detailed test report that compares patient issues against normative ranges for different ages. She highlighted that this data collected helps doctors identify and diagnose knee problems.

Bhairavi also mentioned that AI interprets this data, offering insights into five areas: range of motion, muscle strength, balance and proprioception, stair-case function, six-minute walk test and gait analysis. Data can be collected from the hip to the ankle.

She announced that the product, priced at Rs 6 lakh, has over 75 customers. The sensors receive software updates and the app allows patients to monitor their knee flexion progress. Bhairavi concluded saying that feedback from both patients and doctors has been positive.



Former Lok Sabha Speaker Meira Kumar releasing a biography on Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao named 'VHR—Extraordinary Life and Times of V Hanumantha Rao' on Saturday night at Delhi. CPI national leaders D Raja, Dr K Narayana, TPCC president B Mahesh Kumar Goud and others attended the programme

ICMAI - Hyd Chapter discusses contribution to Viksit Bharat goals

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICMAI), Hyderabad Chapter, discussed their contribution to the Viksit Bharat goals.

Key ICMAI leaders including CMA president Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak, Central Council member Dr K ChA VS Murthy, CMA chairperson Dr Lavanya Kanduri, vice-chairman Venkata Rambabu, secretary Khaja Jalal Uddin and treasurer Kirti Gupta, briefed the media about their transformative initiatives to align with India's growing economy. The meeting focused on how

Cost and Management Accountants (CMAs) can support the Viksit Bharat goals. India has made significant progress in economic development, becoming one of the fastest-growing major economies. To sustain this growth, CMAs play a crucial role by contributing to efficient resource allocation, informed decision-making, performance improvement, regulatory compliance, cost control, risk management and investment appraisal. Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak stated that CMAs are essential for ensuring survival, continuity, and sustainability.



Upgraded workspaces platform WorkplaceOS rolls out in city

Space Matrix expands with 25% growth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With increasing technological upgrades and the prioritisation of hybrid workspaces, Space Matrix expands with 25% growth, providing a 360-degree view of technologically advanced workspaces and interiors in the city.

Interacting with The Pioneer, Managing Director of Hyderabad and North India, Rohit Raj Puniani said that with the rise in technological advancements, employees are looking for stress-free, ambient workspaces with activity-based designs providing for various work styles.

He announced that Space Matrix provides such modules and interior designs, allowing employees to avoid working at fixed workstations all day. Rohit

said, "We have developed a platform called Workplace OS using various technologies and we offer it to clients to help them manage their workplaces better. From employee productivity and engagement to talent retention and parking management, the OS provides a 360-degree view of the organisation."

He added that the app allows employees to book seats and teams to reserve or reschedule meeting spaces. It also offers alerts on cafeteria occupancy, digital self-check-in, lighting and temperature control, access management and food ordering.

Rohit said that such modules are being rolled out in the city's IT workspaces and GCCs, also aligning well with sustainable development goals.

BIOMEDICAL STUDENTS TOLD TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE

Call to make critical intersection of engineering and healthcare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A seminar in Osmania University suggests biomedical students to explore the critical intersection of engineering and healthcare and improve patient care.

The national seminar on Recent Trends in Medical Equipment concluded successfully. It was hosted at Osmania University's Biomedical Engineering department. It attracted experts, faculty members and students from across the country, with a strong focus on innovation and technological applications in healthcare. The ceremony was attended by Prof Kumar Molugaram, Vice-Chancellor,



Dignitaries attending the seminar at the Osmania University's Biomedical Engineering department

UCEOU as the chief guest and Prof P Chandrashekar, principal, UCEOU as the guest of honour. The dignitaries motivated the students to develop ideologies that serve society and inspired them to

create their own identities. Pankaj Kumar's session on robotic and telesurgical equipment was followed by presentations on regulatory frameworks in medical devices by Dr Shruvan and Vikram.



Heritage volunteers get trained at Ramappa

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 12-day-long training programme for world heritage volunteers was conducted at Ramappa temple as per UNESCO guidelines by Kakatiya Heritage Trust and the district administration of Mulugu with the assistance of the Tourism department.

In all, 80 volunteers from all over India, including many Ph D scholars, participated in this programme aimed to create awareness on heritage conservation and tourism promotion with specific reference to world heritage site at Ramappa. Cultural programmes and field visits to Ramappa temple, Pandavulagutta and Laknavaram were also arranged. In the valedictory programme held on Sunday at Ramappa temple, BP Acharya, former Special Chief Secretary and TS Divakar, Collector, lauded the efforts of the coordinators and gave away certificates to participants.



Public awareness about food safety stressed

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Emphasising that whatever you eat, the same kind and quality of food should be served to your patrons, RV Karnan, Food Safety Commissioner and Commissioner of Health & Family Welfare Department of Telangana, addressed a seminar on Understanding Food Safety and Its Regulatory Compliances, hosted by the FTCCI on Sunday.

Speaking as the chief guest, Karnan spoke to over 150 participants, including hotel management students and food business operators. He noted that the most common complaints received via social media are about additives, stale food and improperly cooked food.

Karnan mentioned that many large FBOs are not fully aware of food safety and must undergo training with Food Safety Training and Certification (FoSTaC), a large-scale training programme for food business operators. He also pointed out that while restaurant interiors are attractive, kitchen maintenance is a major problem that must be addressed 24/7. Proper storage, labelling and sourcing of raw materials are crucial. Public awareness about food safety is significant, he added.

Meanwhile, retired deputy director of the National Institute of Nutrition, Dr V Sudershan Rao, explained that food safety involves ensuring food is free from contamination. He stressed that unsafe food can cause over 200 diseases.

GROUP - I FINAL PAPER

Data Interpretation exam a challenge



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Group - I last paper V - Science and Technology and Data Interpretation (DI) was the toughest among all. Non-mathematics background candidates faced confusion on the DI calculation questions in Hyderabad.

In total there were seven papers with over 10 subjects to write for the candidates. The overall exam experience was that one should be updated with previous 10 years current affairs. In the last exam, Science and Technology and Data Interpretation (DI) made non-mathematics background candidates consume more time.

V Anil Kumar, speaking to The Pioneer said, "I feel after writing overall exams, the questions were outdated. Many old versions, for example Solar Mission of 2010 which is Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) was asked and most of us did not know if this still exists and is being followed. This made us think about the preparation of questions."

Rahul T said, "I have no mathematics except until SSC

and many of my friends shared the same feeling. The Data Interpretation included lengthy questions. If it was choice based one, then the time would suffice but these are data questions and we keep on solving until the answer arrives and we do not know if it is the right one."

"We felt the easy mark scoring was Telangana movement and State formation theory in three parts carrying 150 marks, they added.

The facilities were satisfactory but examination centres in far-off locations and mental disturbance as there was confusion about postponing exams with the protests, said Group I candidates.

"We have fought for the postponement of exams thinking on reservation basis. So if the mains were cancelled we would have no hope on Group 1 exams being conducted without any disturbances in Telangana," said the candidates.

According to the Telangana Public Service Commission, 21,151 candidates appeared on the last day for the exam with 67.3 per cent attendance.



All set for birthday celebrations of Ponguleti

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

All set for the birthday celebrations of Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy on Monday across the undivided Khammam district. Congress leaders and Minister's supporters have called for social and welfare activities. Blood donation camps, food distribution programmes and bike rallies are planned. Large cutouts, flex boards, and hoardings have already been erected in the streets for the event. Details regarding these celebrations were shared by camp office in-charge Thumburu Dayakar Reddy. A blood donation camp will be held at Danavagudem and Ramannapeta colonies at 10:30 am. At 11:00 am, another blood donation camp will be organised at Warangal Cross Road in Khammam Rural Mandal. At 12:30 pm, food distribution programmes will be held at the Jeevan Sandhya Old Age Home and Annam Foundation in Khammam. At 4 pm, state-level kabaddi competitions will start at Prakasam Stadium in Kothagudem as part of the birthday celebrations. At 8 pm, a food distribution programme will take place in Mudigonda Venkata Puram.

15 Gurukul students take ill due to suspected food poisoning

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

Fifteen students of Kasturba Gandhi Gurukula in the district have been admitted to government hospital after they took ill due to suspected food poisoning.

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha visited the students at the government hospital and inquired about their health.

The students studying at the Kasturba Gandhi School in Nyalkal Mandal fell ill, leading to their hospitalisation at Sangareddy Government Hospital. Upon learning about the situation, the Minister visited the hospital to meet the students.

He inquired about the students' health conditions and instructed the doctors to take all necessary measures to provide better treatment. The Minister interacted with the students and assured



Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha visiting the students who fell ill at government hospital in Sangareddy on Sunday

them of all help. He also spoke with parents, reassuring them not to lose heart and mentioned that, if necessary, better medical facilities

could be arranged at private hospitals, affirming that the government would support the students. Dr. Anil Kumar, the hospital

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha visited the hospital and directed doctors to provide quality medical treatment to students

superintendent, briefed the Minister on the students' conditions.

District Collector Kranti Vallur also visited the hospital in the evening and spoke to the students and parents. The Collector held discussions with doctors and directed them to shift the students whose conditions is critical to private hospitals for better treatment.

Harish ridicules govt for failing to extend Rythu Bharosa to farmers

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

Former minister and Siddipet MLA T Harish Rao on Sunday accused the Congress government of failing to extend investment support under Rythu Bandhu scheme to farmers. He recalled that the Congress party, when it was in opposition, used to demand that the then government headed by K Chandrashekar Rao extend investment support to farmers thrice a year. But after coming to power, the Congress government failed to provide investment support to farmers even once so far. He alleged that the

Congress came to power in Telangana giving false promises. To quote an example, Harish Rao said that the Congress promised to give two saris to women for Bathukamma festival, but did not give at least one sari.

Distributing CMRF cheques worth Rs 28.65 lakh to 127 beneficiaries at his camp office here on Sunday, the MLA alleged that the Congress government owed payment of five DAs to the government employees. In sharp contrast to the Congress regime, KCR regime used to credit input subsidy into farmers' bank accounts under the Rythu Bandhu.

Shadnagar Govt junior college to get new building

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a significant step towards providing quality education for local youth, Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar has initiated the construction of a new building for the Shadnagar Government Junior College. The foundation-laying ceremony was held on Sunday on the college premises. He has been striving to provide support students from underprivileged backgrounds in his constituency.

Recently a ceremony featured MLC Professor Kodandaram and former MLAs Bakkani Narsimhulu, Bhisma Kishtaiyah, and Prapat Reddy, who joined MLA Shankar in the symbolic foundation stone-laying. Shankar performed a ritual of coconut-breaking ceremony for JCB vehicles, signaling the beginning of construction work on Sunday. This ambitious project, with an estimated budget of Rs 8 to 10 crore, is aimed at creating a college facility equipped with modern



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar laying foundation stone for new Government Junior College building in Shadnagar

amenities. Shankar's dedication to education has driven him to oversee this project personally, collaborating with supporters, industrialists, and local politicians to ensure the building meets quality standards and addresses the needs of future generations. The new facility will be constructed on a vacant plot within the existing junior college grounds.

The event was attended by several local leaders and prominent community members, including Chendi Tirupati Reddy, Krishna Reddy, Raghu, Idris, Balaraju Goud, Mubarak, Agganur Baswam, former MPTC Kommu Krishna, Mohammed Ibrahim, Kumar, Anwar, Councilor Sarwar Pasha, Syed Qadir, Lingareddygudem Ashok, and Sitaram.

18K bicycle rally held to sensitise people on physical fitness

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

As part of the police martyrs' week, the Godavari Sub-divisional police on Sunday took out a 18K bicycle rally led by ACP Madata Ramesh. The rallyists commenced the rally from the road bridge in the border region of the districts Peddapalli and Mancherial.

After flagging off the rally, Godavarikhani ACP M Ramesh asked the participants to focus on physical

exercise to safeguard their health. The programme has been helpful to sensitise the people on their physical fitness. He called upon one and all to work out daily at least for one hour. "Our health is in our hands," he said advising the policemen not to neglect improving their physical fitness. The cyclists wound their way from the road bridge across River Godavari, Ganga Nagar, GM office colony area, bus stand and reached the

main junction and proceeded through the main thoroughfares of Godavarikhani. Later, the cyclist travelled on Rajiv Rahadari to reach the NTPC at Ramagundam and proceeded through the main thoroughfares.

Godavarikhani CI Indrasena Reddy, CI Prasad Rao, Peddapalli CI Praveen Kumar, Manthini CI Raju and Godavarikhani sub-divisional SI took part in the event.

'Govt takings steps to elevate financial status of fishers'

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

Government Whip and Vemulawada MLA Aadi Srinivas initiated the release of fishlings into the Mid Manair Reservoir. A total of 80,000 fishlings were distributed for free in Rudravaram under the Fisheries Department. He stated that the government's goal is to improve the living conditions of fishermen's families.

On Sunday, during the distribution fishlings programme in Rudravaram village under Vemulawada urban mandal, Aadi Srinivas highlighted the fact that Chief Minister A Revanth is organising the programme to distribute fishlings at 100 per cent subsidy.

He also mentioned that the State has been implementing a programme to release 53 crore



Government Whip and Vemulawada MLA Aadi Srinivas, along with leaders, releasing fishlings into the Mid Manair reservoir in Vemulawada in Rajanna Sircilla district on Sunday

fishlings into water bodies across the State. He emphasised the health benefits of fish consumption. The government is

taking steps to provide financial assistance of Rs 5 lakh to families of fishermen who die in accidents at sea.

He pointed out that the Rajanna Sircilla district is witnessing significant development. He mentioned that Rs 50 crore each had already been allocated for the development of the Yaran Depot and the Rajanna Temple in Vemulawada. He urged fishers to take advantage of all available opportunities. He revealed that over 14 lakh fishlings would be released into the Mid manair through the Fisheries Department to provide ample work and elevate the financial status of the 8,642 fisher families in the district.

The programme was attended by Fisheries Chairman Mettu Sai Kumar, Additional Collector Khimya Nayak, Vemulawada RTO Rajeshwar, District Fisheries Officer Varadareddy, Urban Tahsildar Mahesh Kumar, among others.



Girls panic as youth enters hostel

PNS ■ JAYASHANKAR BHUPALAPALLY

Late at night, a young man entered a girls' hostel, causing panic among the girls. The incident, which took place in Chityala mandal of Jayashankar Bhupalapally district, has become a topic of discussion. The young man's unexpected entry raised questions about his identity and intentions.

On the night of October 25, the young man managed to sneak into the hostel when there were no security personnel or staff present. When some girls noticed his presence, they screamed in fear. It triggered chaos in the hostel.

Hearing the commotion, local residents rushed to the scene. Realising the situation, the young man quickly fled. The girls were understandably frightened and immediately informed the police and their parents

about the incident.

In the aftermath, there are serious concerns about security in the hostel. Police arrived at the hostel and began questioning the warden and staff. They are investigating why the security personnel were absent. The police assured the students that they would take action against those responsible and promised to enhance security measures to prevent such incidents in the future.

Interestingly, it was noted that the young man was holding a cake when he entered the hostel. This suggests that he may have intended to surprise a girl on her birthday, but his plan was completely derailed by the unexpected reactions of the residents. Despite his intentions, his surprise turned into a shocking experience. However, the identities of both the young man and the girl he intended to meet remained unknown.



Mini Sammakka-Saralamma fair from Feb 12

PNS ■ MULUGU

The four-day mini Sammakka-Saralamma fair, commonly known as the Medaram Jatara, is set to take place starting February 12. The schedule was announced by the Medaram Temple Trust Committee on Saturday.

According to the temple priests, the rituals will begin on February 12 with temple cleaning, worship and village confinement. On February 13, deities Sammakka and Saralamma

will be honoured with turmeric and vermilion.

While the state government officially organises the biennial fair, the temple priests conduct the mini jatara at the request of devotees during the intervening year. This event commemorates the bravery of the tribal women Sammakka and Sarakka against the imperial Kakatiya kings. Each year, local tribes who worship these goddesses gather in the small village of Medaram to celebrate the Sammakka-Sarakka Jatara.

Police probe 'embezzlement' of deposits in post office

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLY

In a shocking incident in the Begumpet Gram Panchayat under Ramagiri mandal, a female employee at the postal office allegedly embezzled money deposited by account holders under various savings schemes using counterfeit passbooks.

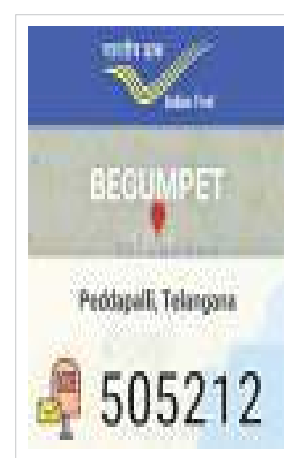
Residents had deposited money into schemes like Fixed Deposits, Recurring Deposits, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, and Time Deposits. Taking advantage of the illiteracy of some of the account holders, a female employee allegedly created fake passbooks and stamps. She managed to avoid suspicion.

The scam came to light when a resident Gunda Shreenu inquired about his passbook at the main post office in the Centenary Colony. Since 2015, he had deposited Rs13 lakh, but the passbook showed only Rs 2.20 lakh. After discussing the matter with others in the village, they discovered that their accounts also reflected discrepancies, leading to suspicions of fraud. Subsequently, they complained to higher authorities in the postal department.

Postal Inspector Mohan, along with other officials, conducted an inquiry at the Begumpet office. They inspected 206 passbooks and found evidence of embezzlement amounting to approximately Rs 25 lakh.

The officers said there was a need to check the passbooks. They are planning to conduct house-to-house investigations. According to reports, there are about 1,000 accounts within the office's jurisdiction. Inspection is expected to reveal the total amount misappropriated. Inspector Mohan assured that steps would be taken to ensure justice for the victims. The employee, when questioned by superiors, reportedly admitted to misusing around Rs32 lakh, while victims claim the amount could be between Rs50 and Rs 70 lakh.

On Saturday, a large number of account holders gathered at the postal office, prompting police to provide security. Officials are currently investigating whether the employee acted alone or if others were involved in the scam.



MUSI RIVER REJUVENATION

Opposition spreading falsehood against govt, says MP

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANGIRI

In the Manaikunta village under Addagur mandal in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, a meeting for the Tungathurthi constituency-level Muasi farmers' gathering was held, with special guests including Bhuvanagiri MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Tungathurthi MLA M Sameelu, and Nakrekal MLA Vemula Veeresh.

MP Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy stated that with the aim of helping the people of Telangana and rehabilitating those living on Musi river bed, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has undertaken the prestigious Muasi River rejuvenation programme.

Opposition parties are merely trying to defame the government without consideration for the welfare of the poor. While efforts are being made to develop Hyderabad into a modern city that is recognised worldwide, they are spreading false propagan-



Lok Sabha member Kiran Kumar Reddy speaking at a public meeting at Manaikunta in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district

da, he said. "When good work is being done, we should speak positively and refrain from petty words and actions," he felt. The Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is working to ensure that Hyderabad does not end up like Bengaluru or Chennai.

They are spreading cheap propaganda on social media. If they do so, the people will not believe them. Many people and farmers depend on the Musi River. "Our government is making efforts to save people from the pollution of the Musi," he pointed out.

Jagadish slams proposal to transfer roads to private players

PNS ■ SURYAPET

At a media conference held on Sunday at the local camp office, former minister and MLA G Jagadish Reddy criticised the Congress party's plans to hand over rural roads to corporates, stating that it would impose an undue tax burden on ordinary people. He remarked that the first bomb dropped into the hearts of rural citizens was similar to what was said by Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy in South Korea, indicating that the Congress is conspiring to give away all rural roads to big businessmen.

Jagadish Reddy asserted that Revanth Reddy is merely following Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's policies and lacked any



Former minister G Jagadish Reddy speaking at a media conference in Suryapet on Sunday

vision for development. He said that under the leadership of former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, the State emerged as a role model for other States. He also expressed strong condemnation of the police raids conducted at the Janwad farmhouse. Addressing a press conference, he questioned the legality and motives behind such actions, stating, "How can the police conduct searches without a warrant?"

ACROSS THE STATES



Six cyber criminals held from Delhi, Rajasthan

Delhi Police arrested six people from Rajasthan and the national capital under a special drive against cyber fraudsters, officials on Sunday said. According to the police, 110 complaints on the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) were found to be linked to those arrested and transactions of nearly Rs 5 crore were found in their bank accounts. They were using three different modus operandi to dupe people -- online investment frauds, fake websites for child-modelling frauds and fake updation of electricity bills. "Our team launched an operation against the cyber fraudsters on the basis of ongoing different cases. In a two-day operation in Jaipur and Delhi, a total of six people were apprehended and arrested," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Dwarka) Ankit Singh said. The arrested were identified as Bipul Kumar (44), Sharwan Pareek (55), Avadhesh Udaival (41) and Mukesh Kumar (30) from Jaipur in Rajasthan, and Devender Singh and Bhipender Mahamana from Delhi.



Man bludgeoned to death, body set on fire in Latur

A man was arrested for allegedly bludgeoning a 25-year-old man to death and setting his body on fire in Maharashtra's Latur district on Sunday, police said. The accused, a scrap collector, was arrested within five hours of the killing that took place on Barshi road in the jurisdiction of the MIDC police station, an official said. The body of an unidentified man near a hospital in the morning, he said. The victim was later identified as Laxman Subhash Gaighate, a resident of Navi Mumbai, was an alcoholic and had come to Latur on October 24 for medical treatment, the official said. Gaighate left his sister's house on Saturday and did not return, he said. Following a probe, the police zeroed in on the accused, Sachin Shivaji Waghmare. The victim had allegedly assaulted Waghmare for a sleeping spot on the roadside, the official said. The accused later returned to the scene and allegedly bludgeoned the victim with a stone while he was asleep and set the body on fire to destroy evidence, he said.



Elaborate security in Jammu for festival season, say police

Amid a spurt in terror attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, a senior police officer on Sunday said elaborate security measures had been put in place across the Jammu region to ensure a peaceful festival season. Additional Director General of Police (Jammu zone) Anand Jain was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a motorcycle rally organised by the force in memory of police personnel who laid down their lives in the fight against terrorism during the past three decades. "The rally was organised to remember and pay tribute to the fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives... We have a lot of police personnel who were martyred in the fight against terrorism," he said. Asked about the security arrangements for the festival season in the aftermath of several major terror attacks, especially in Kashmir where two soldiers were among 12 people killed in the past week, Jain said all measures had been taken to ensure a peaceful Diwali and other festivals. More than 100 motorcyclists, mostly from the police department, took part in the rally as part of a programme to honour the bravery and dedication of the fallen personnel.

JHARKHAND POLLS

Women hold key in CM's constituency, 31 other seats

Women voters may play a decisive role in 32 assembly constituencies, including the seats of Chief Minister Hemant Soren and former CM Champai Soren, as they outnumber male voters in the electoral roll. Out of 32 constituencies where there are more women voters than men, 26 are reserved for scheduled tribes. The elections to the 81-seat Jharkhand assembly are scheduled to be held in two phases on November 13 and November 20. The counting of votes is slated for November 23. Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren has filed his nomination papers from the Barhait assembly constituency, where the number of women voters is higher than male voters. The constituency enrolled more than 2.25 lakh voters, including 1.15 lakh women and 1.09 lakh male voters.

Modi: Make India a global animation powerhouse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing the popularity of Indian animated series such as 'Chhota Bheem', 'Hanuman' and 'Motu-Patlu', Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said India is on the way to ushering in a new revolution in the world of animation and urged the people to take the resolve of making the country a global animation powerhouse.

In his monthly Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, he said India's animation characters and movies, on account of content and creativity, are being loved all over the world. "You must remember the days when 'Chhota Bheem' started airing on TV. Children can never forget that; there was so much excitement about 'Chhota Bheem'. You would be surprised that today 'Dholakpur ka Dhol' attracts children not only in India but also in other countries. Similarly, our other animated serials such as 'Krishna', 'Hanuman', 'Motu-Patlu' also have a fan-following all over the world," the prime minister said. "You might have noticed that from the smartphone to

Cites popularity of 'Chhota Bheem'



the cinema screen, gaming console to virtual reality, animation is omnipresent. India is on the way to ushering in a new revolution in the world of animation," Modi asserted. He also pointed out that the gaming space of India is also expanding rapidly and Indian games are also gaining popularity all over the world. "When I met leading gamers of India a few months ago... I got an opportunity to know and understand the amazing creativity and quality of Indian

games. Indeed, in the country, there's a constant wave of creative energy," he said. In the world of animation, 'Made in India' and 'Made by Indians' can be noticed everywhere, Modi said. "You will be happy to know that today India's talent is also a significant part of foreign productions. Be it the present day Spider-Man or Transformers, in both these movies, Harinraran Rajeev's contribution has been highly appreciated by people," he said.

Animation studios of India, are working with world famous production companies such as Disney and Warner Brothers, Modi noted.

"Today our youth are creating original Indian content, which reflects glimpses of our culture. These are being watched all over the world," he said. Modi stressed that today, the animation sector has donned the form of an industry that is powering other industries, just as VR Tourism is getting famous these days.

Through a virtual tour you can view the Ajanta caves, take a stroll through the Konark temple corridor or enjoy the ghats of Varanasi. All these VR animation marvels have been made by Indian creators. After seeing these places through VR, many people want to visit these tourist places in reality, i.e. virtual tour of a tourist destination has become a medium of creating curiosity in the minds of people," he said. Today in this sector, along with animators, the demand for storytellers, writers, voice-over experts, musicians, game developers, VR and AR experts is also constantly rising, he said.



Peace possible in Bengal only when infiltration stops: Shah

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Asserting that peace can be established in West Bengal only when cross-border infiltration stops, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday exhorted the people of the state to bring in change in the 2026 assembly elections.

Inaugurating a new passenger terminal building and a cargo gate 'Maitri Dwar' at Petrapole land port bordering Bangladesh, Shah said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to the development of West Bengal. "Bring in change in West Bengal in 2026. (We) will put an end to infiltration and ensure peace in the state", Shah said.

He also said, "In establishing peace in the region, land ports play an important role. When there is no scope for the legal movement of people across the border, illegal

modes of movement arise, which impacts the peace of the country... There can be peace in Bengal only when infiltration stops."

Land ports play an important role in improving connectivity and relations among neighbouring countries, Shah said. These facilities also enhance trade relations among neighbouring countries, he said. Shah said the prime minister started many initiatives across sectors like health since the NDA came to power in 2014. "But the people of Bengal are deprived of the benefits given in the health sector. This deprivation will cease from 2026," he claimed.

He slammed the TMC government in the state over the issue of "corruption".

Shah alleged that a major portion of the funds sent by the Centre to West Bengal was "usurped due to corruption" in the state.

'Disengagement first step, and de-escalation next'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday said the disengagement of troops at Depsang and Demchok in Ladakh is the first step, and it is expected that India will return to the 2020 patrolling status.

The next step is de-escalation, which will not happen until India is sure that the same is happening on the other side as well, the EAM said, obviously referring to China.

Earlier this week, India announced it had reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the LAC in



eastern Ladakh, a major breakthrough in ending the over four-year-long military standoff. Addressing a press conference in Mumbai, Jaishankar said consensus has been achieved on patrolling and disengagement in Depsang and Demchok. "It is obvious it

will take time to implement the same. This is the issue of disengagement and patrolling which meant our armies had come very close to each other and now they have gone back to their bases. We hope the 2020 status is restored," he said.

The completion of disengagement is the first step. The next step is de-escalation which will not happen until India is sure that the same is happening on the other side as well, the External Affairs Minister said. "After de-escalation, how to manage the borders will be discussed," he added.

Era of 'doom-gloom' replaced by 'hope-possibility': Dhankhar

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said that an atmosphere of hope and possibility has replaced the earlier era of 'doom and gloom' in the country, which has emerged as a power to be reckoned with at the global level.

He claimed that there will be forces, both within and outside the boundaries, which will not like India coming forth as a global power, and the youth of the country have to respond to such forces through their action. Speaking at the 21st biennial convention of Krishnaguru



International Spiritual Youth Society here, Dhankhar said, "Ten years ago, the atmosphere was of doom and gloom. Now what we see is an atmosphere of hope and possibility. It has been because of the contributions of our great men and saints that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi India is a power at the global level now." "When Bharat is rising,

some people are bound to be hurt. Some are within the country and some outside... the youth will answer these people through the knowledge you have acquired and utilise for the nation," he added. The vice president asserted that the spiritual power of the country is at the centre of Bharat's rise and exhorted the youth to follow the path of spirituality, infusing with it the sense of nationalism and modernity.

He also highlighted the economic growth of the country and said, "While you strive for spiritual awakening, another awakening is unfolding for us. It is the incremental and continual rise of Bharat."

BRS accuses CM for..

Continued from page 1

He said that Revanth Reddy is trying to throw mud at KTR and added that KTR and his wife were not present at Raj Pakala's house.

Raj Pakala had built new houses and had started using them. The party was held to commemorate that, he said. Vivekananda said the CM is trying to emotionally damage

KTR and that Revanth's friend Bandi Sanjay Kumar says that he reacts to everything in advance. The CM is making BJP leaders Sanjay and Raghunandan Rao speak against BRS leaders, he said. Asserting that consuming liquor in houses is a Telangana tradition, Korutla MLA K. Sanjay asked Congress leaders to explain whether they don't keep liquor in their houses.

BRS leader Balka Suman asked how the police could enter Raj Pakala's house without prior notice. He deplored how the Excise Joint Commissioner could come to KTR's house.

Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that political bombs will explode before Diwali. Balka Suman asked whether there were the bombs.

Suman said that there was a party at Raj Pakala's house on Saturday. One or two bottles of alcohol were there. How can it be called a rave party, he asked.

AAP govt 'honestly' served Delhi for 10 years: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP government "honestly" served the people of Delhi for 10 years, doing a lot of work that no other dispensation in the country had done, party chief Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday. The former Delhi chief minister, who was taking part in a 'padayatra' (foot march) campaign ahead of the assembly polls, also asked the public not to vote for the BJP.

He claimed that the saffron party if it assumed power in Delhi, would stop the city government's free schemes for electricity, health care, education and bus rides for women.



Urges people to reject BJP

Kejriwal also promised that he would waive "inflated" water bills, urging the people to vote for AAP and help him become

chief minister again. "The elections are due in February. I will get these 'inflated' water bills waived in March," he said.

Order probe into party..

Continued from page 1

Sanjay said that KTR and his family were also present at the Janwada farmhouse party.

"It is learnt that the drug suppliers, who supply drugs across the nation, also participated in the party. However, some police personnel saved KTR. Why is there no comprehensive investigation regarding this although the Home Ministry is with Chief Minister Revanth Reddy," Sanjay said. It has been proved once again that the BRS and the Congress are one and that the Congress government might have protected KTR due to its friendship with KCR, Sanjay said and asked

the Congress admin whether its drug-free state means protecting the KTR family.

Will the Congress government allow KTR and his family to consume drugs, he asked. The government should seize the passports of KTR's family and take action against KTR, he said. Sanjay asked the government to explain why it is compromising on drugs which are destroying society. It is shameful that the Congress and the BRS are in the politics of compromise, he said. A comprehensive investigation should be conducted on this issue and if the government is sincere it should ensure that the evidence is not destroyed, he said.

Lokesh unveils AP's..

Continued from page 1

Amaravati's construction scheduled to start in December. The government is focusing on various sectors: aqua exports, petrochemicals, and green hydrogen industries in the Godavari districts, and chemical and pharma sectors in North Andhra. Additionally, a Civil Aviation University and data centre are set to be established in Visakhapatnam, the state's financial capital, with TCS commencing operations soon. Lokesh underscored that AP is striving to become a global manufacturing hub, inspired by Prime Minister Modi's vision of "Vikasit Bharat 2047." He encouraged industrialists from the US to invest in AP

and join the state's comprehensive development efforts. Consul General Srikr Reddy commended CM Naidu and Minister Lokesh's commitment to attracting investments to Andhra Pradesh. He noted that the recent Drone Summit in Vijayawada was well-received and that the roundtable was organized to facilitate investment discussions with Indian industry leaders.

Prominent attendees included Indiaspora Founder MR Rangaswamy, Google VP Rao Surapaneni, A5 Corporation CEO Vinay Krithivendi, Applied Materials CTO Om Nalamasu, Pi Datacenter CEO Kalyan Muppaneni, and representatives from TCS, West Bridge Capital, and Silicon Andhra, among others.

3 IAS officers joining AP..

Continued from page 1

of the Labour Department, while MM Naik has been relieved of his additional duties in that department. Vakati Karuna has been appointed as the Commissioner of Health and Family Welfare, with additional responsibilities as the Director of the National Health Mission.

G Vanimohan, the Commissioner of the Archaeology and Museum Department, has been transferred and appointed as Chief Secretary of the Department of Services in the General Administration Department. An order has also been issued to relieve Pola Bhaskar, who has been handling those responsibilities.

39 TG Spl Police..

Continued from page 1

and security in Telangana, the release said.

The Telangana Police remains committed to maintaining strict discipline within its ranks and taking corrective measures against any misconduct, it said, adding a thorough investigation is underway. Senior officials were directed to closely monitor Battalion activities and ensure a positive working environment, the release added. State DGP Jitender on Saturday said the concerns of TGSP personnel would be addressed and their demands sympathetically and on merit. In a release, he warned that indiscipline in uniform forces is a "very serious matter" that attracts the provision of the Police Forces (Restrictions of Rights) Act and the Police (Incitement to Disaffection) Act and is liable to be penalised under the law. He appealed to the TGSP personnel and their families that the grievances are being examined on merit and that the personnel should carry out their duties as usual.

Cops raid house..

Continued from page 1

Section 9 of the Excise Act by the Excise Taskforce.

Excise SI Srilatha said they had registered cases against farmhouse supervisor Karthik and Raj Pakala. She said the party was held in violation of rules. Raj Pakala was stated to be absconding.

Legislator KTR later told the media "it was a family gathering" and claimed that it was being given a different spin due to the Congress government's conspiracy.

The police mentioned in their FIR that narcotic drugs were used at the party and that Vijay Madduri had consumed cocaine given by Raj Pakala. Cases were filed against Raj Pakala and Vijay Madduri. The FIR was filed at the Mokila Police Station after a complaint by SI Koteswara Rao.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Clouds of doom

As the US push for de-escalation, the risk of a multi-front war looms large, threatening to destabilise West Asia

The recent Israeli airstrikes on Iran and the subsequent retaliatory measures have intensified the long-standing conflict between the two nations, raising fears of a broader war in West Asia. The airstrikes, which targeted Iranian military installations and reportedly resulted in the deaths of four Iranian soldiers, were framed as a response to Iranian aggression. Iran's ally, Hezbollah, quickly reacted with rocket salvos targeting residential areas in northern Israel, signalling the potential for the conflict to spread. The current episode of hostilities began after Israeli warplanes allegedly used Iraqi airspace to conduct strikes on military and radar installations in Tehran. These actions were framed by Israel as necessary measures to neutralise threats posed by Iran and its regional proxies, including Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran has condemned the strikes as a violation of its sovereignty, insisting on its right to retaliate. As expected the United States has firmly backed Israel, reiterating its "ironclad" support and cautioning Iran against further retaliation. Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, expressing concern about the potential for the violence to escalate uncontrollably.



The conflict's spillover into Lebanon, where Hezbollah's rocket attacks targeted northern Israel, highlights the interconnected nature of West Asia politics. Hezbollah, a powerful militia with close ties to Tehran, represents Iran's most prominent proxy in the region. Its involvement indicates that the conflict could easily escalate beyond a bilateral confrontation between Israel and Iran, drawing in other state and non-state actors. The conflict's potential to involve additional countries is significant. Lebanon, already grappling with a fragile political and economic situation, could become a battlefield, destabilising the broader Levant. Similarly, Iraq's alleged involvement in providing airspace for Israeli operations could trigger responses from Shia militias in the country. Besides, Iran's network of proxies, including militias in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, could engage in coordinated retaliatory strikes against Israel or the US interests in the region. This would complicate efforts to contain the conflict and could lead to an asymmetric, multi-front war. It goes without saying that diplomatic efforts are urgently needed to prevent the situation from deteriorating further. One country that could convince Israel for ceasefire is the US. It could leverage its influence over Israel and its regional allies to push for restraint, while simultaneously deterring Iranian retaliation through diplomatic channels. In fact even the US does not want the war to spill over. Direct communication between Washington and Tehran could prevent misunderstandings that might trigger further escalation. Besides, international neutral actors such as India, Russia, or regional mediators like Oman could facilitate backchannel negotiations aimed at establishing a ceasefire. The war must be stopped at any cost now else it could be a free-for-all, making it precursor to the World War III.

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PICTALK



People buy decorative items at a market ahead of the Diwali festival, in Amritsar

Come winter, Delhi chokes again



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Despite the implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan, including stricter dust control and bans on open burning, smog continues to blanket the city

Every year, an estimated 4.2 million deaths are linked to ambient air pollution worldwide, as nearly 91 per cent of the global population resides in areas where air quality exceeds the safe limits set by the World Health Organisation (WHO). In Asia's largest metropolitan regions, rapid urbanisation, unchecked industrialisation, population growth, and the surge in automobiles and construction activities have exacerbated air pollution levels, posing severe health risks. Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, exemplifies this crisis, with its air quality frequently plummeting to hazardous levels, especially during the winter months, making it a focal point in the battle against air pollution in the region. On the morning of October 19, 2024, the Air Quality Index (AQI) reached concerning levels in various parts of the Capital City, particularly in Anand Vihar and Akshardham, where it climbed to 334, placing it in the "very poor" category. The worsening air quality in Delhi can be attributed to several key factors. First, as easterly winds set in, dust pollution across the National Capital Region (NCR) has become a primary cause of the declining AQI. The Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP), a series of measures aimed at addressing Delhi's air pollution, was implemented on October 15 as the situation began to worsen. These measures include frequent cleaning of roads and restrictions on diesel generators. However, despite these efforts, the problem continues to escalate. One of the most significant contributors to Delhi's declining air quality is stubble burning in neighbouring states, primarily Punjab and Haryana. The Early Warning System (EWS) for Delhi predicts that the contribution of stubble burning to the city's pollution levels is expected to increase significantly over a few weeks. The seasonal practice of burning crop residue adds large amounts of particulate matter (PM2.5) to the air, exacerbating the already poor conditions in the city. As air quality continues to worsen, there are reports of residents



complaining of increasing health issues. Many are experiencing respiratory problems, including difficulty breathing, coughing, and throat irritation. According to media reports, the smog and particulate matter have caused inflammation of the airways and irritation in the eyes. These symptoms are consistent with high levels of pollution, which contribute to various respiratory illnesses to the extent that doctors have been receiving patients with skin issues too. Moreover, ENT specialists have noted a surge in cases involving nasal irritation, throat inflammation, and persistent dry coughs. These symptoms are affecting children and adults too with complaints of inflammation, and gastrointestinal problems, such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and dyspepsia, which have also been linked to pollution. In this regard, 'climate change' is another factor worsening this situation in Delhi. With changing weather patterns, temperature inversions at regular intervals, and extreme weather conditions even during summer and winter, in this season, pollutants become trapped near the ground, creating a layer of smog. Delhi's minimum temperature of 19.2 degrees Celsius, slightly above the sea-



THE WORSENING AIR QUALITY IN DELHI CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL KEY FACTORS. FIRST, AS EASTERLY WINDS SET IN, DUST POLLUTION ACROSS THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION HAS BECOME A PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE DECLINING AQI

sonal average, contributes to these conditions. Moreover, climate change also aggravates the effects of vehicular emissions by reducing the frequency of rainfall, which would otherwise help to clear particulate matter from the air. The government has taken several measures to curb the rising pollution, including implementing the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) restrictions - which include different stages I-IV - besides imposing fines for open burning. Additionally, authorities have been tasked with identifying local sources contributing to the worsening air quality. To tackle the immediate crises that have engulfed the Capital City, the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has implemented Stage 1 of the Graded Response Action Plan across Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan, in response to air quality data and weather forecasts provided by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), with a series of stringent measures, aimed at mitigating air pollution. Key restrictions include enhanced dust control protocols at construction sites, improved waste management practices, and rigorous checks on polluting vehicles and industrial emissions, particularly from power plants and brick kilns. Additionally, open waste burning and the use of diesel generators are prohibited, along with a ban on coal and firewood in eateries. Construction and demolition activities exceeding 500 square meters face severe limitations, and diesel/petrol vehicles older than 10-15 years, as well as the use of firecrackers, are banned until January 1, 2025. Not only this, traffic management is also prioritised, with increased deployment of police in congested areas to reduce vehicular idling, while visibly polluting vehicles face strict penalties and possible impoundment. These measures form part of a broader strategy to curtail air pollution and improve public health. The situation is also a stark reminder of the need for collective action to address the underlying causes of air pollution, including vehicular emissions, waste burning, and industrial activities, in addition to climate mitigation efforts. What authorities must also look at is the underutilisation of the 'smog tower', which was introduced as a major intervention. (The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Leveraging folklores to educate the new generation



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

The ancient art of storytelling remains a vital medium for teaching values and fostering cultural understanding

Folklores, the traditional stories, myths, and legends passed down through generations, have long been a source of fascination, serving as much more than mere entertainment. Folklores often centre on ordinary people who face adversity yet find ways to overcome it, reflecting everyday life's common struggles and aspirations. This relatability comforts those who feel isolated in their struggles, showing that they are not alone and that their challenges are shared across time and place. One of folklores' most significant aspects is its inherent simplicity, which makes it a powerful tool for education across generations. Folklores are often crafted to be relatable, encapsulating moral lessons or practical wisdom in a format accessible to children and adults alike. This accessibility makes folklore an effective educational medium, especially in regions where formal education might be limited. Through memorable characters, narratives, and



moral lessons or practical wisdom in a format accessible to children and adults alike. This accessibility makes folklore an effective educational medium, especially in regions where formal education might be limited. Through memorable characters, narratives, and

Panchatantra and Jataka Tales have transcended regions, becoming staples of Indian storytelling that educate on universal values while highlighting India's unique cultural tapestry. Indian folklore frequently addresses social issues, challenging established norms and encouraging reflection on societal practices. For instance, the folktales of Tenali Rama, the witty advisor in the Vijayanagara Empire, often question the elite's excesses and promote justice for the common man. Similarly, Birbal, a wise minister in the Mughal court, features in numerous tales that promote intellectual equality. These stories teach Indians to value wit, intelligence, and fairness, subtly questioning the authority of those in power. By embedding reformist ideas within entertaining narratives, Indian folklores provide a soft yet powerful critique of societal hierarchies, encouraging progressive thinking. Many Indian folklore emphasize the bond between humans and

nature, imparting lessons on environmental stewardship that resonate with India's agrarian roots. Stories about sacred rivers, protective spirits, or revered animals highlight the belief that natural entities are to be respected and cared for. These tales often highlight shared human experiences, bridging cultural gaps and fostering a sense of collective identity. Folklore serves as a reservoir of collective wisdom, transcending time and geography to educate and reform society. Its remarkable ability to touch hearts, prompt reflection, and inspire action makes it indispensable in both formal and informal education. In an era dominated by digital technology, folklore may seem antiquated, yet its relevance has only deepened. Modern storytellers, educators, and social reformers can adapt folklore for contemporary audiences, harnessing its emotive power to foster empathy and awareness. (The writer, is the Dean, academic affairs, at Garden City University, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BRICS PRIORITISES DEVELOPMENT

Madam — The power of diplomacy is writ large in the recently concluded bilateral meeting between India and China on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Russia. It also broke some ice ever since the deadly clash in 2020. However, notwithstanding a new deal settled on the disengagement of troops, both remain deeply suspicious of each other. That BRICS has a greater relevance in a multipolar and multidimensional context at a time when the world faces multiple challenges like the ongoing wars, economic uncertainty, climate change, terrorism, east-west and north-south divide as the forum reflects the Global South's deeper concerns, with many more countries queuing up to join or partner with the grouping. The first ever attendance of new member countries like the UAE, Egypt, Ethiopia and Iran opposing the unilateral sanctions by the west on other nations underscores their challenges confronting them and encourages them to unite for a fairer international order. Another case in point is the creation of the New Development Bank, which has emerged as a significant platform for the needs of such countries. Greater use of local currency finds mention in the Kazan declaration rather than supporting a yuan anchored BRICS against the U.S. dollar. India favours greater use of local currencies for cross border payment system. Increasing use of UPI, which has been adopted by many countries including the UAE acts as a bulwark against the west. The development of the global south remains the top priority of the BRICS Summit in contrast to portraying the grouping as only a gang up against the US-led west. Other initiatives include start-up forums, workforce skilling initiatives, and digital public infrastructure providing low-cost solutions for developing countries. Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

IMPROVE RURAL HEALTHCARE

Madam — There should be the government's special focus on public health, particularly in tribal areas in this season. The

Glaciers are melting fast



The rapid melting of all 900 glaciers in Uttarakhand, along with 9,575 others across the Himalayas, has reached a critical level due to global warming. Alarming factors like deforestation, black carbon deposits, and greenhouse gas emissions are accelerating this decline, leading to water scarcity, impacting hydropower generation,

and threatening the extinction of many aquatic species. To protect our nation and environment from these apocalyptic consequences, immediate and decisive action is essential. According to the Global Forest Watch report, "From 2001-2023, Uttarakhand lost 20.7 thousand hectares of tree cover, representing 0.89% of the global total." This tree loss is unacceptable, and measures like afforestation, preserving green areas around glaciers, and strengthening forest protection are crucial. Furthermore, it is imperative to establish research and development projects to study and preserve glaciers and to limit black carbon emissions. Acting now is essential to safeguarding our natural resources and the future of our environment. Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

KIWIS WINS PUNE TEST

Madam — Kudos to the Kiwis for their marvellous victory at the Pune Test and a series win since 1955 on Indian soil for the first time. Bowlers winning matches has been proven again when Kiwis Mitchell Santner put India off the backfoot in the Pune test. Chasing a target of 359 to win the test, the only batter who played with intent was Jaiswal, and in the end, there was some resistance from Ravindra Jadeja, but it was not good enough. The Indian top order can't rest on the old laurels of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, and both of them failed to deliver. Full credit goes to Washington Sundar and Ashwin for fighting despite the fact that this was the most humiliating defeat for India while beaten in our own backyard very convincingly by the Kiwis. It's high time for the head coach Gautam Gambhir to realise that this team calls for a revamp and to bring in those who are hungry for runs and wickets. AP Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

DVG Sankara Rao | Vizianagaram



FIRST COLUMN

UNLOCKING THE DIVINE ENERGIE

According to yogic traditions, each day is linked to a specific shakti and Diwali happens to be a special day



ASHWININI GURUJI

The universe operates under the influence of various *shaktis* (divine energies). As one advances in yogic practice (*sadhana*), these energies can be experienced directly. Each of the 365 days is associated with a specific *shakti*, which is why maintaining discipline and consistent daily practice in yoga is crucial. Missing even a single day can disrupt the connection with that day's *shakti*, potentially setting back the entire year's *sadhana*. In the cosmos, every element is interconnected, so when one aspect is neglected, it affects everything—our body, the Earth, and even other planets and stars. Each *shakti* is associated with a day, but accessing these energies does not require rituals. In yogic and tantric traditions, *sadhana* alone is the key to connecting with *shakti*. Understanding the form (*swarup*) of each *shakti* is essential. While every form has a specific name, names are revealed only after the body is prepared through particular *sadhanas*. At a basic level, when you meditate (*dhyan*) with your guru, you may see different forms manifesting in them, such as the sun or the moon. Have you ever wondered what these forms signify?

Many practitioners have reported seeing the sun during meditation. What makes the sun so significant? If you observe the sun at sunrise or sunset while focusing on the Manipura chakra (navel centre) and chanting the mantra "Ram," you will notice a glow emerging in your body. Within a month, you may begin to look noticeably different. However, a word of caution—any yogic practice should be undertaken under the guidance of a *guru* who can adapt it to your capacity. Similarly, the moon is a fascinating energy source. It merely reflects the sun's light, yet it can influence tides and even the Earth's surface during a full moon. Have



you ever considered what makes the moon special? On full moon nights, animals may behave aggressively, and incidents of accidents and conflicts tend to rise. These are just basic observations that hint at something deeper about these celestial forms. Understanding their true nature requires direct experience, which is attainable through the proper practice of *Sanatan Kriya*. The moon may appear calm and peaceful, but it is actually more volatile than the sun. When you observe the moon under a *guru's* guidance, you can perceive the mantras embedded within its form. Some *shaktis* are not directly visible and can only be accessed through other *shaktis*. These experiences form the foundation of yoga. Without direct experience, yoga remains incomplete. Nature, with all its wonders—from flowers of various colors to the sky above—contains the hidden forms of *shaktis*. If you observe these elements without blinking, under the guidance of a *guru*, you may find that your physical and mental imbalances begin to dissipate. However, discipline (*niyam*) is essential. The practice must be continuous, and disruptions will occur if one lacks the capacity for the *shakti* or does not have a *guru* to guide them. Everything around us contains the essence of *shakti*, and these energies are easily accessible. When one becomes steady and focused on a particular *shakti*, it starts to follow them, empowering their life. The nine days leading up to Diwali hold special significance because of the congregation of specific *shaktis* during this period. Our ancestors advised observing celibacy (*brahmacharya*) during these days to strengthen the body and prepare it to receive these energies. During this time, keep your mind centred within yourself, as the *sadhana* performed during these nine days is equivalent to months of practice. As Diwali approaches, especially on *Amavasya* (the new moon night), when we light *dijas*, it is an opportune time for *shakti sadhana*. Even a layperson who is not an experienced practitioner can perceive the *swarup* of *shakti* by sitting with closed eyes in meditation. With a pure heart, one can experience these divine energies without any elaborate rituals. Let this Diwali be a time to connect with the powerful *shaktis*, embracing their presence to enrich your spiritual journey.

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

Rising import reliance amid regulatory challenge



UTTAM GUPTA

Despite Government efforts to boost domestic production, policy constraints and pricing caps continue to stifle the energy sector's growth



According to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG), during the first six months of the current financial year (FY) September 2024, India's consumption of natural gas (NG) increased by almost 12 per cent to 36.850 billion metric standard cubic meters (bmscm) over the corresponding period last FY. However, the import of NG (it is imported in a liquefied form commonly known as LNG) increased by 23 per cent to 18.975 bmscm during this period. Taken as a proportion of consumption, imports were 51.5 per cent during April-September 2024 up from 46.8 per cent during April-September 2023.

The country's production of NG registered a marginal increase of around 2 per cent during April-September 2024. The State-owned major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation or ONGC (it contributes about 84 per cent of total domestic output) produced 9.407 bmscm of NG during this period, which was 4 per cent less than during the same period of last FY. However, Oil India Limited (it has 8 per cent share) produced 4 per cent more NG at 1.577 bmscm during this period. The share of production in consumption was 48.5 per cent. Delivering the 75th Independence Day address on 15th August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to achieve self-reliance in energy production by boosting the gas-based economy. He had then wished the share of NG in the total energy mix to go up from subsisting around 6 per cent to 15 per cent. Pertinently, even to comply with the 6 per cent share, India had to import more than 50 per cent of its NG requirement. The position hasn't changed even today. Increasing the share of NG in the total energy mix to 15 per cent would require its consumption to increase from its current annual of 73,689 bmscm to 184,222 mmscm (73,689x2.5). The current consumption includes domestic production of 35,739 bmscm. If domestic production stagnates at the current level (in sync with the trend of the last few years) then, to achieve the 15 per cent target, the import of LNG will have to be 148,483 bmscm (184,222-35,739) which means India's import dependence will have to increase to over 80 per cent. The above calculation assumes no



THERE IS AN URGENT NEED FOR A 'PREDICTABLE' AND 'ATTRACTIVE' POLICY ENVIRONMENT TO GIVE A FILLIP TO THE EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION OF NG

increase in total energy consumption. But, it is increasing at a rapid pace. The country's power demand alone is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 7 per cent during the next five years (as per an estimate by the Central Electricity Authority or CEA).

In that scenario, compliance with the 15 per cent target for NG would mean still higher reliance on imports. What is coming in the way of increasing production? Natural resource endowment is not a problem. India has 26 sedimentary basins (SBs) covering an area of 3.4 million sq km that could be searched for hydrocarbon resources. However, only six of the SBs are under commercial exploitation; these too are sub-optimally utilised. Hydrocarbon exploration is a highly capital-intensive and technology-intensive business involving a long gestation period. It is risky, especially when drilling in deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature (D/UD/HP/HT) fields in offshore areas such as the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin.

However, these areas offer maximum promise in terms of reserves. Multinational companies (MNCs) such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total etc. which have the technology and resources can be enthused to take long-term bets in the Indian hydrocarbon sector provided the government offers them an opportunity to earn an attractive return on their investment in a 'sustained' basis.

This, in turn, requires that their efforts in the discovery and development of NG fields don't face regulatory hurdles and that they can sell the gas 'freely' at a 'remunerative' price. Modi - The government has made a lot of efforts to remove regulatory hurdles. Until recently, of 1.73 million sq km SB area lying offshore, 0.69 million sq km was a 'No go' area, courtesy of security reasons.

The Centre has released almost all of this for exploration and produc-

tion (E&P) activity. Now, it is granting lease rights over the entire economic life of the allotted fields (this could extend up to 30 years, even beyond depending on the available reserves) instead of the extant system of short tenure with extensions.

It has also made amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act to enable prompt access to forest areas for exploration of hydrocarbon resources. Under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP), also known as the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) launched in 2017, E&P firms are allowed to pick up a block of their choice unlike the earlier New Exploration and Licensing Policy (NELP) (launched in 1999) wherein they had to accept what the government offered. Besides, under OALP, an operator gets a composite license to search for hydrocarbon in whatever form viz NG, 'shale gas', CBM (coal bed methane) etc. For long, E&P efforts were hamstrung by cumbersome procedures, multiple approvals and bureaucratic red tape. Approvals were needed at every stage.

As many as 37 procedures were required to be followed by a firm-awarded block under NELP. Team Modi has substantially liberalised and de-bureaucratised approvals by providing for self-certification of documents and pre-approved clearance of blocks. While the above helps, without freedom of marketing and the ability to secure a good price, E&P firms won't get enthused. Of the domestic gas, on around two-thirds of supplies (mostly from so-called 'legacy fields' given on nomination to ONGC and OIL and from fields given under NELP), the Centre has full control over 'to whom' the supplies will be made and at 'what price'. From April 1, 2023, based on the recommendations of the Kirit Parikh committee, this price expressed on a per million British thermal units (Btu) basis is arrived at by taking 10 per cent

of the monthly average of the Indian crude basket in the preceding month and notified every month. The price thus calculated is subject to a ceiling of US\$ 6.50 per mBtu which makes the formula redundant.

Now, the bureaucrats have come up with a 20 per cent premium on supplies by ONGC and OIL only from the so-called 'new wells' or 'well interventions'.

If their intent is to give a good price why put a cap in the first place? Moreover, which fields get the benefit of 'new wells' or 'interventions', will also be solely at their discretion. Even the pricing of the remaining one-third of domestic NG supplied from the so-called deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature fields (KG-D6 operated by Reliance Industries and neighbouring KG-DWN-98/2 operated by ONGC in Krishna-Godavari basin off the Andhra Pradesh coast fall in this category) isn't free from 'control' 'discretion' and 'arbitrariness'. Technically though, the firms can go for competitive bidding to determine the price for such supplies (referred to as a 'premium' price), this too is subject to a ceiling linked to the prices of alternate fuels including fuel oil, naphtha, and LNG.

There is an urgent need for a 'predictable' and 'attractive' policy environment to give a fillip to the exploration and production of NG. The Kirit Parikh committee was conscious of this when it recommended de-regulating difficult gas fields' prices by January 1, 2026, and the price on supplies from legacy fields by January 1, 2027. The government should implement these recommendations. Meanwhile, it should prepare the ground for giving subsidies directly to major users such as fertilizers, power, CNG, PNG etc instead of creating distortions in the supply chain by controlling the price of basic inputs such as NG.

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

Ayurveda Day 2024: Celebrating innovations for global health and wellness

This year's celebration aims to highlight the transformative potential of Ayurveda in addressing modern health challenges

Over the last decade, the Ayush sector has undergone a significant transformation, largely due to the initiatives led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This revolution in traditional Indian medicine has created new opportunities for various stakeholders, including industry professionals, traders, and healthcare practitioners. Since its establishment in 2014, the Ministry of Ayush has successfully integrated Ayush into mainstream healthcare, driving innovation, research, and gaining global recognition. The ministry's strategic focus encompasses public health, technology, education, globalisation, and quality control, ensuring that Ayush products and services are safe and of high quality.



RAJESH KOTECHEA

This comprehensive approach aligns with the goals of universal health coverage and sustainability, contributing to the sector's growth, increased public awareness, and a rising demand for Ayush healthcare systems worldwide. Ayurveda Day is celebrated on the occasion of Dhanteras to honor Lord Dhanvantari, the deity revered as the physician

of the gods and the God of Ayurveda. This year, Ayurveda Day will be observed on October 29, 2024, with a renewed focus on the theme "Ayurveda Innovations for Global Health." Since the Ministry of Ayush initiated Ayurveda Day in 2016, the event has expanded into a global celebration. The emphasis this year is on showcasing Ayurveda's potential to improve global health through innovative practices and natural treatment methods. Ayurveda's core strength lies in its holistic approach to health, which emphasizes prevention, health promotion, and natural healing. With the growing global demand for integrative healthcare solutions, Ayurveda is gaining recognition as a viable and sustainable alterna-

tive. Recent advancements, supported by scientific research, have increased the global reach and acceptance of Ayurvedic practices. One of the most notable contributions of Ayurveda to modern healthcare is the innovative use of herbal medicine. It is reported that over 95% of Ayurvedic interventions are based on herbal treatments, utilizing the healing properties of nature. As scientific research continues to validate the effectiveness of Ayurvedic herbs and therapies, the demand for these natural solutions is rapidly increasing worldwide. The rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, and cancer has highlighted the need for natural, preventive healthcare solutions.



Ayurveda, with its focus on holistic well-being, offers a unique approach to managing these conditions. Additionally, the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance requires alternative treatment methods, and Ayurvedic remedies, rooted in herbal medicine, present sustainable options. As climate change exacerbates health risks,

Ayurveda's emphasis on lifestyle management, mental health, and care for the elderly provides resilient solutions for vulnerable populations. Moreover, as societies face challenges like nutritional disorders and mental health crises, Ayurveda's approach to balancing the body and mind becomes increasingly relevant. Ayurveda is not a static system; it evolves continually through ongoing research and innovation. Recent advancements in fields such as genome sequencing and nanotechnology have revealed parallels with traditional Ayurvedic concepts like Prakriti (body constitution) and Bhasma (herbal-mineral formulations). These modern innovations help bridge the gap between traditional practices and contemporary

healthcare, making Ayurvedic treatments more accessible and scientifically validated. Ayurveda as a proactive health strategy that can boost immunity, mental clarity, and overall well-being. The alignment of Ayurvedic innovations with the SDGs and Universal Health Coverage (UHC) underscores its potential to provide accessible, affordable, and inclusive healthcare. The 2024 Ayurveda Day will mark several important milestones that reflect the growth and integration of Ayurveda into mainstream healthcare. The Ministry of Ayush is accelerating this progress through the construction of Phase II of the All India Institute of Ayurveda in New Delhi and the establishment of six new Centers of Excellence to promote innova-

tion and research in traditional medicine. Plans to develop the Central Research Institute of Yoga and Naturopathy (CRIYN) in Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh aim to enhance the promotion of holistic health practices. The celebrations for Ayurveda Day 2024 will include a variety of engaging activities, such as creative exhibitions, Ayurveda quizzes, medical camps, and Prakriti Parikshan (body constitution analysis). Initiatives like "Ayurveda in My Kitchen" and "Ayurveda in My Vatika" will emphasise the practical application of Ayurvedic principles in daily life.

(The writer is Secretary Ministry of Ayush; views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

PUSH TOWARDS GREEN ENERGY TRANSITION

Govt plans to issue ALMM for PV cells

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is planning to introduce an Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) for solar cells on the lines of module manufacturing to boost India's transition towards green energy.

The government is aiming to make the second list (List II) under the ALMM for solar PV cells effective April 1, 2026.

The government introduced the ALMM order (List I) in 2019 for solar modules to boost the manufacturing and usage of made-in-India solar panels. It was made mandatory to source PV modules from models and manufacturers included in the ALMM List I.

According to an office memorandum of the Ministry of



New and Renewable Energy, the ALMM order dated January 2, 2019, specified models and manufacturers of solar PV modules, whereas List-II will identify and include models and manufacturers of solar PV cells.

However, to date, List II of solar PV cells has not been issued because the installed capacity of solar PV cells in the country was lower than the demand, the government document said.

"With installed capacity of solar PV cells in the country expected to increase substantially in the next two years, it

has been proposed to issue List-II of solar PV cells under ALMM, which shall be effective from April 1, 2026," according to the draft amendment to ALMM order for implementation of ALMM for Solar PV cells.

The draft paper also proposed that the solar PV modules -- which are presently enlisted in ALMM List-I (for solar PV modules) with an expiry date beyond March 31, 2026 -- will also have to use solar PV cells included in ALMM List-II (for solar PV cells) from April 1, 2026, onwards.

If the modules don't have the cells included in List-II, they will be liable to be delisted from ALMM List-I, as per the draft.



'Network densification to drive next phase of growth'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Swedish telecom gear maker Ericsson expects its next phase of growth in India will be driven by network densification due to the rising data consumption appetite of end users in the country, a senior company official has said.

Ericsson's managing director for India and head of networks for market area South East Asia, Oceania and India, Nitin Bansal told PTI that there is significant potential for growth in fixed wireless

access in India, and it will soon surpass the number of deployments in the US.

"The next phase of growth is focused on meeting increasing traffic requirements, primarily through network densification to enhance network utilisation. Network densification will occur due to increased network utilisation," he said.

Ericsson estimates that the data traffic in India will grow from 29 GB per smartphone user per month to 68 GB per smartphone user per month by 2029.



Air Express plans to start flights to Bangkok, Phuket

Air India Express plans to start flights to Bangkok and Phuket in the coming months as the Tata Group-owned airline expands its network. Currently, the carrier flies to 14 international cities, mostly in the Middle East, and 35 domestic destinations. It has a fleet of 90 aircraft and operates more than 400 flights daily. A senior official told PTI that the airline will be expanding its operations and plans to start services to Bangkok and Phuket in Thailand. The airline is expanding its network and this week announced that it will start flights to Jammu and Sri Vijaya Puram (Port Blair) from December 1. It has services to 14 overseas destinations -- Abu Dhabi, Doha, Dubai, Kuwait, Ras al-Khaimah, Riyadh, Al Ain, Bahrain, Dammam, Jeddah, Muscat, Salalah, Sharjah and Singapore. Another official in the know said the carrier is focused on expanding its presence in the leisure travel segment and continuing to strengthen routes mainly catering to the expat community.



'Overall job postings surged by 20 %'

Professional networking platform apna.co has reported a 20 per cent year-on-year increase in job postings to 2.16 lakh this festive season across logistics & operations, e-commerce, and hospitality. This year's festive season was particularly important for businesses looking to rebound after a slowdown in consumer spending during the summer and election periods. Companies were focused on driving sales beyond last year's numbers, according to apna.co. Additionally, the rapid expansion of the quick commerce industry contributed to this hiring momentum. Among the sectors, logistics and operations experienced the highest growth with a 70 per cent increase in job postings. Retail and e-commerce followed with a 30 per cent rise, while the restaurant and hospitality sector grew by 25 per cent. To meet the rising demand, logistics and mobility leaders like Rapido, Delhivery, Ekart, and Shiprocket have posted over 30,000 openings for roles like warehouse managers, logistics associates, inventory managers, and delivery drivers. "At Apna, we typically start preparing for the festive season two months in advance.

Mahindra Lifespace posts Rs 14 cr loss on lower income

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers Limited has posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 14.01 crore for the second quarter of this fiscal on lower income.

The company had posted a net loss of Rs 18.93 crore in the year-ago period.

Its total income declined to Rs 16.96 crore during the July-September quarter from

Rs 26.70 crore in the year-ago period, according to a regulatory filing on Friday.

During the April-September period of this fiscal, Mahindra Lifespace posted a net loss of Rs 1.27 crore against a net loss of Rs 23.20 crore in the year-ago period.

The total income grew to Rs 222.66 crore in the first six months of this fiscal from Rs 136.76 crore in the same period of the preceding year.

Hindustan Zinc to double production capacity: CEO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Group firm Hindustan Zinc plans to pump in up to US\$ 2 billion (around Rs 17,000 crore) to double its production capacity to 2 million tonnes in the next few years, its CEO Arun Misra said. The company which had already engaged consultants to ramp up its capacity is looking for mining partners for the same, Misra said.

"We have a plan of doubling



the production to 2 million tonnes... So, I am sure by the

end of this quarter, we should be able to make project announcements, which projects, how much and where it is happening," he explained.

The company is targeting a production capacity of 1.2 million tonnes (MT) in 2025, followed by 1.35 MT in 2026 and 1.8 MT in 2027, Misra said.

"And then finally, sometime, we should be able to get 2 million tonnes," he explained.

When asked about the investment the company plans

to make to increase production capacity, he said, "Because most of the mining infrastructure is in place, so, it is anywhere between 2 billion dollars or 1.95 or 2 billion dollars, roughly about, say, Rs 14,000 crore to Rs 17,000 crore is the kind of money that will be required."

On the company's restructuring plans, he said that the discussions are on and the stakeholders are talking regularly.

Mcap of nine of top-10 firms drops Rs 2 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Nine of the top-10 most valued firms together lost a whopping Rs 2,09,952.26 crore from market valuation last week, in line with weak trends in equities, with Hindustan Unilever and Reliance Industries Limited taking the biggest hit.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,822.46 points or 2.24 per cent.

"The dismal Q2 earnings so far have aggravated the

investors' woes while persistent FII selling continued to create havoc in the market," said



Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

From the top-10 pack, HDFC Bank emerged as the only winner.

The market valuation of Hindustan Unilever eroded by Rs 44,195.81 crore to Rs 5,93,870.94 crore.

Reliance Industries' valuation tumbled Rs 41,994.54 crore to Rs 17,96,726.60 crore.

State Bank of India's market valuation plummeted by Rs 35,117.72 crore to Rs 6,96,655.84 crore, and that of Bharti Airtel tanked by Rs 24,108.72 crore to Rs 9,47,598.89 crore.

FII activities, trends key drivers for market movement

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Equity investors will track the trading activity of foreign investors, global trends and ongoing earnings results for further cues, and benchmark indices may continue to witness consolidation in a holiday-shortened week amid the monthly derivatives expiry, analysts said.

Markets fell sharply last week amid massive foreign capital outflows and dismal Q2 earnings so far.

Weakness in the markets might continue in the near

term amid cautiousness among investors ahead of the US presidential election early next month, an expert said.



Equity markets will remain closed on Friday for Diwali, but a special trading window

will be open for one hour in the evening.

Leading stock exchanges BSE and NSE will conduct a one-hour special 'Muhurat Trading' session on the occasion of Diwali on November 1, marking the start of the new Samvat 2081.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said, "We expect the consolidation to continue in the short term. A reversal in trend will depend on a slowdown in FIIs' selling intensity and the outcome of the US presidential election".



'SBI named Best Bank in India for 2024'

State Bank of India (SBI) was recognised as the Best Bank in India for 2024 by Global Finance Magazine of the US at its 31st Annual Best Bank Awards event held during the sidelines of Annual Meetings of the IMF and the World Bank in Washington. SBI Chairman CS Setty received the award in recognition of the bank's unwavering commitment to providing exceptional services and promoting financial inclusion nationwide by winning the trust of its customers, the bank said in a statement. For decades, Global Finance's Best Bank Awards have set the trusted standard for evaluating the world's financial institutions, making them invaluable to corporate decision-makers, especially as the global economy faces significant challenges.

Turkiye's safeguard measures impact exports: India Seeks compensation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has sought compensation from Turkiye as Ankara's decision to extend safeguard measures on polyester staple fibres has impacted the product's exports, an official said.

India flagged concerns and impact from these measures during a recent bilateral consultations with Turkiye under the WTO's safeguard agreement.

On October 14, India sought consultations with Turkiye under the agreement following Ankara's decision to extend safeguard measures on polyester staple fibres.

"We have sought compensation as we have a loss of trade.

India has the option to propose retaliatory customs duties equivalent to the value of export loss if the issue will not be resolved through consultations," the official said.

India has exported these fibres worth US\$ 22.18 million during 2023-24. It was US\$ 23.55 million in 2022-23.

In September, Turkiye decided to extend safeguard measures against imports of polyester staple fibres.

"As a member having a substantial trade interest in the export of products concerned, India had requested for consultations with Turkiye on the extension of the measures," the official added.

FSSAI is now more pro-active, industry-centred: Nestle

PNS ■ SAMALKHA (HARYANA)

There has been a dramatic change in the tone and tenor of FSSAI, and the Indian food regulator has now become more pro-active and industry-centred with fast responses in the last decade, said Nestle India Chairman and Managing Director Suresh Narayanan.

Moreover, with the setting of more NABL-accredited laboratories by different leaders of FSSAI, the credibility of the testing process has also increased, said Narayanan, who led Nestle India after the Maggi crisis, which unfolded almost a decade back.

In June 2015, FSSAI banned

Maggi noodles for allegedly containing lead beyond permissible limits, forcing the company to withdraw the product from the market.

Industry observers opine



that only after the Maggi crisis did the FSSAI come into the limelight across the country though it was established almost seven years ago, in September 2008, to lay down

science-based standards for food articles and rules and regulations.

Nestle India relaunched Maggi in November 2015 after the ban was lifted and again got its pole position in the fast-growing instant noodles segment, where it still dominates with over 60 per cent market share.

Nestle has sold over six billion servings of Maggi, making India the largest market for Maggi worldwide, the company disclosed in its latest annual report earlier this year.

When asked about the evolution of FSSAI as a regulator in the last decade after the Maggi crisis, Narayanan said it "has come a very long way".

FPIs withdraw Rs 85,790 cr on attractive Chinese market valuations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors have continued selling in the Indian market, pulling out a massive Rs 85,790 crore (around USD 10.2 billion) from equities this month due to Chinese stimulus measures, attractive stock valuations, and the elevated pricing of domestic equities.

October is turning into the worst-ever month in terms of foreign fund outflows. In March 2020, FPIs withdrew Rs 61,973 crore from equities.

The latest outflow came after a nine-month high investment of Rs 57,724 crore in September 2024.

Piramal Pharma deploying US\$ 85 mn capex: Nandini

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Piramal Pharma is utilising a capex of about US\$ 85 million for various initiatives, including capacity expansion, maintenance and de-bottlenecking of CDMO sites, in the current fiscal, according to its Chairperson Nandini Piramal.

The Mumbai-headquartered firm, which aims to cross US\$ 2 billion in revenue by FY30, has already invested around US\$ 30 million in the first half of the ongoing fiscal on the initiatives.

"We expect the capex this year to be at a similar level as last year, which is about US\$ 85 million," Piramal told PTI in an interaction.

Regulatory changes like amendment in the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code and standardization of bond wordings would give a fillip to newly introduced product underwritten by general insurance companies, called surety bonds, experts said.

This product launched in 2022 is going to play a crucial role in supporting India's infrastructure development and heavily reduce reliance on bank guarantees for project finance. As a result, banks can focus on other productive sectors for lending.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, which is the pioneer of the product said that it has been able to add more than 50

SURETY BONDS BUSINESS

Regulatory changes to provide necessary push: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



This product launched in 2022 is going to play a crucial role in supporting India's infrastructure development and heavily reduce reliance on bank guarantees for project finance

beneficiaries who have started accepting surety bonds.

According to Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Chief Technical Officer TA Ramalingam, possible amendments in the legal framework are crucial in providing insurance companies with equal legal recourse as banks under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy

Code (IBC).

This parity would provide a level playing field, encourage fair competition and foster market growth for surety bonds, he said. According to a government official, the matter is before the concerned ministry and amendments in IBC may be tabled in Parliament in the due course of time.

"The expectation that surety bonds should be cheaper

than bank guarantees is unsustainable for insurers. Issues related to pricing, reinsurance options, and lack of clarity on indemnity documents further hinder progress. The Indian Contract Act and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code do not recognize the rights of insurers at par with financial creditors," Vara Technology founder Sunil Kanoria said.

TELANGANA SCHEDULED CASTES COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD., (TGSCDCCL), Hyderabad, invites Proposals (RFP) for Engagement of training institutions that are affiliated with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), New Delhi, to provide skill development training programs for Scheduled Caste unemployed youth of Telangana. These programs aim to develop skills that are useful for Wage employment/Self-employment. Eligible and interested institutions may download the proposed application format from the website and submit their proposals accordingly. Website Address: <https://tgscdccl.cgg.gov.in> Sr. VC & Managing Director TGSCDCCL, Hyderabad
DIPR RO NO. 589-PP/CL-Agency/Advt/12024-25 Date: 26.10.2024

WHEN SOUNDARYA WAS 'CRUISING THROUGH HER EMOTIONS' ON SETS OF HOUSEFULL 5



Soundarya Sharma speaks her heart out in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, expressing her gratitude for her rise to fame, interesting insights about her upcoming film *Housefull 5* and more

TEJAL SINHA
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Soundarya Sharma, the *Bigg Boss* sensation who set the reality TV show ablaze with her sizzling glamour and fiery personality, is now ready to take the silver screen by storm with her highly anticipated film *Housefull 5*! With a spark in her eyes and a spring in her step, this talented actress is all set to showcase her impressive range and leave fans spellbound with her undeniable charm and talent. As she makes her way from the *Bigg Boss* house to the big screen, Soundarya Sharma is sure to make a lasting impact and cement her place as one of the most exciting new stars.

"It feels amazing," begins the *Country Mafia* fame with a chuckle, overwhelmed with the love and opportunities she's been receiving right from ads to shows and now with films. "It feels on top of the world seeing how you've started the journey and finally, some baby steps you've taken. There is a silver lining in life. It feels very good. *Jab aapka kaam longe dekhte hai* and they appreciate you for your hard work."

Well, that's just not it! Her life post stint in *Bigg Boss* has been all about love, immense recognition and the adulations of fans not

just in India but overseas too. "Every time that I've travelled, the love I've received has been humongous. My first travel post about the show felt so thrilling. People who didn't know about my work now know me and my work so well," says the *Raktanchal 2* actress.

Fast forward to the present; she's all set to star in one of the biggest film franchises, which has already been the talk of the town since its announcement—*Housefull 5*. As we were about to discuss, Soundarya was so excited about this project, because, why not? "I'm on cloud 9," she expresses with immense exhilaration. Though she has no godfather in the industry, however, she's all grateful for her god sister, Wardha Khan Nadiadwala, for believing in her. "It feels amazing when someone believes in you and shows that interest, especially when you come from nowhere as an outsider. My dream was always to make it big and see myself on the biggest screen; emerge as the biggest superstar and upcoming star of the country."

"I think you'll have to ask Wardha for this and eventually Sajid sir as well," expresses the *Ranchi Diaries* fame about what really made her get onboard for the project. So eventually one day, Soundarya was showing her show's reel to the lady boss of Nadiadwala Productions. "They had also seen me in *Bigg Boss*. I'm blessed to have her in my life because all it takes is one person to believe in you. I feel she's that person who believed in me when nobody did. So I'm truly grateful. Like I said, she's just my god sister. She's an angel; God sent the

angel. One day, she called me up, saying, "We have signed you for *Housefull 5*. I couldn't believe it at that moment. I was just crying and it was raining that day."

There's also a heartwarming moment she recalled for us: "I remember as a kid, I used to dance to *Housefull* songs, *Dhanno* and *Papa Jag Jaayega*. For me to be a part of *Housefull 5* is a great deal. Little did I know that one day I would be a part of *Housefull 5* as a lead. I've been so excited that I'm jumping and just dancing all the time these days." Haha, that's cute! Well, we get it, Soundarya.

Housefull 5 has an ensemble cast with the OG Akshay Kumar, Riteish Deshmukh, Dino Morea, Abhishek Bachchan, Shreyas Talpade, Chunky Panday, Jacqueline Fernandez, Nargis Fakhri and Chitrangana, among the rest.

While she's also had the opportunity to previously work with Akshay Kumar, Shah Rukh Khan and Ajay Devgn in *Vimal* advertisements, little did she know that she would soon star alongside Akshay Kumar in such a big franchise. As she was all praises for her co-stars, she says, "Ritesh sir is so amazing. Abhishek's so cute. Nargis is a sweetheart. Jackie, everyone is, like, so amazing and so supportive of a newcomer like me. Akshay is so supportive. He's always been supportive. And this time, working in a film with him, they still play pranks and make jokes about me, but then I'm the most junior amongst the set. I hope fingers crossed that I get to work with him more and more in upcoming films. I've grown up fascinating and

thinking being Akshay Kumar's heroine."

Well, without revealing much about her character, she shares that this film is going to be different from the previous *Housefull* films. "It's larger-than-life. It's mega. It's a laughter ride, a fun ride and you will see me in a never-seen avatar."

She's got her fingers crossed now, hoping for more opportunities to come her way. "I'm sure God has been so kind and given me this platform and pedestal; so are my producers and all the amazing actors on board. I feel definitely opportunities will come my way. I hope at least people get to see the working side of me as an actor."

Then comes discussing how a day of the shoot was of the *Housefull 5*: "It was full of excitement. We were shooting on the cruise. Good bright sunny day. My intro scene was to be shot. That sound of camera action is still echoing and I was so overwhelmed when it happened. They had to do a retake only because I started to cry and I turned red. It was full of emotions. I don't know how to express that, but only an actor can tell you when you've longed for something good in your life and you're starting your journey with something like you had never imagined."

With a promising project potentially on the horizon for December, the excitement is palpable. Though tight-lipped about the details, Soundarya's enthusiasm is infectious and we can't help but share her optimism. One thing is certain: this talented actress is committed to choosing roles that showcase her versatility and passion for storytelling.



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From Assam to the world

With a deep respect for India's rich textile heritage, Sonam is on a mission to preserve and promote the country's diverse cultural traditions through his stunning creations. In this exclusive interview with *The Pioneer*, Sonam Dubal takes us on a journey through his design philosophy, his inspiration and his latest project, "Threads of Tradition," which showcases the beauty of Kerala and Northeast India's textile legacy

SHIKHA DUGGAL
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Met Sonam Dubal, the style sensation whose creative juices were sparked by the iconic Rohit Khosla! His East-meets-West masterpieces, infused with Pan-Asian flair, resonated with Sonam's culturally rich upbringing, making him the perfect fit for our fashion spotlight! Moreover, he is thrilled to introduce us to "Threads of Tradition in Anant Samagan 2024," a unique fashion showcase that blends the traditional with the modern to commemorate the eternal beauty of India's varied textile legacy. "When incorporating design aesthetics from North Eastern fabrics and weaving into a collection, sensitivity to cultural history is essential. An essential component in naturally developing a Pan-Asian vibe for a collection is combining modern styles or aspects with weaving or motif techniques that are more generic in nature or colours that evoke the underlying essence of nature. At the same time, using native weaves and textiles, such as ERI silk, is becoming increasingly popular due to the global emphasis on sustainability," the fashion designer explains how his creations easily combine Western aesthetics and Eastern customs to create a pan-Asian appeal.

"Threads of Tradition" will essentially take center stage to showcase Kerala and the Northeast, two of India's most culturally diverse regions. A visual voyage through elaborate traditional weaving reimagined contemporary designs and sustainable fashion breakthroughs is what the event offers. Here's where Sonam Dubal comes in! One little-known truth about this designer is that he was born in Assam, has Sikkimese and Maharashtrian ancestry and wears it on his sleeves to symbolise his heritage. "Couture Chronicles celebrates Kerala's and the Northeast's textile heritage, organised by the Aalekh Foundation. Every weave or pattern in the North East's stunning potpourri of textiles demonstrates the distinctive artistic talent of local communities, each of which has historical value. These textiles are essential manifestations of community identity and pride, ranging from the Mekhala chador of Assam, which is embellished with elaborate motifs that symbolise local folklore, to the exquisite shawls of Nagaland and Manipur, as well as motif designs in the weaves of Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Mizoram," he shares. Similar to this, Kerala's weaving heritage is well-known for its exquisite handloom silks and cottons, which capture a long history of artistry. The exquisite Kasavu sarees, to mention a few, which are worn at festivals and weddings and symbolise festivity and tradition, serve to accentuate this.

Thus, one of the event's main highlights is sustainability. When we asked Sonam how he combines eco-friendly methods with traditional

workmanship, he only replied, "Eco fashion, also known as sustainable fashion, is crucial to maintaining traditional methods. It involves more than simply preservation methods; it also involves attempting to lower pollution and raise awareness of conscientious consumption and attire. For me, creating markets in India and elsewhere has been made possible by using natural or vegetable dyes, handcrafted techniques, avoiding digital printing and mostly working with woven textiles and embroidery. Like the butterfly effect, more and more designers are entering the sustainable world, which is a natural ecosystem that is generating more jobs and assisting traditional weavers in finding new opportunities in the global economy."

The couturier himself claimed that the Mekhla Chador was similar to Burmese or Myanmar costume, while the Mundu was similar to the Thai sarong or lungi. Due to their ties to Southeast Asian culture, both of these traditional outfits naturally transform into contemporary silhouettes that are appropriate for a wide range of people. Although the sensitivity of history and folklore must be taken into account when dealing with the weaving, clothing is significant for Sonam. However, incorporating more contemporary knotting or wrapping techniques can be interesting as a modern approach. The seamstress continued, "The con-

temporary Indian woman is both open to modernity and grounded in tradition. Indian women today are more empowered and conscious and don't always follow in the footsteps of their Western counterparts. Despite having her own unique style, she is conscious of who she is. Since a large portion of my handiwork and embroidery is based on heritage, my collections highlight the wearer's inherent elegance as well as emotional intelligence." It's fascinating to hear the story.

Then he talks about how fashion technology is challenging since it would fundamentally alter the culture if current traditional methods were to be compromised. However, digitally recreating missing themes or even patterns that have vanished, similar to antique photographs, can be envisioned in a contemporary textile cape, much like Gustav Klimt's prints that transition from textile to canvas to wall. "The digital world is vast and can work into many avatars," he says without hesitation. "However, this shouldn't be altered for conventional methods like block printing or dyes that are still being used. While I am looking at digital technology and working on more painterly abstract interpretations of disappearing motifs and patterns from my earlier lines, I am also making a conscious effort to keep some practices sacred because they have become emblematic of my label. In this way, it is more

about regeneration or reincarnation." The unique style of his works transcends time and cultural boundaries. According to his personal perspective, "The development of a unique aesthetic has been largely dependent on individuality and sincerity. Working primarily with hand-woven fabrics and vintage textiles that have a connection to the Silk Road has always been at the heart of my storytelling, which is based on the preservation of tradition. My upbringing in a multicultural environment gave me the freedom to discover who I am, and as I've worked over the years, encountering fascinating people, travelling and learning about art history as well as various musical and cinematic genres have all impacted me in the creation of backgrounds for my cross-cultural and cross-temporal design language."

An encyclopedia of the specifics of natural dyeing and the history of indigenous Eri and Muga silk, working with Narmohan Das has been an amazing experience. Sonam was able to meet him in Assam at Bongaigaon earlier last year through another project. Narmohan Das is a social entrepreneur from Assam who works with indigenous silk yarns and natural dyeing techniques. It struck a strong chord with Sonam to watch him labour in the vegetable dyeing process. In reality, he is helping to sustain entire village households, providing a living for over 1000 households in rural Assam.

"My clothing embraces cultural variety and is more timeless and inclusive. I serve real people, especially classic women who take pride in their identities and clothing choices. Over the years, the elder women have consistently supported me. Through my representative Gail Percy, a piece from my 2016 collection was worn by Hollywood actress and Italian icon Isabella Rossellini in the television series *Shut Eye*. Later, in 2020, Vidya Balan wore my sari and cape in the movie *Shakuntala Devi*, which was made possible by costume designer and friend Neharika Khan. Over the years, patrons from both India and abroad have inspired me."

He only ever collaborated with one designer, Rohit Khosla, whose presence and output greatly inspired Sonam Dubal. He encouraged him to think independently and to constantly be aware of his uniqueness and authenticity. He learned a lot from him, but he was also a friend who encouraged Sonam to immerse himself in the world of textiles, embroidery and style. He was also incredibly committed, meticulous and a fantastic stylist. "It is possible to study fashion. Style is instinctive, but I learned. Working with Rohit Khosla inspired me to think differently, try to make a cultural difference and map the area that I knew the best—the northeastern part of India—absorbing its natural ethos, style and innate intelligence, natural sustainability and incorporating these elements into my work over the years in an effort to gradually weave a narrative into the Indian fashion canvas." The costumer ends the interview on a touching note.



SPICE UP YOUR TRAIN RIDE

As you step onto the train, the air buzzes with anticipation—what's the first thing that catches your eye? Perhaps it's the colourful rangolis decorating the compartments or the mouthwatering aroma of steaming samosas sailing through the aisle.

In the peak festive season, the demand is overwhelming and getting a confirmed ticket can feel like a small miracle. For those who missed out, the Tatkal quota, or last-minute ticket booking system, becomes a frantic yet hopeful chance. People across the country from different cultures board the train, which seems like a festival itself. People share their excitement through food and stories of their celebration.

Food plays a bigger role in any Indian celebration. What does the pantry in the train do special? During the festive rush, the pantry service is often overwhelmed by high demand, and travelers may find their orders misplaced or delayed. On a lucky day, you might receive a fresh, piping-hot meal. Other times, the quality and hygiene may be a concern, leaving travelers to rely on their own packed food or other vendors.

"Chai, chai, chai garam," buzzing with hawkers' voices. No sooner had the chai-wala moved on, when another voice called out, "Bhel puri! Fresh and tasty bhel puri!" These hawkers sell food that is prepared in bulk and sell it throughout the day. While a crispy pakora or a warm vada

may be tempting, travellers often weigh the risk of consuming items that may not have been stored or prepared in the cleanest conditions. Though the flavours are usually satisfying, the freshness and quality can be unpredictable, and falling ill during the festive season is a risk most travellers would rather avoid.

A train food app, RailRestro, provides a variety of food to your seat in the train on time. Be it vegetarian, non-vegetarian, or even Jain food, it has all the options in its menu. It is very simple to order food on this app and it delivers food to more than 450 rail stations across India at an affordable price.

Manish Chandra, founder of the app, expressed, "We are delighted to see the passengers response and promise to provide hygienic and varieties of food options through RailRestro to enhance the food experience of our passengers. We aim to deliver an unmatched food experience through our platform, making train travel more comfortable and enjoyable for everyone."

RailRestro has a special menu for the festive season. *Sabudana khichri, fruit chaat and makhana kheer*, among the rest, are some of the specialties. If you have a baby with you on the train, they have it all covered. The delivery partner will deliver the baby food to your seat on time. Worries are out of the window. Just travel, enjoy the landscapes and leave the responsibility of the food to RailRestro.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SHOW:

1. Runway debuted with the striking Naga shawls, the graceful Kasavu sarees from Kerala and the colourful Mekhela Chadors of Assam. These clothes in their true form enthralled audiences and captured the essence of these places.
2. Observed how designers combined history and modernity by elevating Northeast tribal themes in elegant evening gowns and transforming Kerala's traditional Mundu into sleek jumpsuits.
3. The last couture outfits in the show harmoniously combined Kerala and Northeast Indian textile traditions. This conclusion symbolised togetherness through fashion and a blending of cultures.
4. Designers also showcase eco-friendly fashion, using organic fabrics and natural dyes, combining traditional craftsmanship with sustainable practices.

what's brewing?

BREWING UP HAUNTINGLY GOOD TIME!

This Halloween, Get ready for Halloween special that's all about spine-tingling sips and potion-like surprises! This year, step behind the cauldron and conjure up concoctions that bubble, fizz and cast a spell on your taste buds. With a dash of mysterious ingredients and a sprinkle of spooky flair, these drinks are guaranteed to add a ghostly glow to your party. From deep, dark brews to eye-popping garnishes, each creation will leave your guests enchanted, keeping them coming back for just one more taste of the unexpected. This Halloween, let your drinks be as thrilling as the costume!

SMOKEHATTAN

INGREDIENTS:

- 60 ml Oaksmith Gold ● 90 ml Apple juice
- 15 ml Lime juice ● 10 ml Sugar syrup

METHOD:

- In a cocktail shaker, combine 60 ml of spirit with 90 ml of apple juice.
- Add 15 ml of freshly squeezed lime juice to brighten up the flavours and 10 ml of sugar syrup for a touch of sweetness.
- Add ice to the shaker and shake vigorously for 10-15 seconds to chill and mix the ingredients.
- Strain the cocktail into a chilled half-cut martini glass.
- Complete the drink by infusing apple wood smoke over the glass for a sophisticated aroma.



PEHCHAN KAUN

INGREDIENTS:

- 60 ml Old Monk ● 90 ml Cranberry juice
- 80 gms Sangria fruits ● 15 ml Sugar syrup

METHOD:

- In a wine goblet, start by adding the sangria fruits. Muddle the fruits gently to release some of their natural flavors.
- Add 60 ml of rum, followed by 90 ml of cranberry juice.
- Pour in 15 ml of sugar syrup to balance the tartness of the cranberry.
- Carefully build the drink by stirring gently with a bar spoon, mixing the ingredients without disturbing the muddled fruits too much.
- Let the flavors infuse for a few seconds.
- Finish by covering the goblet with a smoke top for a smoky aroma.

- By Sonali Mullick, Mixologist at Hitchki and Bayroute



IMLI KA BOOTA

INGREDIENTS:

- Tequila: 60 ml
- Orange Juice: 30 ml
- Homemade Tamil Nadu Tamarind Syrup: 15 ml
- Chaat Masala: 1 gm
- Ice: 100 gms

METHOD:

- Rim the rim of a cocktail glass with chaat masala.
- Fill a cocktail shaker with ice.
- Add the tequila, orange juice, tamarind syrup, and chaat masala to the shaker.
- Shake the shaker vigorously for about 15-20 seconds to chill the ingredients and combine the flavours.
- Strain the mixture into the prepared cocktail glass and enjoy your IMLI KA BOOTA.
- For the best flavour, make sure to use a homemade Tamil Nadu tamarind syrup. You can find this syrup online or at specialty grocery stores.



Actress Lakshmi Manchu inaugurated the new Limelight Lab Grown Diamonds store in Hyderabad, marking the brand's 16th location in India! The brand aims to open 15 new stores across India by December. At the inauguration, Lakshmi emphasised on the importance of looking good while wearing diamonds, regardless of their origin.



TIC has expanded nationwide with its new academy format, inaugurating the first TIC Academy in Pan India at Himayatnagar, Hyderabad, Telangana. Founder Rakshat Goyal, along with Master Franchisee Vishwanath Sam and Academy Franchisee Sanjay Dolwani lit the lamp, marking a new chapter in its journey.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



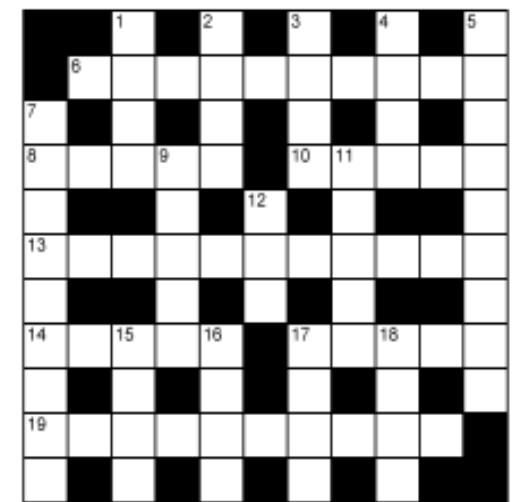
REALITY CHECK



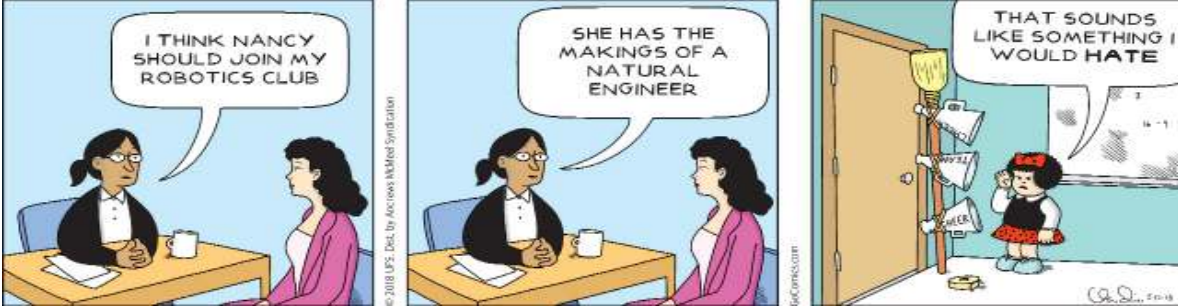
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- 6 Something chewed but usually not swallowed (7,3)
- 8 With lots of sunshine
- 10 A stand for an artist's painting
- 13 Straight away
- 14 Tossed
- 17 Put words on paper
- 19 Daily publications

DOWN

- 1 Part of your face
- 2 Absent
- 3 One time
- 4 Hens lay these
- 5 People who work for a business



GINGER MEGGS





RITU VARMA BRINGS MAJAKA TO LIFE AS 'BLAZE IN BREEZE'

Sundeep Kishan's upcoming film *Majaka*, directed by Nakkina Trinadha Rao, pairs him with Ritu Varma, who adds sparkle to this father-son comedy set for Sankranthi. Currently shooting in Visakhapatnam, *Majaka* marks Sundeep Kishan's 30th film. Directed by Nakkina Trinadha Rao, with a story by Bezawada Prasanna Kumar and produced by Ramesh Danda, *Majaka* stars Ritu Varma as Sundeep's love interest and Anshu Sagar opposite Rao Ramesh.

Filming is set to complete 60% of the movie in Visakhapatnam, with the remainder in Hyderabad. The film is slated for a Sankranthi release and promises comedy as Sundeep and Rao Ramesh portray a humorous father-son duo. Anshu Sagar, known for *Manmadhudu*, also returns to the screen in this film.

On Sunday, the filmmakers shared a video featuring a light-hearted moment with Ritu Varma and Sundeep Kishan, with Ritu in bridal attire, capturing her as a "blaze in the breeze." The successful duo of Nakkina Trinadha Rao and writer Prasanna Kumar Bezawada is known for past hits, and they bring their combined strengths to *Majaka*, with Prasanna providing the story, screenplay and dialogues.



'PRIYADARSHI IN SARANGAPANI JATHAKAM WILL LEAVE YOU SMITTEN'

Director Mohanakrishna Indraganti's third project with Sridevi Movies is set to deliver a hilarious comedy called *Sarangapani Jathakam* featuring Priyadarshi and Roopa Koduvayur.

Starting off the promotions with an unconventional 'No Audio' promo, the film crew launched a peppy lyrical song *Sarango Saranga* on Sunday via Aditya Music.

Listening to Armaan Malik's calming vocals, along with the lovely lyrics by Ramajogayya Sastry, instantly made this Vivek Sagar musical a beloved choice.

Showcasing the happiness of *Sarangapani*, the main character, at a pivotal moment in his romantic tale, the scenes capture simple to observe and replicate. Amidst the expectations of the film, director Mohanakrishna Indraganti says, "This song features the joy of lead character Sarangapani at a crucial juncture of his love story in the film. Interestingly shot in and around Hyderabad city, Armaan Malik's vocals added energy to Ramajogayya Sastry's beautiful lyrics thereby creating magic for Vivek Sagar's musical. You'll witness a new Priyadarshi in this film on December 20, 2024 and I'm sure you'll enjoy the film."

The talented composer, Vivek Sagar, appears to have created a varied album that combines different elements to match the tone and atmosphere of the film.

'KA TO HAVE CLIMAX LIKE NO-OTHER'

Nayan Sarika and Tanvi Ram, the female leads in *KA*, share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations. While Nayan, a newcomer with a few Telugu films, is enthusiastic about the film's unique plot, seasoned Malayalam actress Tanvi looks forward to the release and potential Telugu projects

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As the excitement builds for *KA*, which stars Kiran Abbavaram, the film promises a gripping narrative and dynamic performances. Nayan Sarika portrays Satyabhama, while Tanvi Ram takes on the role of Radha. Both actresses express their enthusiasm for the project, particularly praising the script and screenplay for their compelling content.

"I really liked the content and the script, especially the climax. It was too interesting," Nayan shares. "There are many twists and turns in the film which I can't reveal too much about, but it is definitely interesting. Everyone involved in this project became like family. Although I don't share many scenes with Tanvi, we became good friends."

Nayan's journey to *KA* was quite serendipitous. "My profile was circulated among many filmmakers, which led director Sujith to call me for a look test. At that time, I was shooting for *Aay* in Amalapuram and fell ill," she explains. "I traveled to Hyderabad, was admitted to the hospital and just three days later, I did the look test and was locked in for this project."

Tanvi Ram's entry into the film came with its own hurdles. "I had a very brief call with the director, who shared a one-liner of the story. I was down with dengue fever and took nearly a month to recover. After 28 days, I finally met the team, and they narrated the story along with my role," she reveals. "It's quite an intense character with a lot of scope to perform."

When discussing the highlights of signing on for *KA*, Nayan emphasises the unique content. "The film's story is set in the 1970s, providing a different look at that time," she notes. "I watched clips of Sridevi for reference, and my portrayal of Satyabhama draws inspiration from Savitri's look. I loved how she could portray deep emotions without glycerin, which is a quality I aimed to replicate in my role."

Tanvi describes her character as a school teacher from a different era. "Though I won't share many scenes with Satyabhama, the connection between my character and hers



will be clear on screen," she says. "I'll reveal more about my role and backstory after the film's release."

The film's director duo, Sandeep and Sujeth, dedicated eight months to pre-production, ensuring clarity for every character, which Nayan and Tanvi appreciate. Tanvi shares her personal challenges during filming, including late-night shoots and emotionally intense scenes, which are quite different from her usual routine. "I have to approach these scenes multiple times for different angles, which can be challenging, but I embrace the profession and the range of emotions it requires," she reflects.

Both actresses commend Kiran Abbavaram for his ded-

ication. "He insisted on performing a difficult action scene without a body double, which shows his commitment to this film," they agree.

Looking ahead, Tanvi is working on various Tamil and Malayalam projects and hopes that the release of *KA* will open doors for more Telugu opportunities. Meanwhile, Nayan is eager for the film's debut and is in discussions for upcoming projects. "I'll know more in the coming weeks," she concludes.

KA not only showcases the talents of its cast but also presents a unique storyline that promises to captivate audiences this Diwali.



Sai Pallavi: Army personnel relived their own stories watching *Amaran*

Sai Pallavi and Siva Karthikeyan, the lead pair of the upcoming film *Amaran*, are in the city to promote their film. The story, based on real life, will be released on October 31.

"I always choose my films carefully and give my best to those characters, keeping in mind the audience. Now, I am coming up with *Amaran*. It's a film based on a real-life journey. It's a good film," said Sai Pallavi about the film.

"Some days ago, we showed this movie to Army personnel and they all enjoyed it. They

claimed it to be real and they could witness their experience unfold in the movie. I enjoyed the movie and I adored the character I portrayed in it," Sai Pallavi expressed her happiness about meeting everyone with her upcoming Telugu film release.

The actress further shared that she will talk more during the *Thandel* promotions. "My Telugu film *Thandel* is releasing soon and I will talk more at that time. Wherever I go, whatever I do, the Telugu people have showered their love on me and my films."

Amaran is based on the life of Major Mukund Varadarajan and Rebecca.

Siva Karthikeyan, the lead actor in the film, meanwhile said that this is going to be a different film. "I played Major Mukund and everyone knows how Sai Pallavi performs; in this film, she performed very well. When Kamal Haasan entered our project, it gained more weight," said Siva Karthikeyan. The Telugu distribution rights have been acquired by Sudhakar Reddy and he is releasing it here.

Renu Desai thanks Ram Charan-Upasana's pet Rhyme for paws-itive gesture

Actress-filmmaker Renu Desai has been making a big difference in the field of animal welfare. It is known that she has initiated Shree Aadya, an animal shelter, which she has named after her daughter. The facility is committed to saving and looking after dogs, cats and other household pets.

The shelter was recently surprised by a touching donation from an unlikely source - Rhyme, the darling pet of Global Star Ram Charan and Upasana. The kind donation was used to acquire an ambulance, a vital asset to the shelter's activities.

Expressing her gratitude, Renu took to her Instagram story to extend thanks to Rhyme and Upasana. This act of generosity will have a significant effect on the lives of many animals. Renu's commitment to animal welfare has been truly motivating.



Suriya, Disha Patani, Bobby Deol's chemistry shines at *Kanguva* audio launch

Kanguva makers had organised a grand audio launch event in Chennai. The highlight of the evening was the presence of popular stars Suriya, Disha Patani and Bobby Deol, who are set to grace the occasion and connect with their fans.

The music for the film is composed by none other than the renowned rockstar, Devi Sri Prasad (DSP). Known for his energetic compositions and chart-topping hits, DSP's work is eagerly awaited by fans and industry insiders alike. DSP had also brought in a special performance and live singing which will definitely be a treat to the eyes.

At the event, lead actor Suriya Sivakumar couldn't help but acknowledge the excitement around Disha, praising her during his speech: "Disha, you had the loudest cheer in this gallery. The audience is so happy to see you here in Chennai. Thank you for all the support and



love you've brought to this film."

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

Directed by Siva, *Kanguva* stars Suriya Sivakumar, Disha Patani, and Bobby Deol and will release in cinemas nationwide on November 14, 2024.

INDIAN BATTERS WERE EXPOSED BY SANTNER; KOHLI'S FORM NOT A CONCERN: SIMON DOULL

PTI ■ PUNE

Former New Zealand pacer Simon Doull attributed India's shocking series defeat to their batsmen's inadequacies against spin bowling but he was not ready to write off underwhelming star batter Virat Kohli.

Left-arm spinner Mitchell Santner grabbed 13 wickets as the Kiwis walloped India by 113 runs in the second Test here on Saturday to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

"There's a misconception that Indian players are better players of spin. I think they've had better spinners and they've been able to expose the opposition batters. But in this Test (at Pune), their batters were exposed a little bit by a very, very good performance from Mitchell Santner," Doull told PTI Videos.

Even though Doull said negating spin is no longer a forte of many teams, he conceded that Indian batters' capitulation against "not a world-class spin bowling attack" of New Zealand offered some worrying signals.

"I think you get used to playing on such good wickets. And when it does turn, techniques get exposed a little bit. For a long time, when



India played on turning surfaces, they still had the best spinners in the world in Jadeja and Ashwin.

"So, they've been able to undo other sides. In this Test match, they were undone by a New Zealand side that, with all due respect, is not a world-class spin bowling attack. So, that will be a concern of some sort," he detailed.

Kohli's modest run in the ongoing series was one of the talking points, as the veteran batter succumbed to spin three times in four innings.

But Doull did not read too much into the former Indian captain's dismal form, and said it would not have an effect in the upcoming five-match Test series against Australia.

"There're issues against spin but he's not the only one. You're not going to find those (spin-friendly) conditions in Australia. He (Kohli) had a great series Down Under."

"He plays quick bowling as well as he has for the last four or five years. So, I don't think it's a concern," he noted.

The 55-year-old also defended Indian skipper Rohit Sharma for his defensive approach and placed veteran bowlers in the side as culpable for the series defeat.

"I think winning the toss is crucial. For Rohit, the wrong decision at Bangalore was crucial. He's admitted to that as well. New Zealand seamers took advantage of that," he said.

Rohit elected to bat first in the opening Test under overcast conditions and his side got

bowled out for a pathetic 46, which eventually transpired into an eight-wicket defeat.

The second Test saw a different scenario as New Zealand skipper Tom Latham won the toss and smartly elected to bat first, realising that batting fourth on Pune pitch would be a tough task.

"Winning the toss in this Test (at Pune), when you knew, pitch was going to turn...it might not have looked like a big score, 259 in the (NZ) first innings.

"But it was made to look like a really big score because the ball was turning. So, I think Tom Latham's captaincy was outstanding for the most part."

Doull, who took 98 wickets from 32 Tests, said senior bowlers too should have taken more responsibility.

"People say Rohit might have been a touch defensive, but that comes down to the bowlers. There're very, very senior spin bowlers in that side.

"If you can't trust an Ashwin or a Jadeja to set his own field, you can't blame Rohit for that all the time. I think the bowlers have to have some part to play in that as well," he explained.

Moving over to the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Doull said winning the third Test at Mumbai against the Kiwis will do a world of good

to their morale ahead of the marquee clash starting next month.

"They have to forget about this series. They could go out and win the third Test in Wankhede and go to Australia with a little bit more confidence. In Australia, quick bowlers will be required. India batters, I think, will be a lot better off on good surfaces. That's what you tend to get in Australia."

Doull said India have good enough players to tackle the Australian challenge.

"I'll come down to how they play the quick bowlers from Australia - the tall, slightly bouncer bowlers. But they've got the batters to do the job, I think, in good conditions.

"And if later on in the Test matches, whether it be in Perth or whether it be in Sydney, it starts to turn and bounce a little bit, then their spinners will come into play."

New Zealand also became the first visiting side to win a Test series in India after 12 years, and Doull termed it remarkable.



Shami's absence big loss for India, but won't underestimate reserve pacers: McDonald

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia head coach Andrew McDonald feels the absence of Mohammed Shami during the marquee Border Gavaskar Trophy next month is a huge loss for India, but stressed that the hosts won't underestimate the quicks stepping in for the seasoned pacer.

Shami, who had played a significant role in India's successful 2018 tour of Australia, has not played since the ODI World Cup final last November due to an ankle injury. He underwent surgery and was subsequently rehabilitating at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) but developed swelling in his knees which affected his rehabilitation.

"Mohammed Shami is a big loss," McDonald was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo on ABC's Offsiders.

"The way our batters speak about his relentless nature, his line and lengths, the way he goes about his business, a real good complimenting skill set to Bumrah so think that one-two combo they'll lack a little bit, and they'll miss that."

India have handed maiden call ups to Delhi speedster Harshit Rana and Andhra seam bowling all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy while quicks Akash Deep and Prasidh Krishna have also

been selected for the marquee series. Jasprit Bumrah will lead the fast bowling department.

"But needless to say we saw what happened last time, they had reserves that came in and did the job as well so they cannot be underestimated at all," he added.

Australian teenager Sam Konstas, who announced himself with twin Sheffield Shield centuries for New South Wales earlier this month, is in the reckoning to partner Usman Khawaja at the top in the five-match series.

"I think we're picking the best team for here and now, and if that does encompass a younger player, then we'll head down that direction," he said.

McDonald stated that if the selectors believe the 19-year-old is the best option, he will receive a Test debut, regardless of his lack of first-class experience.

"I've heard people commenting 'do you protect the player?' If they're ready, they're ready in our mind, and if Sam's capable and we feel as though is capable to fill that spot I don't think that the opponent should come into the equation."

Australia will host India for the Border Gavaskar Trophy, starting November 22 in Perth.

Sivarajan, Sukant shine as India wins 24 medals at Japan Para Badminton International

PTI ■ TOKYO

Sivarajan Solaimalai and Sukant Kadam delivered standout performances, helping India win an impressive 24 medals at the Japan Para Badminton International on Sunday.

India won six gold, nine silver and as many bronze medals in the tournament. Sivarajan enjoyed a double victory, clinching gold in the men's singles SH6 class and partnering with Sudarsan Saravanakumar Muthusamy to win the top prize in men's

doubles. Sukant also excelled, taking gold in men's singles (SL4) and silver in men's doubles (SL3-SL4) with partner Dinesh Rajaiiah. He triumphed over fellow Indian Tarun in a thrilling singles final, winning 21-12, 21-10, while Naveen Sivakumar and Surya Kant Yadav secured bronze medals.

In the doubles final, Sukant and Dinesh fought valiantly but fell short against compatriots Umesh Vikram Kumar and Surya Kant Yadav, losing 5-21, 22-20, 16-21 to take home silver.



"Winning gold in singles and silver in doubles is incredibly special," Sukant said in a release.

"I thank my coaches, support team, and the entire para-badminton community for their unwavering support.

This victory fuels my motivation to keep pushing boundaries." In other events, reigning Paralympic champion Kumar Nitesh claimed silver after a close match against Japan's Daisuke Fujihara, losing 16-21, 21-18, 19-21 in the SL3 finals.

In women's SU5, Manisha Ramdass captured gold by defeating Japan's Mamiko Toyoda 21-12, 21-18, while Neeraj settled for silver in the women's SL3 category after falling to Coraline Bergeron. Neeraj also finished second

in mixed doubles with Surya Kant Yadav in the SL3-SU5 category.

In men's doubles SU5, Hardik Makkar and Ruthvik Ragupati won gold, while Dev Rathi and Indonesia's Bartlomiej Mroz secured silver. Hardik and Ruthvik also earned silver and bronze in men's singles SU5.

In the men's doubles WH1-WH2 category, Abu Hubaida and Prem Kumar Ale took home bronze, while Alpha James bagged silver in the women's singles WH2 category.

Move over Messi-Ronaldo, new generation of soccer stars lining up to win Ballon d'Or



AP ■ MANCHESTER (ENGLAND)

No Lionel Messi. No Cristiano Ronaldo. When the Ballon d'Or is presented at a gala ceremony in Paris on Monday, it will feel like the start of a new era in soccer. There is also a sense of void now that one of sport's most engrossing rivalries is likely over.

"It's interesting that as it starts to come to an end, we are sort of saying, what's the next equivalent rivalry going to be," soccer author Jonathan Wilson told The Associated Press. "As if that kind of rivalry was a natural state. But, there's never been a rivalry like that before."

Messi and Ronaldo won soccer's most prestigious individual award a combined 13 times over 16 years of unprecedented dominance. Neither has been nominated this year. Instead Real Madrid winger Vinicius Junior is the favourite to be crowned the world's best player and become the first winner born this century. He underlined his credentials this week with a stunning Champions League hat-trick against Borussia Dortmund.

"Vinicius had an incredible season where he was a key player... He proved he's the best player in the world," Madrid teammate Lucas Vazquez said.

But, rather than Vinicius spearheading a new era of dominance, it seems likely the award will revert to a time before Messi and Ronaldo when multiple winners were relatively rare.

France great Zinedine Zidane, for instance, only won it once. The same goes for Ronaldinho, Rivaldo, Luis Figo and George Best. Originally limited to European players, it was never won by Pele or Diego Maradona.

Before Messi, the last player to win back-to-back awards was Dutch striker Marco van Basten in 1988 and '89. Messi won a record-extending eighth Ballon d'Or last year after leading Argentina to triumph at the World Cup in 2022. Wilson, who wrote about the history of Argentinian soccer in his book "Angels With Dirty Faces," sees no obvious successor to the Barcelona great, now at Inter Miami.

"Messi's now phenomenal for 17, 18 years," he said. "It's not a pure tallying process, but in terms of greatness over a protracted period, Messi is the greatest there has ever been by quite some margin."

"I don't think there's anybody in the world now who has anything remotely close to that talent."

Such was the dominance of Messi and Ronaldo, not only

would Vinicius Junior become the first winner born this century, but there has never even been a recipient born in the '90s.

Vinicius Junior, whose goals helped Madrid to a record-extending 15th European Cup last season, is part of a new generation of stars that are flourishing as Messi and Ronaldo reach the final stages of their careers.

Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland, Jude Bellingham and Lamine Yamal make up a field of contenders who could challenge for years to come. Manchester City midfielder Rodri is the second favourite to win this year and would become the first player born in the '90s to take the award.

Mbappe, who has long been seen as the heir to Messi and Ronaldo as the world's best player, was born in 1998, meaning it's likely there will eventually be a winner from that decade even if Rodri misses out. The only other winners since Ronaldo won his first Ballon d'Or in 2008 were Luka Modric in 2018 and Karim Benzema in 2022. Both were born in the 1980s. The award was cancelled in 2020 when Robert Lewandowski was widely regarded as the best player that year. He was also born in the '80s. Neymar, born in 1992, came third on two occasions.

Lewandowski and Yamal spoil Mbappé's first clasico as Barcelona routs Real Madrid 4-0

AP ■ BARCELONA

Robert Lewandowski scored twice and Lamine Yamal piled on to ruin Kylian Mbappé's first clasico as Barcelona routed Real Madrid 4-0.

The lopsided victory in Spain's capital ended the host's unbeaten run in La Liga at 42 games, one shy of Barcelona's record streak in 2017-18. Carlo Ancelotti's side suffered its first loss since Sept. 23 last year.

And what a loss it was. Lewandowski got the visitors going from a superb pass by Barcelona's latest youth talent Marc Casadó in the 54th minute and rose up to head in a fine header three minutes later to silence Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

Yamal made it a rout in the 77th when the teenage phenom rifled a shot from an angle over goalkeeper Andriy Lunin. That goal made him the youngest scorer in a clasico at 17 years, 105 days, surpassing teammate Ansu Fati, who was about 250 days older in October 2020. Raphinha then broke free with Madrid completely unhinged and chipped Lunin in the 84th.

The win came three days after Barcelona thumped Bayern Munich 4-1 in the Champions League. It has outsourced its last five opponents 21-2. "We came here to do just this," Yamal said. "We had lots of confidence and when we scored the second goal, we wanted to score a third, and then a fourth, as many goals as possible. To win 4-0 at this ground and beat Bayern 4-1, we showed that we are ready for anything."

It is an understatement that Mbappé had a frustrating first game against Barcelona in a white shirt. The France star was caught eight times offside by Barcelona's synchronized



back four and failed to beat second-choice goalkeeper Iñaki Peña one-on-one with his team down two goals.

"We knew that they played with a high line, and we just couldn't take advantage of it," Ancelotti said. "Sometimes (Mbappé) fell offside, but he had three or four chances to score and needed a better finishing touch."

Hansi Flick, meanwhile, had a night to remember in the first clasico for the German coach. Barcelona still has financial troubles that cast doubt over its future but its youthful team has made huge steps forward since Flick replaced Barcelona great Xavi Hernández in the summer. "Today we made a fantastic

match and it is all about the team. Everyone gave it 100%," said Flick, who Ancelotti called "a gentleman" for telling his bench to cool it when they effusively celebrated the fourth goal near Madrid's dugout.

After opening a six-point lead over Madrid at the top of La Liga, it is no longer a foregone conclusion that with Mbappé on board Madrid will waltz to a second straight domestic title.

Casadó was one of five homegrown players that Flick put in his starting lineup, the same 11 from the Bayern win. Six players under 22 years old started for Barcelona, led by 17-year-olds Yamal and Pau Cubarsi.

times in the first half hour, as Barcelona pressed high. Vinicius Junior, who featured in a fascinating duel with Cubarsi, missed a golden chance in the 21st when he shot past the post from close.

"When they scored those back-to-back goals it took the energy out of us," Ancelotti said. "This is a complicated moment for us. It hurts to lose a game and especially after going 42 games unbeaten, but we shouldn't just throw everything away because this team will play better."

Peña was questioned if he was up to the task of replacing Marc-Andre ter Stegen, out long term with a knee injury. His strong performance, which included two stops to deny Mbappé, was his first great game in goal for Barcelona.

"Our coach said that playing a high defensive line was non-negotiable," Peña said. "It is risky to play with such a high defense line, but the effort and work of the entire team is reflected in the offside traps we are creating."

Raphinha's goal confirmed his massive step forward under Flick. The Brazil forward, who acted as Barcelona captain, has 10 goals in this campaign.

Lewandowski's goals 16th and 17th overall for the Poland striker this season, taking his league-best tally to 14. He also hit the post. Mbappé, by comparison, has eight goals in all competitions. Ayoze strikes again. Ayoze Pérez scored his seventh goal since joining Villarreal this campaign to help it win 2-1 at Valladolid and lift his team into third place. Rayo Vallecano beat Alaves 1-0 after scoring late despite having played a man down from the 22nd, while Las Palmas beat Girona 1-0.