


QUOTE OF THE DAY
 Chief Minister Revantha Reddy has become a pan India Chief Minister after arresting pan India film star Allu Arjun. Some CMs became known through corruption, however, Chief Minister Revantha Reddy grabbed attention through his daring decisions. It is wrong on the part of KT Rama Rao to say that there is a scam involving Rs 12,000 crore in the RRR project as its total value is just Rs 7,000 crore

- Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Bhongir MP

'Don't depend on freebies, produce own solar power'



'INDIA-EFTA TRADE PACT LIKELY TO COME INTO FORCE BY YEAR END'



Mahesh Babu-Rajamouli film begins, with all SHUSH!



DON'T MISS...
Police crackdown on sale of banned manja

Hyderabad City Police's Mangalhat division has launched a stringent drive against the sale of banned Chinese manja, a synthetic, non-biodegradable kite string known to endanger human lives, birds and animals. Acting on credible information, the police seized a total of 1,094 bobbins of the illegal string and registered 18 cases against 22 accused individuals during their operation, which began on November 10, 2024. Led by Inspector M Mahesh and Sub-Inspectors of Mangalhat police station, the drive was conducted under the supervision ...

PM's resolutions mere 'jumlas'

The Congress on Thursday alleged that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's new year resolutions are nothing short of 'jumlas' (rhetoric) destroying the lives of every citizen. In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the government has given no solution for the economic turmoil created by it as he cited seven indicators to substantiate his point. "The Modi government has no solution for the economic turmoil it has created! Seven..."

White-collar hiring up 9% in Dec: Report

White-collar hiring activity in December witnessed a 9 per cent increase compared to the same period of the previous year, driven by high-skill and strategic roles, a report said on Thursday. According to Naukri JobSpeak, the index reached an impressive 2,651 points in December 2024, reflecting a robust 9 per cent year-on-year growth, a promising sign for the year ahead. Key sectors that were primary growth drivers in December 2024, included AI/ML (36 per cent), Oil and Gas (13 per cent), FMCG...

Dressing room debates should stay there

Asserting that "debates" in the dressing room should not come out in public domain, India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Thursday said he has had some "honest" conversations with his players and that the ongoing transition in the team will be all-encompassing. Gambhir also side-stepped queries on whether out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma will get a place in the final XI for the fifth and final Test against Australia starting on Friday. Amid reports of unrest in the dressing room, the head coach sought...

'BRS regains lead, BJP making gains in TG'



'It is encouraging to see that the BRS has managed to recover quickly after its Lok Sabha defeat. The BRS leadership believes that this turnaround is a result of their swift action to reconnect with people.'



PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The New Year has brought good news for the BRS as recent public opinion surveys conducted by various survey agencies have brought optimism to the BRS. Sources in the BRS indicated that the party has reportedly regained the lead in Telangana, followed by the Congress. The BRS is now 9% to 10% ahead of the Congress in surveys, said sources. What stands out, however, is the unexpected rise of the BJP, which has made significant gains despite minimal visible activity on the ground.

Top BRS sources revealed that the surveys were conducted by the same agencies that had accurately predicted the party's defeat in the 2023 elections. This credibility adds weight to the current projections, making the results a topic of discussion across political circles. "It is encouraging to see that the BRS has managed to recover quickly after its Lok Sabha defeat," said a party source. The BRS leadership believes that this turnaround is a result of their swift action to reconnect with people.

Meanwhile, the BJP's rise, despite limited initiatives or visible campaigns, has puzzled observers. "It's surprising that the BJP is gaining momentum without much effort. This is something we need to keep an eye on," the source added. The Congress, which seemed to be gaining ground earlier, appears to be falling behind the BRS in the latest survey. With local body elections on the horizon, the evolving dynamics between these three major parties are expected to set the stage for an intense political battle in Telangana.



Will expose Congress govt's scams, says Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Government Whip Adi Srinivas stated that BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy has been resorting to blackmail politics while making cheap allegations against the Congress government.

Alleging that scams running into thousands of crores are taking place, BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said that he will expose the Congress government's scams within two days. Maheshwar said that he had evidence of the scam and that Ministers were involved in it. He said he will reveal details of the scam with full evidence. He said that demanding applications again from farmers for Rythu Bharosa is nothing but deceiving them. The BRS government gave Rythu Bandhu, he said and asked the Congress government to reveal why it is not going to give in the same manner. It is not proper for the Congress government to pass time without revealing the guidelines of the



Srinivas alleged that Maheshwar Reddy has been creating hungama every two months before the media while making allegations against the government as he wished. Maheshwar Reddy has been telling lies to the media in the name of corruption and irregularities. In a video statement issued on Thursday, Srinivas asked Maheshwar Reddy to stop baseless and meaningless allegations against the government. It is not proper for Maheshwar Reddy to make cheap allegations, he alleged, demanding Maheshwar Reddy to show evidence if he has guts.

Rythu Bharosa, he said. Addressing the media at the BJP State Office here on Thursday, Maheshwar said the Congress government should not show empty hands to tenant farmers. He demanded the government should give identity cards to tenant farmers and give them Rythu Bharosa immediately.

Maheshwar resorting to blackmail: Adi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Government Whip Adi Srinivas stated that BJP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy has been resorting to blackmail politics while making cheap allegations against the Congress government.

Govt to explain Rythu Bharosa terms to farmers at Grama Sabhas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The Congress Government has decided to explain to the people Rythu Bharosa conditions at Grama Sabha meetings held from January 5 to 7 in villages across the state. The government also decided to accept applications from farmers again from January 5 to 7 after dividing mandals into three parts. The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Rythu Bharosa took these decisions at its meeting held on Thursday at the secretariat. However, a final decision will be taken only during the Cabinet meeting being held on

ED asks BLN, Arvind to appear on Jan 8 & 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has ramped up its investigation into the Formula E-Car Race case and has issued fresh notices to BLN Reddy and Arvind Kumar, IAS. The notices, sent on Thursday, directed both individuals to appear for questioning on January 8 and 9 respectively. BLN Reddy and Arvind Kumar both sought 2 to 3 weeks to appear and submit documents. Earlier, the ED had scheduled hearings for BLN Reddy on January 2, Arvind Kumar on January 3, and KTR on January 7. However, BLN Reddy was absent for his hearing on Thursday. Citing the need for more

PHONE TAPPING CASE
SC concerned over long winding probe



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Supreme Court heard the bail petition of Additional SP Mekala Tirupathanna, a key accused in the phone tapping case, on Thursday. The petition, originally filed in October 2023, was heard by a two-judge bench comprising Justice BV Nagarathna and Justice N. Kotishwar Singh. Senior advocates Siddharth Luthra and Dushyant Dave represented the government and the petitioner, respectively. During the proceedings, the court expressed concern over the prolonged nature of the investigation into Tirupathanna's role in the case. The court observed that investigations should not infringe on the petitioner's freedom and said that such delays could not be justified by continuing inquiries. The court emphasised that while it does not intend to interfere with the investigation, a balance must be struck to ensure that the petitioner's rights are not hindered. The Bench directed the government counsel to present a detailed account of Tirupathanna's involvement in the case during the next hearing. The court adjourned the case to January 27.



CM: Bhu Bharati will improve revenue services in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revantha Reddy announced that the new ROR (Record of Rights) Act, known as 'Bhu Bharati', will soon come into effect to improve revenue department services in Telangana. Speaking at the launch of the annual diaries of the Telangana Tahsildars Association (TGTA) and the Telangana Revenue Services Association (TGRSA) on Thursday, the CM emphasised that the initiative aims to resolve land disputes and improve transparency in revenue administration. Highlighting the shortcomings of the Dharani Portal, Revantha said that Bhu Bharati is designed to provide quick, efficient services to farmers and the public and address the issues created by the earlier system. "The new law will ensure that land problems are resolved at the district level and will decentralise powers to improve service delivery," he said. The CM reminded revenue officers of their expanded powers and responsibilities under the new system. He urged them to effectively implement the new law, which includes provisions for the appointment of a revenue officer in all villages. This decentralized approach aims to make revenue services accessible at the field level providing immediate relief. Telangana Employees Joint Action Committee Chairman V. Lachi Reddy raised concerns about the transfer of tahsildars during elections, stating that many have not been re-assigned to their home districts, causing difficulties. Responding positively, the CM assured that the transfer process would be speeded up.

TG ranks 2nd in leveraging social media

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has ranked Telangana second in the country for effectively leveraging social media for voter engagement and information dissemination. The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Telangana announced this achievement, highlighting the state's consistent efforts in transparency, voter education, and inclusivity in electoral processes. As per the ECI's latest report, Jharkhand secured the top position, with Telangana following closely. The CEO-Telangana credited this success to a robust social media strategy that includes timely updates, myth-busting and direct engagement with voters. The CEO stated, "Beyond conducting elections, our role extends to ensuring transparency, accuracy and the upholding of democratic values in the world's largest democracy." With over 3 lakh subscribers across its social media platforms, CEO-Telangana has significantly enhanced voter outreach.



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RECORD 17 PARA-ATHLETES TO RECEIVE ARJUNA

Manu Bhaker, Gukesh among 4 Khel Ratnas

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker and chess world champion D Gukesh were among four winners of the Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna award announced by the Sports Ministry, which also named an unprecedented 17 para-athletes in the list of 32 Arjuna awardees to honour their resounding success at the Paris Paralympics. The other two Khel Ratna winners unveiled by the ministry on Thursday for the year 2024 were men's hockey captain Harmanpreet Singh and para-athlete Praveen Kumar. The awards will be conferred on the athletes by President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 17. The 22-year-old Bhaker became



independent India's first athlete to win two medals in a single edition of the Olympics with her bronze-winning show in the 10m air pistol individual and 10m air pistol mixed team events in August. The announcement comes

a few days after reports that Bhaker had been ignored for the Khel Ratna as the award selection committee did not recommend her due to the absence of an application from her.

Deepthi Jeevanji bags Arjuna Award

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister Revantha Reddy extended heartfelt congratulations to Telangana's para-athlete and Warangal resident, Deepthi Jeevanji, on being conferred the Arjuna Award for 2024.



Deepthi secured a bronze medal for India in the 400-meter race at the Paralympics. As part of the state's sports policy to encourage athletes who represent India in national and international events, the Chief Minister had earlier presented Deepthi with Rs 1 crore and her coach, Nagapuri Ramesh, with Rs 10 lakh. The state government had also given a Group-2 level government job and 500 square yards of land in Warangal for

Deepthi in recognition of her achievements. Revantha reiterated the government's commitment to promoting sports and nurturing talent through initiatives like the Young India Sports University and the establishment of sports complexes across the state.

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | JANUARY 3, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Vijay Hazare Trophy

Kerala vs Tripura

Venue

Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium
January 3, (9 am)

Live Performance

By Dhruvam (Band)

Venue

36 Downtown Brew Pub (Vapour)
January 3 (8 pm)

15 Years Of Excellence

(Bharathanatyam, Flute, Violin) by Kalarvarshini Institute Of Dance, Music & Arts

Venue

Shilparamam
January 3, (4:30 pm)

Friday Night

With DJ Asif Iqbal

Venue

Insomnia
January 3, (8 pm)

Live Performance

By Kalakaari (Band)

Venue

Posh Nosh
January 3, (8 pm)

Migrant Memory

Art Exhibition By Raki Nikahetiya

Venue

Kalakriti
Till January 5 (8 pm)

Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

Venue

Culinary Guru Institute, Hyderabad.
Till January 11, 2025.

Rs 70.01 lakh of defrauded woman recovered

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Rachakonda Cyber Crime Police recovered Rs 70,01,788 for a 65-year-old woman, Geetha Upadhyay from Uppal who fell victim to digital arrest scam. According to the Police, the victim received a WhatsApp call on December 8, 2024, from a person impersonating a Mumbai Cyber Crime officer named Mohit Sharma. The caller falsely accused her of being linked to a mobile SIM card issued in her name, which was allegedly used for illegal activities, including harassment and sharing obscene content. He further claimed that 24 complaints had been filed against the SIM card and threatened her with legal consequences.

Exploiting the victim's fear, the fraudster coerced her into disclosing personal information and transferring Rs 1.58 crore, including funds from fixed deposits (FDs) and Public Provident Funds (PPFs), to various accounts. The victim was also warned against sharing the matter with anyone. Realising she had been duped, she approached the Rachakonda Cyber Crime Police Station in LB Nagar.

ACP S Shivashankar swiftly registered the case and led the investigation. With coordinated efforts, Inspector Maqbool Jani and his team traced the funds to ICICI Bank, Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh, and successfully recovered Rs 70,01,788.



Tourism dept unveils 'Telangana Awaits You' promotional video

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to elevate the global profile of Telangana's tourist destinations, the State Tourism department has released a captivating promotional audio-visual (AV) video titled 'Telangana Awaits You.' The 58-second video, designed to attract tourists from across the globe, beautifully showcases the state's natural beauty and heritage sites.

The video highlights some of Telangana's most iconic locations, including the breathtaking Jodeghat valley, the lush expanse of the Nallamala Amrabad Tiger Reserve and the serene Kinnersani Wildlife Sanctuary. It also features the scenic backwaters of the Sriramsagar Project (SRSP) at Nandipet and the historic

Kumram Bheem Project.

The state's cultural and historical wealth is also prominently displayed, with stunning visuals of the UNESCO-recognised Ramappa temple and Bhudan Pochampally, honoured as the Best Tourism Village by the UNWTO. Other notable sites featured include the Yadagirigutta temple, the fort temples of Ghanapuram, Pandavulagutta, Nagarjuna Sagar, and the picturesque Ghanapuram lake.

Through this promotional initiative, the department aims to entice global travellers and showcase its unique blend of natural splendor, historical grandeur and cultural richness. The tourism department is confident that this video will play a pivotal role in positioning Telangana as a premier global travel destination.

Police crackdown on sale of banned Chinese manja



With Sankranti season round the corner, shop-keepers get set with the sale of kites and manja

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad City Police's Mangalhat division has launched a stringent drive against the sale of banned Chinese manja, a synthetic, non-biodegradable kite string known to endanger human lives, birds and animals. Acting on credible information, the police seized a total of 1,094 bobbins of the illegal string and registered 18 cases against 22 accused individuals during their operation, which began on November 10, 2024.

Led by Inspector M Mahesh and Sub-Inspectors of Mangalhat police station, the drive was con-

ducted under the supervision of ACP K Venkata Reddy and guided by Additional DCP Md Ashfaq and DCP G Chandra Mohan of the South West Zone. The team targeted shops selling the banned manja and kites in the Mangalhat area, ensuring swift action against offenders.

Authorities have issued stern warnings to shopkeepers, instructing them to refrain from selling the prohibited manja.

Those who fail to comply will face severe legal consequences. To further prevent harm, police conducted awareness meetings with residents and customers, highlight-

ing the dangers posed by the synthetic kite string and the need for safer alternatives.

The police have also emphasised the importance of precautions during kite-flying, urging residents to use rooftops with compound walls or railings to prevent accidents. Citizens have been advised not to purchase or use the banned Chinese manja, as violators will face legal penalties.

The South West Zone Police remains committed to ensuring public safety and protecting the environment by cracking down on the sale and use of non-biodegradable kite strings.

TSAA set to expand with focus on medium drones

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Aviation Academy (TSAA) is set to expand its Drone Academy in 2025 by introducing a new course focused on medium drones. Additionally, they are testing First Person View (FPV) drones and may soon receive authorisation to train applicants in this technology.

The TSAA has collaborated with the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) to offer advanced drone pilot training. SN Reddy, Secretary and CEO of TSAA, mentioned that aspiring drone pilots undergo a five-day training programme at TSAA. Those interested can further their education at NRSC, focusing on data management and analysis. Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February, approximately 91 students have completed train-



ing at NRSC.

In the upcoming year, TSAA plans to provide ample opportunities for applicants and aspiring drone pilots to learn how to operate medium drones. They have acquired two medium drones to enhance their training programmes, which previously focused solely on small drones.

Women are coming forward to become drone pilots, the last batch has three women from different fields. One woman has a drone at home and as she wishes to travel she wanted to use it for video purposes.

The current drone pilot

training spans five days, after which pilots receive a certificate from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) authorising them to operate small drones. The course fee is Rs 35,000, and the fee structure for the upcoming medium drone course may vary.

Dinakar Devireddy, Head of Drone Pilot Training at TSAA, highlighted that there is no age limit for applicants, noting a significant increase in aspirants for each batch. Regarding employment opportunities, he stated that the drone industry is rapidly growing. While individuals can assemble drones at home, obtaining permission to fly them requires formal training, underscoring the role of academies like TSAA.

Devireddy also mentioned that he assists students seeking employment by connecting them with startups. Additionally, the expanding use of drones in agriculture opens various avenues for freelancers.

2025 CALENDAR



The 2025 calendar of Swatantra was launched by Swatantra channel Chief Editor Ramesh Kandula. On this occasion, representatives from the Swatantra districts and Hyderabad participated in the event. Ramesh extended New Year greetings to the people of Telugu states

Delegates from NIT Hamirpur meet Governor

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The delegates of Yuva Sangam Phase V from NIT Hamirpur, Himachal Pradesh and Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad visited Raj Bhavan in Telangana and met Governor Jishnu Dev Varma on Thursday.

This visit, under the Ministry of Education's 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative, is aimed to promote cultural exchange and national unity.

Delegates from NIT Hamirpur shared Himachal Pradesh's rich heritage, while those from Telangana highlighted their state's vibrant traditions. Governor Varma emphasised youth empower-



ment and regional harmony and urged the delegates to embrace diversity and work collectively for progress. Discussions on leadership, innovation and respect were also conducted.

Meanwhile, Dr Param Singh, Nodal Officer of Yuva Sangam Phase V, expressed gratitude to the Governor, reaffirming the programme's dedication to national integration.

Yuva Sangam, aligned with EBSB, provides youth exposure to five areas: tourism, traditions, development, people-to-people connections and technology.

Launched in 2016, the initiative stems from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for unity, proposed during Rashtriya Ekta Divas in 2015. Over 4,795 participants have joined 114 tours across previous phases, showing massive enthusiasm nation-wide.

HYDRAA uncovers traces of Eedula Kunta lake

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) has initiated efforts to reclaim the historical traces of Eedula Kunta lake in Khanamet, located in Serilingampally mandal.

Acting on complaints from locals that the lake had disappeared, HYDRAA conducted a detailed survey with the Survey of India on Thursday to demarcate the lake's boundaries.

Using high-resolution maps from the National Remote Sensing Centre, HYDRAA had already identified the lake's remnants. A month ago, Hydrax Commissioner AV Ranganath inspected the site and observed encroachments on the lake area. Complaints revealed that the flood channel connecting

Tumudukunta and Eedula Kunta was blocked during the construction of a bridge near Cyber City (HITEC City), leading to water inflow being cut off. This allowed portions of the lake to be filled with soil and occupied by alleged land-grabbers.

The controversy intensified as a real estate company claimed ownership of the site, countering local complaints.

HYDRAA officials summoned both parties for an inquiry, during which evidence was submitted about the alleged encroachments.

On Thursday, Survey of India conducted a detailed survey using topographical maps to confirm the presence of Eedula Kunta lake between Khanamet and Kukatpally village boundaries. The survey also identified the Full Tank Level (FTL) and water spread areas of the lake.

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Hon'ble Chief Minister, Govt. of Telangana

Under the able Leadership of
Sri Duddilla Sridhar Babu Garu
Hon'ble Minister for IT, Electronics & Communications, Industries & Commerce and Legislative Affairs, Govt. of Telangana & President - Exhibition Society

Guest of Honor
Sri Kanakreddy Venkat Reddy Garu
Hon'ble Minister for Roads & Buildings and Geo-survey, Govt. of Telangana

Sri Ponnava Prabhakar Garu
Hon'ble Minister for Transport & EC, Welfare Govt. of Telangana

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Vaishnavi, wife of Rakesh who was allegedly harassed by a moneylender, speaking to the media in Hanamkonda on Thursday

'Harassed' by moneylender, man dies of heart attack

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

A tragedy unfolded at the dawn of the New Year at Vangapally village under Kamalapur mandal in the district. Akunuri Rakesh, a resident of Vangapally, reportedly died of a heart attack late at night after being unable to bear the harassment from a finance company. His family members stated that he passed away due to a heart attack.

Rakesh's wife, Vaishnavi, shared with the media that her husband had taken a personal loan from Arman Finance. Due to financial difficulties over the past three months, there was a delay in repaying the loan, which led to repeated visits by finance recovery agents to their house. These agents created disturbances, filed cases, and

threatened to send him to jail, causing immense stress.

Rakesh told his wife that he had chest pain, and he was rushed to the hospital by ambulance. The doctors informed her that he died of a heart attack.

Vaishnavi also mentioned that they had filed a complaint at the local police station regarding the harassment by the finance company. Villagers accused these finance companies of luring people with initial small loans and later exploiting them for profit, often leading to severe consequences. They demanded that the government take action to regulate such microfinance institutions.

The untimely death of Rakesh cast a shadow of sorrow over the village.

CRPs' strike delays survey to identify out-of-school children

PNS ■ SIRICILLA

The survey aimed at identifying out-of-school children, including those in the 15-19 age group, which was scheduled to begin on December 12, has yet to commence due to an ongoing strike by the Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) of the Samgra Shiksha Abhiyan. The CRPs have been on strike for the past 22 days, demanding the fulfillment of their various concerns, and there is no indication that the survey will proceed in the near future.

The month-long survey, which was supposed to start on December 12, is crucial for identifying children who have remained out of school for nearly a month. It is also intended to find students aged 15-19 who have dropped out or never enrolled. Teachers, retired educators, youth associations, and panchayat secretaries were supposed to assist the CRPs in conducting the survey. In cases where physically chal-



lenged children are identified, the details are to be forwarded to inclusive education resource persons for further support.

Once the data is collected, it is expected to be uploaded onto the Prabhandh portal, and the out-of-school children should

be enrolled in the nearest government schools. College students would be encouraged to take advantage of open education systems.

The survey also includes children of brick kiln workers, who are typically migrant labourers from states like Odisha and Maharashtra. Schools are set up near brick kilns or the children are enrolled in neighboring government schools. Special volunteers, paid by brick kiln owners, assist these children. Mid-day meals are provided from nearby schools, and transfer certificates are issued before the children move to new locations.

Last year, 420 children were successfully identified and enrolled in nearby schools. However, due to the ongoing strike, this year's survey has yet to begin.

Officials said the survey would commence as soon as the government is likely to take a decision regarding the ongoing strike.

CPM alleges Gairan land grabbing

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) has alleged that some individuals have encroached upon the Gairan land - the land earmarked by Collector for free pasturage village cattle - in Atchampeta and wanted the State government to take possession of the land from them and distribute it to the landless poor, according to a memorandum submitted by the

party leaders to Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) here on Thursday.

According to the memorandum, an extent of 4.31 acres of Gairan land under Survey number 293 near the Idgha on Nagarkurnool road should be immediately freed from the individuals who grabbed it for distribution to the homeless poor. District executive body member of the party and former sarpanch of Narasayapalli L Desh Nayak alleged that

some individuals have been levelling the Gairan land to develop housing plots and sell them and appealed to the State government to take possession of the Rs 50 crore worth land.

According to the land records the said land is the government land from 1954 to 2013. However, the individuals are trying to encroach on the land by falsifying the land records.

The memorandum

appealed to Atchampeta RDO to respond immediately and take possession of the lands. If the government officials failed to take possession of the land, the CPI-M would see to it that huts are raised on the said land and wage struggles till the land is distributed to the landless poor.

CPI-M Atchampeta mandal secretary S MalleeshBalmuru, mandal secretary M SankarNaik and others took part in the event.

Security at Rajanna temple grossly inadequate

PNS ■ VEMULAWADA

Devotees have alleged that security at the Rajanna Temple in Vemulawada is grossly inadequate. Though thousands of devotees visit the temple daily, and the temple secures considerable income, security measures taken by the authorities are inadequate. While temple officials claim that dozens of CCTV cameras have been installed to monitor security, in practice, it appears that the authorities have taken steps to monitor the operation of the devices. Recently, several incidents have highlighted the flaws in the temple's security.

For instance, a few days ago, a young girl went missing during her visit to the temple, and her parents filed a complaint at the local police station. When the police tried to review the CCTV footage in the temple, they faced an unpleasant experience. There were no traces of the girl in the footage obtained from the cameras installed in the temple. Upon further investigation, it was revealed that there was no data on the CCTV cameras. This led to significant doubts about the security at Rajanna Temple.



Nightmare for cyclist as Chinese manja slits neck

PNS ■ BHADRADRI KOTHAGUDEM



Chinese manja

The deadly nature of kite manja (kite string) has once again been proved. A cyclist was severely injured when the banned Chinese manja (string), used for flying kites, wrapped around the neck of the cyclist, causing his neck to be cut and resulting in heavy bleeding. This incident occurred in Ramavaram in Bhadrادri Kothagudem district.

The condition of the injured person is stated to be critical, and he was immediately rushed to the hospital in Kothagudem. From there, he was transferred to Hyderabad for better treatment. Despite the ban on Chinese manja, it is still wide-

ly available in the market. Unaware children are purchasing it and using it to fly kites. Chinese manja threads had been responsible for several fatalities in the past. There have also been increasing injuries and deaths among birds. Police are urging kite flyers to avoid using Chinese manja threads during Sankranti celebrations.



Land deal irregularities alleged in Rangareddy district

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Allegations of widespread land deal irregularities in Ranga Reddy district have been made, drawing attention to the state of government lands and the role of officials in protecting them. Accusations against former District Collector Amoy Kumar regarding his alleged involvement in these irregularities have added fuel to the controversy.

As government leaders intensify their scrutiny of land issues in the district, numerous incidents of malpractice are reportedly being uncovered. Reports suggest that irregularities involving ponds, Srikham lands, Launi lands, and even trust lands. In several constituencies, including Ibrahimpatnam, Maheshwaram, Chevella,

Shadnagar, Serilingampally, LB Nagar, and Rajendranagar took place. Confusion over government lands persists. Allegedly, some unsettled or disputed lands have even disappeared from official records.

The situation has raised concerns about corruption within the administrative system. Observers note that if senior officials are implicated in such malpractices, it could indicate deeper issues at the grassroots.

The government has introduced a new law aimed at protecting public lands, but questions remain about its effectiveness.

Whether these measures will restore order and accountability in land management in Ranga Reddy district is something the public eagerly awaits.



Police Commissioner unveils Swatntra Channel calendar

PNS ■ RAMAGUNDAM

The Swatntra TV Channel's 2025 calendar was unveiled by Ramagundam Police Commissioner M Srinivas. He emphasised that Swatntra News Channel should remain a platform for the common people and stand by the people every day. The calendar was released at the Ramagundam Police Commissionerate.

Cybercriminal prevented from stealing money

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

An unknown miscreant, who claimed to have been calling from the IndusInd Bank Credit Card Department, has stolen Rs 66,000 from the bank account of a person. The victim filed a complaint at the Khammam Khanapuram Haveli Police Station, according to Inspector Bhanuprakash. The incident occurred when the victim, a resident of Balajinagar in the Khammam in the limits of Haveli Police Station, received a call from an unfamiliar person who claimed to have been calling from the IndusInd Bank Credit Card Department, asking for an update on the credit card. The caller, using the number 9835074668, spoke with the victim and transferred Rs 66,739 from the victim's bank account.

Upon realising the fraud, the victim immediately called the 1930 helpline. As a result, the funds were not transferred to the cybercriminal's account. The fraudster, identified as Bhupal Chandra Mandal from Jharkhand, is currently under investigation.

Probe ordered into fake certificates

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

High-level officials have launched an investigation at the Mannanu DDO office into nearly 200 individuals allegedly bribed officials in various departments with fake agency documents in the Amrabad mandal.

Recently, a group of local people in Amrabad and Padara mandals were found to have illegally acquired agency documents and got jobs in police, forestry, and other departments. A state-level complaints led to the inquiry.

District Forest Officer Rohit Gopidi, Achampet Revenue Divisional Officer Madhavi and the Amrabad and Padara Tashildars are investigating the bogus certificates. Local outsiders allegedly bribed officials to obtain fake agency certificates, depriving the local youth of job opportunities. The local unemployed youth are expressing their anger over the issue. They are demanding a fair and legal investigation.

Car mows down 40-year-old woman

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

In Nagar Kurnool district, a car travelling at high speed caused a disaster near Peddamuddunoor village under Nagarkurnool mandal.

The car flipped into the air and wreaked havoc, killing a woman, named Lakshamma (40). The driver of the car was seriously injured.

The incident came to light on Thursday. The car, which was on its way from Nagarkurnool to Kollapur on Wednesday, lost control and veered off the road. Due to the high speed, the car flipped and ran over Lakshamma, who was walking on the side of the road. The woman died on the spot.

The injured driver was rushed to Nagarkurnool Area Hospital by ambulance for treatment. Based on a complaint from the victim's family, the police have filed a case and launched an investigation into the incident.

Mystery surrounding death of two cops, computer operator deepens

The call data records, according to sources, showed that sub-inspector Saikumar, woman constable Shruthi and computer operator Nikhil spoke to each other hours together before they jumped into the tank on December 25

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY



The mystery surrounding the death of a sub-inspector, woman constable and computer operator in Kamareddy district remains unresolved. The police are investigating whether the three individuals committed suicide or were blackmailed into taking their lives. Important developments are unfolding every day in the case. The police have reportedly gathered key information. Along with the call data records of the deceased, their WhatsApp chats have also been collected. This data has now become the most crucial aspect of the investigation.

The death case of sub-inspector Sai Kumar, woman constable Shruthi and computer operator Nikhil has caused a stir across Telangana. It has been eight days since the tragedy took place, but the mystery of the suicide case remains unsolved. There are many doubts regarding the deaths of Sai Kumar, Shruthi and Nikhil. The Kamareddy district police are investigating the case from various angles.

The Superintendent of Police Sindhu Sharma confirmed there were no eyewitnesses to the incident. The police suspect that one of them jumped into a lake, and

the other two went in to save them, which led to their deaths. The police are also investigating the complaint by Nikhil about a threat to his life.

Meanwhile, pressure is increasing on the Kamareddy police to make progress in the case. The cyber forensic report is expected to play a crucial role in the investigation. At this point, much of the investigation is based on speculation.

The phone call and WhatsApp chat data of the victims have become key elements in the case. Police have discovered that on the day of their deaths, Sai Kumar, Shruthi, and Nikhil spoke on the phone for hours. It is known that they drowned in a large lake near Adloor Yellareddy in Kamareddy district on December 25. According to call data, they talked on the phone from early morning on Wednesday until they met at a specific

location. Sai Kumar used three SIM cards across two phones, Nikhil used two phones, and Shruthi used one. It seems they had been talking a lot on the phone for about a week before the incident.

The police found that Shruthi and Nikhil were in constant contact via WhatsApp messages. The WhatsApp chats suggest there was a romantic relationship between them. However, the key question now is why Sai Kumar was involved in this relationship. There are rumours that Nikhil and Shruthi were planning to marry, but due to some disagreements, their wedding was postponed, which led to the conflict. In this triangular love story, local people are now considering sub-inspector Sai Kumar as the main antagonist. However, there is speculation that the police are dragging their feet in the investigation to portray Sai Kumar as a hero.

Collector inspects Indra Mahila Shakti canteen

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

Collector Muzammil Khan, along with Additional Collector P Sruja and trainee Collector Mrinal Shrestha on Thursday visited the Indra Mahila Shakti Canteen on the premises of the Collectorate



Khammam Collector Muzammil Khan visiting Indra Mahila Shakti Canteen in Khammam on Thursday

and had tea at the canteen. He advised the organisers of the canteen to run the facility on profitable lines. He asked the organisers to make special arrangements for cleaning the utensils at the canteen and asked them to keep the surroundings hygienic.

Further, he suggested that the management adjust the menu based on customer preferences. He advised the restaurant management to get feedback from the Collectorate employees.

For the benefit of the people visiting the Collectorate, boards should be installed on the premises and near the bus station there is a canteen on the second floor of the Collectorate building and bringing outside food is not entertained.

District Rural Development Officer Sanyasaiah, Additional DRDO Nooruddin, officials and others were present. The Collector advised restaurant management to adjust the menu based on customer preferences.

Indian Bank Maruthi Nagar Branch
6-3-222/18/204, Shalimar Apartments, Youssufguda Main road, Madhuranagar, Hyderabad

APPENDIX- IV-A* [See proviso to rule 8 (6) / 9(1)]
(*Retain whichever is applicable)

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (1) [(*Retain whichever is applicable) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Indian Bank, Maruthi Nagar branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whichever there is" on 24.01.2025, for recovery of Rs. 64,67,355.00/- (Rupees Sixty Four Lakhs Sixty Seven Thousand Three Hundred Fifty Five Only as on 30.12.2024.) due to the Indian Bank, Maruthi Nagar branch, Secured Creditor, from Mr/Ms/Ms/Mr Gankidota Srinivasa Rao (Borrower) Mr. Nediripati Gopala Krishna, S/O Sri Rana Raju (Guarantor) Lakshmi Ramesh, S/O L. Ragaviah (Guarantor), & M. Gankidota Sai Sandeep (Borrower).

The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed description of the Property	
All that the Office Unit No. 2, On first floor of, Dhar Manjun Nara east Addressing 195 sq ft (including common area), along with car parking together with proportionate undivided share of land 37.12 sq yards out of 297.39 sq yards is premises No. B-3-1662/1, situated at Erodegauda Near Gokul Theatre, Hyderabad Boudhanagar North. Open to sky, South: Unit No. 1, East: Open to Sky, West: Centre	
Encumbrances on property	Nil
Reserve Price	Rs. 5906000/-
EMD Amount	Rs. 590600/-
Bid incremental amount	Rs. 196000/- (Rupees ten thousand only)
Date and time of e-auction	24.01.2025
Property ID No.	IDHS91111511611

Bidders are advised to visit the website (<https://saarinet.com/>) of our e-auction service PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance, please call 8291202220. For Registration status and EMD status, please email to support@saarinet.com. For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions, please visit <https://saarinet.com/> and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. Contact No. 8291202220. Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with <https://saarinet.com/>.

Date: 31.12.2024
Place: Hyderabad
Sd/-Authorised Officer, Indian Bank



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Save Priya

Priya's story reveals a harrowing struggle. Efforts must intensify to stop her execution and ensure repatriation

The story of Nimisha Priya, a nurse from Kerala, currently on death row in Yemen, has sparked widespread debate and concern. With her death sentence sanctioned by Yemen's President Rashad al-Alimi, the clock is ticking on securing her release. Her story is not an isolated case but an ordeal that many workers face in the Gulf and many other countries. This case is not only about the fate of one individual but also raises critical questions about justice, diplomacy and human rights. Nimisha Priya, a trained nurse, moved to Yemen to work in private hospitals and make a career. In 2015, she partnered with Yemeni national Talal Abdo Mahdi to set up a clinic in Sana'a. Yemen's laws necessitate local sponsorship for businesses and Mahdi played that role for Priya. However, this professional relationship spiraled into a nightmare. Mahdi manipulated ownership documents of the clinic, claimed he was her husband using forged and morphed photographs and seized control of her finances. She was harassed mental-



ly and subjected to physical torture and imprisonment in her own home. In 2017, desperate to reclaim her passport and escape his clutches, Priya attempted to sedate Mahdi. Unfortunately, the sedatives proved fatal due to an overdose, leading to his death. The Yemeni judicial system found her guilty of murder, sentencing her a death sentence.

Efforts to appeal her conviction have been exhausted, with the Yemeni Supreme Court and President rejecting her pleas. While Mahdi's death is undeniably tragic, Priya only wanted to regain her life and runaway from coercion and cruelty. If she is executed than it would be travesty of justice and would mean

penalising a victim. Priya's actions, though legally punishable, occurred in a context of desperation and fear for her safety and freedom. The Government of India must assist Nimisha Priya and her family in securing her release and repatriation. Her release hinges on a complex process involving Yemen's tribal justice system and the payment of blood money to Mahdi's family must be paid by the accused to get a pardon. High-level diplomatic discussions with Yemeni authorities and tribal leaders are essential to secure a waiver of the death penalty. Besides, mobilising public support to raise blood money can be a way out. Employing a dedicated legal team with expertise in Yemeni law and tribal negotiations is crucial to ensuring fairness and efficiency in the process. Highlighting Priya's case on global platforms as a human rights issue may garner international support and pressure Yemen to reconsider her sentence. Priya's case underscores the plight of expatriates caught in abusive circumstances. Her actions, while grave, were not premeditated but driven by self-preservation against a backdrop of systemic exploitation. Repatriating Priya to India would allow her a better trial. The Indian government and civil society must step up efforts to secure her release and ensure she receives a fair chance to rebuild her life.

Winter session stalemate: Urgent need for reform

There is a pressing need for parliamentary reforms to ensure discipline, decorum and efficiency as a lot of parliamentary time is simply wasted



KALYANI SHANKAR

The Parliament's productivity in the recent Winter Session was a record low, with only 52 per cent of scheduled work completed. Various factors, including disruptions and lack of quorum, contributed to the reduced output. The confrontation between the treasury benches and a belligerent Opposition continued throughout. The current performance highlights the challenges in maintaining productivity. The Opposition, in particular, wanted to discuss the Adani issue. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has been raising the issue in public. It is a matter of significant public interest due to its implications. Also, the Opposition asked Union Home Minister Amit Shah to apologize for his comments about Dr BR Ambedkar, a highly respected figure in Indian history. The government was not willing to be flexible. With a productivity of merely 40.03 per cent during the Winter session.

Lok Sabha passed four of the five bills it received. Rajya Sabha approved 3 bills. During this session, the Lok Sabha lost 65 hours and 15 minutes, the highest in 2024. Many requests for adjournment motions made in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were not accepted. The 18th Lok Sabha is different in many respects. For the first time in a decade, we have a strong opposition with an official leader of Opposition (LOP). The bitterness between parties within and outside Parliament is increasing. Neither side is willing to accommodate. Discipline, decorum and dignity of Parliament are of paramount importance. The pressing need for parliamentary reforms is more evident than ever, and action is needed now. Over Rs 97,87,50,000 of taxpayers' money was spent during the Winter Session. The cost of running a Parliament session is over Rs 2.5 lakh per minute, a considerable burden on the exchequer, which should prompt reevaluating our parli-



mentary practices. The Parliament's high cost and low productivity must be addressed sooner or later. House is often adjourned many times a day. In the last five decades, it has increased by over 100 times. This underlines the need to address the issue. For instance, Parliament saw protests from the ruling BJP-led NDA and the aggressive Opposition INDIA Bloc. BJP MPs accused the Congress party of "insulting" Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and INDIA Bloc MPs demanded the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his comments about Ambedkar. The escalating conflict over this issue resulted in two injuries and police involvement. Political parties should focus on honouring Ambedkar's legacy instead of blaming each other. Other bills include the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, the Bharatiya Vayuyam Vidheyak, the Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill, the Bills of Lading Bill, the Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, the Railways (Amendment) Bill, the Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, and the



DURING THIS SESSION, THE LOK SABHA LOST 65 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES, THE HIGHEST IN 2024. MANY REQUESTS FOR ADJOURNMENT MOTIONS MADE IN LOK SABHA AND RAJYA SABHA WERE NOT ACCEPTED

Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Bill. The government also introduced a controversial bill, 'One Nation, One Poll'. While the MPs are called lawmakers, Bills have been passed amidst the din and noise without proper discussion. The decreasing time available for parliamentary debates is detrimental to democracy. Protests, adjournments, and shortened sessions have lost nearly half of the sessions. Parliamentarians question the government, elicit information, and check it mainly through the Question Hour. Short Notice questions, calling attention, and adjournment motions all check the executive. But all these are relevant only when the House runs. More efforts need to be made to establish the success of a parliamentary system: Discipline, character, and a strong sense of public morality. The need for comprehensive and immediate parliamentary reforms is more evident than ever, and the time for action is now. All stakeholders, including political analysts and citizens, must understand the urgency of the system. All stakeholders, from

political parties to citizens interested in governance and parliamentary affairs, should feel this urgency. Economic reforms are imperative to ensure sustainable economic growth. The role of Parliament is linked with the new economic policy, which should lead to a drastic reduction in the role of the State. Professionalising floor management techniques is crucial to ensuring Parliament's efficient functioning. While we can legitimately be proud of the reasonably successful work of Parliament during the last five decades, Parliament must function in step with the needs of the changing times. We must proceed carefully and cautiously and evolve a national consensus on desirable changes. After all, Parliament is the communication link between the people and the government. The solution lies in adopting healthy parliamentary practices and maintaining decorum and discipline, which are crucial for dignified conduct in the Parliament. For this, both the government and the Opposition must cooperate.

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

PICTALK



Local folk singers (Baul Fakir) perform to entertain visitors and wishing them Happy New Year, in Birbhum PTI

Crowdfunding can transform science research funding

By connecting directly with the public, crowdfunding offers researchers an opportunity to explore bold ideas fueled by passion

The conventional research funding model, which is primarily dependent on government grants and institutional allocations, is currently under increasing scrutiny. Scientists and innovators frequently find themselves facing competition for a diminishing pool of resources as budgets tighten and priorities shift in numerous regions of the globe.

A novel paradigm is emerging, one that is influenced by the digital economy: crowdfunding for research. Is it possible that this community-driven, decentralised approach could revolutionise the way we finance science? Government funding has been a cornerstone of scientific research across the globe, particularly in the domain of basic research. This funding plays a vital role in driving innovation, supporting the exploration of fundamental scientific principles, and fostering advancements that often serve as the foundation for applied research and technological development. Despite its critical importance, accessing government research grants presents sig-



nificant challenges for scientists and institutions, making it a complex and often time-consuming endeavour. The exhaustive application process is one of the foremost difficulties in securing government funding. Researchers must navigate hectic administrative paperwork, including filling out detailed forms, providing extensive documentation, and adhering to strict procedural guidelines. This bureaucratic overhead often becomes a distraction, diverting researchers' time and energy away from their primary focus—scientific discovery. Writing and refining grant proposals, ensuring compliance with submission requirements, and coordinating with institutional administrators

consume weeks or even months. This process can be overwhelming for many scientists, particularly those involved with teaching responsibilities or other professional commitments. Another challenge is the influence of governmental policy on funding priorities. The allocation of research funds is often tied to the strategic objectives of the ruling government. This means that researchers must tailor their proposals to align with themes or areas of focus deemed significant by policymakers. As a result, projects that do not align with government priorities may struggle to find financial support, even if they hold substantial scientific or societal value. Moreover, the eligibility criteria for government funding further restrict access. Typically, government grants are available only to individuals holding doctoral degrees and those affiliated with recognised academic or research institutions, and some agencies restrict people from private institutions. Crowdfunding is emerging as a revolutionary alternative to

overcome these hurdles. Crowdfunding involves gathering financial support for a project or venture by soliciting small contributions from a large group of people, typically through online platforms. It offers a direct, democratic, and flexible solution, empowering researchers to pursue their ideas with fewer constraints while promoting passion-driven inquiry. Crowdfunding allows researchers to connect directly with the public, garnering financial support for projects that resonate with a broader audience. Platforms like Kickstarter, Indiegogo, FundRazr, Hoope, GoFundMe, etc. have already successfully funded creative projects and their application in scientific research is growing. Crowdfunding science projects require researchers to dedicate considerable time and effort to campaign management, diverting resources away from their core research work.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE ON DR SINGH

Madam — I am writing to express my heartfelt appreciation for the excellent article titled 'The Statesman and a Gentleman' published in your esteemed newspaper. The article captures the life, legacy and unparalleled contribution of Dr Manmohan Singh to India's economic and political landscape. The article is very informative and educative. I have found Dr V K Bahuguna extremely well-informed. His writings are excellent and deep.

R K Sharma | New Delhi

SIMPLIFY H-1B VISA PROCESS

Madam — The H-1B visa system, a vital link between international talent and US companies, has become a contentious issue in the global workplace. It offers opportunities for skilled professionals in fields like technology, medicine, and engineering but faces significant challenges such as intense competition, complex procedures, and unclear minimum wage thresholds. According to a 2024 report by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, only 85,000 of 387,000 applications were approved, with the lottery-based system often excluding highly qualified professionals. Companies like Infosys, TCS, and Google face talent shortages due to limited approvals, while startups struggle with high costs, ranging from \$35,000 to \$50,000 per application.

The lack of a minimum wage threshold further fosters unfair competition for U.S. workers. Tesla CEO Elon Musk has called for reforms, including a minimum wage of \$150,000 to ensure only highly skilled professionals qualify. He advocates simplifying and automating processes to enhance efficiency. Musk also suggests reducing fees to support startups and small businesses, aligning the system with its goal of advancing America's technological and industrial leadership. Reforming the H-1B visa system could boost U.S. innovation, productivity, and tax revenues while balancing competition

R K Jain | Barwani

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Farmers' protests disrupt daily lives



Hindu sentiment of the fundamentalist Khalistani forces added up force in the agitation under the grab of farmers.

People at large are angrily fed up with the farmers agitation that started with the 3 farm laws enacted by the parliament, which were touted to be the game changer to improve the economic health of farmers across the country. As usual, about every decision of the Union Govt. led by Narendra Modi since 2014, the political opposition with tacit anti-India international forces successfully built the narrative after their anti-CAA agitation faded out and the anti-

Though obviously the so-called farmers who are agitated are from Punjab and have been the recipient of the biggest cake from the state in the name of MSP, subsidies, loan waivers, free electricity etc., what they are demanding now is untenable. The Supreme Court which called for suspension of the farm laws without exercising its authority against the roadblocks is still deaf towards the tragedy of commuters on the highway blocked by these anarchists supported by AAP, Congress and SAD politically just to vent their hatred towards the BJP and Modi. Only forcible evacuation of the highway is the very first thing that needs to be done, the SC and the CJI must order the use of force in public and national interest at the earliest.

Jai Prakash Gupta | Ambala

between local and foreign workers. With transparent and efficient procedures, the system could become a cornerstone of global collaboration and long-term growth, positioning the U.S. as a leading hub for global talent.

ROHIT SHARMA NEEDS A BREAK

Madam — Australia is the champion in the 'Boxing Day' test at Melbourne when they have everything in their command. The will to win made all the difference and the Aussies did it professionally at MCG in the fourth test to take the lead 2-1 in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. While India lost by a margin of 184 runs by bowled out for a meagre 155 in their chase, the selectors must take a serious call at this juncture. It's once again the pathetic failure of Rohit Sharma, which has been highly disappointing and Kohli partnered him soon in the pavilion by recklessly fishing one well outside the off-stump. K L Rahul and N K Reddy can't always be among runs and get out by the beauty of deliveries. Yashasvi Jaiswal was

the lone fighter in the middle and his fluent 84 couldn't help the team when wickets were falling like ninepins at the other end.

When Pat Cummins sets an example by his responsible all-round display for the Aussies, Rohit Sharma can't have any excuses for his dismal batting. Selectors would continue with Rohit for the final test at Sydney and if the stewardship doesn't go to change in the near future it will be construed as gross injustice for Jasprit Bumrah by denying him the captaincy at the right time. Time has ripened for Bumrah to take over and it's high time for Rohit to gently take a break from the test cricket format to make room for deserving young guns who are in the waiting for long to take pride by wearing the Indian hat. Maybe the Head Coach Gautam Gambhir might have felt that his fitness and form are much better than relying on Rohit and Kohli at this stage.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S NEW TRADE PARADIGM WITH THE US

India faces new challenges from the Trump's tough stance, spurring urgent talks on tariffs and trade



KUMARDEEP BANARJEE

The year gone by saw some crucial path-altering elections in nearly 70 of the most powerful democracies in the world. Some of the most populous countries led by India and including the US, Bangladesh, Indonesia etc. voted for a leadership of their choice in 2024. While the Indian electorate chose to renew another 5-year term for Prime Minister Modi (albeit with a less-than-expected mandate), Bangladesh too renewed its faith in Sheikh Hasina (who was accused of rigging the electoral process to retain power), which ultimately led to her being thrown out in a coup. In a highly polarised election ground, in the US, the incumbent President a front runner for the top job at the white house, pulled out near the finish line, leaving his second in command the Vice President to throw her hat in the ring against a mighty opponent Donald Trump. The US electorate gave a clear mandate for Donald Trump to lead the new global order for the US. Donald Trump's clear victory in the US elections, now potentially could lead to several multilateral, bilateral rejigs, around the globe. President-elect has already nominated several friends and allies from the past, in some of the top jobs.

He has threatened high tariffs for Canada and Mexico while joking that the former is another state of the US. He has strong views on India's trade surplus with the US which is already an issue of concern for Indian officials. Several Indian ministries were in a huddle in the last week of the year 2024, trying to assess the amount of exports from their respective sectors, while looking at the tariffs imposed on US imports. New Delhi-based policy research institute Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) spent the last day of the year discussing 'Trade Tariff and Trump'. Several recommendations were made by the panel of experts regarding the future of India-US bilateral trade relations.



A press release from the event highlighted in the first paragraph that "India should have comprehensive engagement with the US, as new administration led by President-elect Trump takes over. India should explore a comprehensive new institutional framework to address the multiple issues that arise from trade, investment, technology and finance linkages. India should urgently consider appointing a Task Force or create other institutional mechanisms that bring in domestic policy coherence on these lines." In an unrelated development, India's External Affairs Minister Jaishankar spent the last week of the year in the US, meeting key presidential nominees for the incoming Trump administration and also attending the last foreign affairs ministers meeting under President Biden, even though QUAD as the framework was empowered by Trump Presidency 1.0.

The policy research institute RIS has cautioned to not respond with any knee-jerk reactions, to possible volatile statements emerging from Washington, immediately after President Trump's swearing-in, instead, it suggests "India may need to plan first, plan hard, and yet plan fast." An agile, business approach may be the best way forward to dealing with the incoming administration.

It may also be worthwhile to note that the Indian government should reconsider some of the non-tariff barriers it imposes on imports in the form of regulatory compliances and compulsory testing etc. To avert losses, tie up with our US importers need to be strengthened so that they lobby for their own needs. However, low technology products have high US tariffs. We may be left with an avenue there to improve our participation in the value chains being built up in the US manufacturing sector. "A diversification of markets for Indian products may be needed, which could also have a sectoral focus. India can focus on exporting a certain bunch of products to say the Gulf Nations or the ASEAN group of countries depending on the price advantage. Some hedges need to be built to prevent any major hit of Trump tariffs.

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

AI: Revolutionising Punjab's governance



A S MITTAL

Punjab has the potential to harness artificial intelligence as a cornerstone for global competitiveness and unprecedented growth and bring about substantial gains



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept confined to science fiction; it is a transformative force redefining governance globally. For a state like Punjab, rich in culture and potential but grappling with multifaceted challenges, embracing AI could be a game-changer. With a technocrat policymaker like Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab is uniquely positioned to leapfrog other states by recognising AI as a critical element for global competitiveness to unlock unprecedented growth. One of the first steps toward AI-driven transformation is the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Artificial Intelligence (MAI). Such a ministry, backed with an Artificial Intelligence policy equipped with adequate budget provisions, could centralise its AI initiatives, ensuring that day-to-day work across multiple departments is well-coordinated and strategically aligned.

The ministry could also promote AI literacy among citizens, emphasising the benefits of AI and addressing any potential concerns or ethical challenges. A robust policy framework led by MAI could position Punjab among innovative states. States like Telangana have already set an example by launching an AI mission to drive AI adoption across governance, healthcare, and agriculture. Punjab can adapt these learnings to build a robust AI ecosystem that attracts accountability and efficiency. Fostering Accountability and Efficiency AI is not a replacement for human effort but a tool to support it. AI can free up human resources for more strategic work by automating routine tasks and providing real-time insights. For example, Finland has successfully used AI to improve public services, ensuring accountability and efficiency in governance without overburdening employees.

Punjab's administration can similarly use AI to track project progress, measure outcomes, and enhance transparency. AI can also play a vital role in curbing corruption, a long-standing issue in governance. By using AI algorithms to analyse pat-



AI CAN ALSO PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN CURBING CORRUPTION, A LONG-STANDING ISSUE IN GOVERNANCE. BY USING AI ALGORITHMS TO ANALYSE PATTERNS IN FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS AND DETECT ANOMALIES, THE GOVERNMENT CAN IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS INSTANCES OF MISMANAGEMENT OR FRAUD

terns in financial transactions and detect anomalies, the government can identify and address instances of mismanagement or fraud. Such measures save resources and build public trust in the governance. Empowering Citizens Through AI Successful implementation of AI empowers citizens. AI-driven e-governance platforms can simplify administrative processes, making it easier for people to access government services. For example, AI chatbots can assist citizens in filing complaints, applying for permits, or seeking information, significantly reducing bureaucratic delays.

AI can enhance public safety by enabling predictive policing and improving disaster management systems. By analysing data on crime patterns and natural disasters, AI can help authorities take preventive measures, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Punjab's residents.

Revolutionising Key Sectors - AI can be the cornerstone for transformation in Punjab's key sectors: **1. Health:** AI-powered diagnostic tools can revolutionise healthcare delivery in Punjab, especially in rural areas with limited access to quality healthcare. Tamil Nadu's use of AI to predict disease outbreaks and improve maternal healthcare outcomes offers a model worth emulating. Punjab's healthcare system could leverage AI for telemedicine, enabling remote consultations and reducing the burden on overworked medical professionals. Moreover, AI can assist in making cutting-edge treatments more accessible to patients.

2. Education: AI-driven platforms can personalise student learning experiences, addressing individual strengths and weaknesses. For instance, a country

like Estonia has integrated AI into its education system to offer tailored teaching, ensuring no student is left behind. Punjab can adopt similar systems to improve education levels and employable skill development. AI can also predict dropout rates and identify at-risk students, enabling timely interventions to keep them in education. Additionally, AI tools can train teachers, equipping them with modern methodologies to enhance classroom engagement.

3. Agriculture: Agriculture is Punjab's backbone, but the sector faces multifaceted challenges. AI can optimise irrigation, predict weather patterns, and offer crop-specific advice to farmers. Karnataka's use of AI to predict crop yields and help farmers secure better prices exemplifies how technology can empower agricultural communities. Punjab could take this further by implementing AI-powered precision farming techniques, which use data from drones and sensors to monitor soil health and pest activity, ensuring higher productivity with lower resource consumption.

4. Industry and Infrastructure: For enterprises, AI could bring regulatory clarity or, conversely, added scrutiny in areas such as data sharing, intellectual property and the ethical use of AI. It can streamline manufacturing processes, enhance supply chain efficiency, and improve project monitoring in infrastructure development. Gujarat's use of AI to attract investments and facilitate industrial growth shows how a state can harness technology to boost its economy. Punjab's industrial sector could use AI to identify global market trends and adapt its manufacturing capabilities accordingly. In infrastructure,

AI can ensure better planning and execution of projects, reducing delays and cost overruns.

5. Resource Mobilisation: AI tools can help Punjab's government enhance efficiency in tax collection, reduce revenue leakages, and improve financial planning. Andhra Pradesh's Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS) uses AI to monitor and optimise resource allocation, providing a blueprint for Punjab to follow. AI can also assist in identifying untapped revenue streams, enabling the government to fund developmental projects without increasing the financial burden on its citizens.

The Way Forward By embracing AI with a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach, Punjab can address its existing challenges and set itself on a path toward sustainable and inclusive growth. The magic of AI lies in its ability to amplify human potential and solve complex problems. Under the visionary leadership of Bhagwant Mann and with the proper policy framework, Punjab can harness this magic to transform its socio-economic landscape. Establishing a dedicated AI ministry, investing in infrastructure, and adopting AI across key sectors will make Punjab a leader in good governance and improve its people's quality of life. The time to act is now, and Punjab must rise to the challenge to set a precedent for other states to follow.

(The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika ITL Group, Vice-Chairman (Cabinet minister rank) of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association. Views expressed are personal)

From vision to reality: How good governance is transforming education in India

Vajpayee's vision of a 'New India,' anchored in democratic principles and citizen-centric governance is giving a new look to the education

Ten years ago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi set forth his vision of sushasan (good governance), calling it "the key to a nation's progress." He declared December 25, former PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birth anniversary, as Good Governance Day. Vajpayee had envisioned a "New India" where the government would embody the principles of democracy and development, emphasising citizen-centric decision-making, transparency, and public participation.



TUHIN A SINHA

Put simply, good governance means that the day-to-day functioning of the government is effective, transparent, and accountable, which, in the modern age naturally includes e-governance and digital empowerment. In fact, in the context of a welfare government functioning in a vastly unequal society, good governance is fundamental for ensuring sustainable development, social justice, and the protection of human rights.

In 2019, India also adopted a metric called the Good Governance Index (GGI) to track and compare governance among the states and

union territories across ten key sectors. The 11th Good Governance Day presents an apt moment to pause and reflect on the state of governance in one of the most critical sectors—education. Even though Human Resource Development, composed of indicators like "quality of education" and "elementary school retention rate," is one of the ten key sectors covered by the GGI, a close look at India's education governance reveals substantial room for improvement, particularly at the school level. Vajpayee's commitment to education was evident during his tenure as Prime Minister—he pioneered the landmark Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2002,

which emphasised universal school enrollment and went on to form the cornerstone of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009. Building decisively on this foundation, Prime Minister Modi's leadership has elevated education to new heights through bold reforms.

The introduction of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, along with the NIPUN Bharat Mission, has revolutionised the approach to foundational learning. This shift is being carefully monitored through multiple assessment initiatives - states have implemented third-party evaluations, while programs like CBSE's SAFAL, the National Achievement Survey, and Gujarat's groundbreaking Vidya



Samiksha Kendra (VSK) use cutting-edge technology to track progress systematically. These assessment systems have revealed both progress and persistent challenges in our education system. The data highlights critical areas that need attention, particularly in learning outcomes. Various learning sur-

veys show that over 5 crore elementary-grade students lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills. Learning gaps for these children only keep widening as they progress through grades with a weak foundation. It is then unsurprising that almost 33 per cent of Grade VIII students are unable to read simple sentences or do basic arithmetic.

Recognising these challenges, PM Modi's administration has taken a step through the State School Standards Authority (SSSA), recommended in the NEP 2020, which emerges as a pivotal reform to enhance India's school governance standards. The proposed SSSA would be an indepen-

dent quality regulator for all schools, both public and private. One of the key functions of the SA is to ensure public disclosure of school performance data for all schools through a digital portal. With all schools being held to clear and uniform quality standards and policymakers being informed by data-driven insights, educational resources will be used more efficiently. The SA can create a culture of transparency where parents are active participants in their children's education. With its emphasis on streamlining bureaucracy, focusing on outcomes rather than inputs, and integrating technology to reduce administrative burdens, not only

does it embody Prime Minister Modi's ideal of "minimum government, maximum governance". A pertinent example is the set of eight principles of good governance recommended by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)—participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, equity, effectiveness, consensus, and responsiveness. As the nation observes Good Governance Day, the call to action is clear: states must embrace the SA to realise the shared vision of a "New India," where quality education is a right, not a privilege. (The writer is National Spokesperson, BJP; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Rupee falls 9 paise to close at 85.73 against US dollar

The rupee depreciated 9 paise to close at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as strong dollar demand from importers and foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments. Forex traders said the dollar gained against most currencies during 2024 and continued to remain on a strong footing this year. Moreover, persistent foreign fund outflows further dented investors' sentiments. Additionally, global markets are expected to see low volumes as the holiday season is underway in major economies like those in Europe. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened on a weak note and witnessed an intra-day low of 85.79 and a high of 85.68 against the American currency. The local unit settled for the day at 85.73 (provisional), registering a fall of 9 paise over its previous close amid a sharp recovery in domestic equities. On Wednesday, the rupee settled flat at 85.64 against the US dollar. On December 27, the local currency touched its lifetime intra-day low of 85.80 against the greenback. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on strength in the US Dollar and dollar demand from importers.



India sugar production declines to 95.40 lakh tn

Sugar production fell by 16 per cent to 95.40 lakh tonnes in the first quarter of the ongoing current marketing year that started in October, mainly due to a decline in output in Maharashtra, according to industry body ISMA data released on Thursday. Mills had manufactured 113.01 lakh tonnes in the year-ago period. The production data excludes the diversion of sugar for ethanol making. According to the Indian Sugar and Bio-Energy Manufacturers Association (ISMA), crushing rate in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka was better than last year. However, the crushing rate suffered in Uttar Pradesh during the last week of December 2024 due to a temporary disruption in cane supply owing to rains. During the first quarter, 493 mills were operational as against 512 factories a year ago.



DMart's revenue up 17.5 pc to Rs 15,565 cr

Avenue Supermarts Ltd, which owns and operates retail chain D-Mart, has reported 17.5 per cent increase in standalone revenue from operations at Rs 15,565.23 crore for the third quarter ended December 31, 2024. The company had posted a revenue of Rs 13,247.33 crore in December quarter a year ago, Avenue Supermarts informed BSE on Thursday. The total number of stores as of December 2024 stood at 387. Revenue for the quarter is subject to limited review by the statutory auditors of the company, it said. In October-December 2022-23, standalone revenue was Rs 11,304.58 crore. Promoted by Radhakrishnan Damani and his family, D-Mart retails basic home and personal products across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, NCR, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Rajasthan.

White-collar hiring up 9 pc in December: Report

White-collar hiring activity in December witnessed a 9 per cent increase compared to the same period of the previous year, driven by high-skill and strategic roles, a report said on Thursday. According to Naukri JobSpeak, the index reached an impressive 2,651 points in December 2024, reflecting a robust 9 per cent year-on-year growth, a promising sign for the year ahead. Key sectors that were primary growth drivers in December 2024, included AI/ML (36 per cent), Oil and Gas (13 per cent), FMCG (12 per cent) and Healthcare (12 per cent), said the report. Top metro cities collectively posted a 10 per cent growth as the year came to an end, it added. The Naukri JobSpeak is a monthly Index representing the Indian job market and hiring activity based on new job listings and job-related searches by recruiters on the resume database of Naukri.com. Meanwhile, according to the

Govt to revise WPI base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23

Sets up 18-member working group

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday said it has constituted an 18-member working group, under the chairmanship of NITI Aayog Member Ramesh Chand, to revise the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23. The revision of the base year helps in presenting a more realistic picture of the price situation in the country. As per the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the group, it will suggest the commodity basket of WPI and Producer Price Index (PPI) with the base year 2022-23 in the light of structural changes in the economy; review the existing system of price collection and suggest changes for improvement; and decide on the computational methodology to be adopted for WPI / PPI. The group will also examine the methodology for the compilation of PPI, suggest further improvement in compilation and presentation and recommend a roadmap for



switch over from WPI to PPI. The members of the group include representatives from the RBI, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Statistics, Department of Agriculture, Department of Consumer Affairs, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Chief Economist, SBI Group. The non-official members include Economist Surjit Bhalla; Shamika Ravi, Member, Economic Advisory Council to PM; Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisis; Nilesh Shah, MD, Kotak Mahindra Asset Management; and Indranil Sengupta, Co-Head and Economist, Bank of America Merrill Lynch. Earlier, there was a plan to revise the base year from 2011-12 to 2017-18.

Oil, gas demand to remain strong in FY26: India Ratings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's oil and gas demand is likely to remain strong in the next financial year even as weak global demand will drive down refining margins, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said on Thursday. The agency expects the credit profile of downstream companies to remain stable during the year, driven by healthy demand for petroleum products and healthy marketing margins that would offset compressed Gross Refining Margins (GRMs), yielding healthy overall EBITDA. Credit profile may see an addition of debt on account of under-construction refinery expansion projects for all the major oil marketing companies (OMCs). The credit profile of upstream oil companies shall remain dependent on crude oil prices, Ind-Ra said in the FY26 Oil and Gas Outlook. EBITDA generation for upstream companies may fall with a moderation in oil prices and a reduction in production from legacy fields. However, the impact of low crude oil prices is expected to be offset by the removal of special excise on the production of crude and an increase in production expected from new discover-



ies. "Indian oil and gas demand is expected to remain strong in FY26, leading to an expansion in the refinery and petrochemical capacities. India's refinery capacity is expected to increase by 22 per cent in the next two-three years. Ind-Ra expects the strong demand to be driving oil and gas investment decisions in India," said Bhanu Patni, Associate Director, Corporates, Ind-Ra. Ind-Ra expects the City Gas Distribution (CGD) sector's credit profile to remain stable in FY26 post-reduction of low-cost domestic gas allocation. Return on invested capital could moderate, however it would remain healthy. New geographical areas could see some pressure on capex execution as internal

'India-EFTA trade pact likely to come into force by year end'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The implementation process of free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the four-nation European bloc EFTA is progressing fast and is expected to come into force before the end of this year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said. The two sides signed the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) on March 10, 2024. Under the pact, India has received an investment commitment of USD 100 billion in 15 years from the grouping while allowing several products such as Swiss watches, chocolates and cut and polished diamonds at lower or zero duties. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) members are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

"Yes, EFTA is progressing very fast," Goyal told PTI when asked if the agreement would come into effect this year. The minister said the Swiss Council of States has approved the agreement and now will go to their National Council for approval. "So this overwhelming support in political circles in Switzerland for the TEPA with EFTA is truly a sign of the times to come... and in their statement also, it shows that it has cleared an important hurdle and they are hoping to bring in entry to force by autumn of 2025, before the end of calendar year 2025," Goyal said. The bloc committed an investment of USD 100 billion -- USD 50 billion within 10 years after the implementation of the agreement and another USD 50 billion in the next five years -- which would facilitate



the creation of 1 million direct jobs in India. This is a first-of-its-kind pledge agreed upon in any of the trade deals signed by India so far. The commitment is the key substance of the TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement), which took almost 16 years to conclude, for India in return for opening its markets for several products coming from the EFTA nations.

There is a provision in the agreement that if the proposed investments would not come because of some reasons, India can suspend duty concessions

to the four countries. Domestic customers will get access to high-quality Swiss products such as watches, chocolates, biscuits, and clocks at lower prices as India will phase out customs duties under the trade pact on these goods over 10 years. It is taking time to implement the agreement due to an elaborate ratification process of these pacts in different countries. In India, such agreements are approved by the union Cabinet, in EFTA countries, they need approval from their parliament. On the progress of FTA negotiations with other countries, Goyal said he has held meetings with the new UK trade minister on the proposed pact. India and the UK are expected to hold the next round of talks for a proposed FTA later this month to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations. The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

'Employment increases 36 pc to 64.33 cr in last ten years'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union labour minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Thursday said employment in the country has increased by 36 per cent to 64.33 crore in 2023-24 from 47.15 crore in 2014-15, which shows improvement in job creation during NDA period. Talking to media persons, the minister also stated that employment under UPA grew by just about 7 per cent between 2004 to 2014. He noted that under the UPA government between 2004 to 2014 just 2.9 crore additional jobs were created whereas under the Modi government between 2014-24, 17.19 crore jobs were added. In the last one year (2023-24) alone, the Modi government has created around 4.6 crore jobs in the country, the minister stated. The data assumes significance in the backdrop of pressure on the government for job creation in the country. About the agriculture sector, the minister stated that employment declined by 16 per cent between 2004 to 2014 under UPA tenure whereas it has grown by 19

Sebi to continue proceedings against ZEEL

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets watchdog Sebi on Thursday said it will slap a fresh show cause notice on ZEEL founder chairman Subhash Chandra, and his son Punit Goenka as it vowed to continue the investigation into alleged violation of listing norms against the media baron and his company. The order passed by Sebi's adjudicating officer said the contents of the earlier Show Cause Notice (SCN) issued to them will also be incorporated "in the SCN to be issued in the instant matter". The ZEEL and its top management are under Sebi scrutiny for alleged violations of disclosure norms and initially a show cause notice was issued to them in July 2022. Following the July 2022 show cause notice, Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL) and Punit Goenka filed settlement applications with the Sebi. However, the application to settle the adjudication proceedings was rejected by a panel of whole-time members of Sebi and the matter was referred to the markets watchdog for further investigation.

Govt clears PLI incentive of Rs 246 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ministry of Heavy Industries has approved incentive claims of Rs 246 crore submitted by Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors under the Rs 25,938 crore PLI scheme for the automobile and auto components industry, officials said. Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy has expressed satisfaction with the progress made by auto original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) toward achieving localized manufacturing through initiatives like PLI scheme. He also congratulated Tata Motors and M&M for devel-



oping this capability and exuded confidence that more applicants would take advantage of the PLI scheme. According to sources, Tata Motors submitted an incentive claim of approximately Rs 142.13 crore based on determined sales in FY 2023-24. The eligible sales of Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) products from Tata Motors include the Tiago EV (electric four-wheeler), Starbus EV (electric bus), and Ace EV (electric cargo vehicle), totalling Rs 1,380.24 crore. Mahindra & Mahindra submitted an incentive claim of Rs 104.08 crore based on deter-

mined incremental sales of AAT products totalling Rs 800.59 crore for FY 2023-24, with a cumulative investment of Rs 978.30 crore, officials said. The eligible sales from their e3W models, including Treo, Treo Zor, and Zor Grand amount to Rs 836.02 crore, supported by a certificate of domestic value addition (DVA) issued by the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI). "The total claims from these two applicants amount to approximately Rs 246 crore, which have been examined and recommended by the Project Management Agency (PMA) and subsequently approved by Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI)," an official said. The scheme aims to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities in AAT products, address cost disabilities, and establish a robust supply chain.

Investors richer by Rs 8.52 L cr in two days of market rally

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth surged Rs 8.52 lakh crore in two days of market rally, with the benchmark Sensex climbing nearly 2 per cent on Thursday alone. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex jumped 1,436.30 points or 1.83 per cent -- its best single-day gain in more than a month -- to settle at 79,943.71 on Thursday. During the day, it soared 1,525.46 points, or 1.94 per cent, to 80,032.87. On Wednesday, the benchmark gauge had climbed 368.40 points, or 0.47 per cent, to settle at 78,507.41. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms surged Rs 8,52,239.27 crore to Rs 4,50,47,345.71 crore (USD 5.25 trillion) in two days. "While markets failed to deliver a Christmas rally over the past few weeks, the New Year has provided strong optimism in the first two days with Sensex touching the psychological 80,000-mark on the back of broad-based short-covering. "Gains in banking, IT, auto and metal triggered a major rally despite concerns in the currency market which saw the rupee scaling fresh lows amid rising crude oil prices and subdued growth," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said. From the 30 Sensex blue-chip firms, Bajaj Finserv jumped nearly 8 per cent while Bajaj Finance soared 6.50 per cent.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
IRRIGATION AND COMMAND AREA DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TENDER NOTICE
Tender Notice Number: 07/2024-25 dt: 07.12.2024
Name of Work: Construction of Guest House in the Old Guest House premises of I&CAD Department in Tandur (V) & (M), Vikarabad District-Balance Estimate -2nd call.
Amount: Rs.60.55 Lakhs, Tender Starting Date: 03.01.2025, Tender Closing Date: 18.01.2025, Tender Opening Date: 18.01.2025, Time Period in Months: 6
Sd/- Superintending Engineer Irrigation Circle, Chevella
R.O.No: 1508-PFCLAD/DT/112024-25, Dt: 02-01-2025

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
E-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Short NIT No.886/UBD/Sec-Zone/GHMCI/2024-25 Dated: 02.01.2025
No. of Works: 01 Works, Estimated amount: Rs. 3.85 Lakhs, Bid Submission Start Date & Time: Dt: 03.01.2025 @ 11.30 AM, Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: Dt: 10.01.2025 @ 11.30 AM. Name & Address Officer Call No.: Dy. Director, USD, Sec'bad Zone, GHMC, Call No. 7207923113. Further details can be seen at @ https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Dy. Director, UBD, R.O.No: 1508-PFCLAD/DT/112024-25, Dt: 02-01-2025 Sec'bad Zone, GHMC

'Every dish I create carries the memory of the place'

TRAVELOGUE

Travel and food share an inseparable bond, enriching the other in ways that create unforgettable experiences. For celebrated chef Ranveer Brar, this connection goes beyond mere exploration—it's a philosophy, a way of life that shapes his culinary creations and storytelling. Here's diving in deep into his travel diaries and exploration



TEJAL SINHA
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Whether wandering through the bustling streets of a foreign city, soaking in the serene beauty of a remote mountain range, or tasting the local flavours of a quaint village, travel offers a unique lens through which we can experience the world. It's a chance to break free from routine, embrace spontaneity and create memories that last a lifetime. Each trip, whether near or far, carries the promise of discovery—of new places, new people and perhaps, a new sense of purpose.

For celebrated chef Ranveer Brar, food is not just a craft—it is a lifelong institution of learning. His journey into the world of cooking began in the bustling communal kitchen of a langar in his hometown, where the act of feeding hundreds selflessly planted the first seeds of his culinary passion. "The sheer volume of food being cooked by 50 to 60 people, without tasting it and yet producing dishes of such delicious perfection—it was fascinating," Brar reflects. "It taught me the importance of emotion in cooking, hygiene, and above all, selflessness in the kitchen." Brar's love for cooking truly blossomed when he

Over the years, he expanded his culinary horizons, opening restaurants across India and abroad, but he never forgot the foundational lessons learned in the langar or the streets of Lucknow. Brar firmly believes that travel is essential to becoming a better chef. "To innovate or reinvent any dish, you need to experience it in its original form, at its place of origin," he says. His travels have taken him across India and to distant lands like Turkey, Scandinavia and Kerala, all of which have left an indelible mark on his culinary style. "Kerala's spices, Turkey's vibrant street food and the minimalist elegance of Scandinavian cuisine have all been deeply inspiring."

His trip to Georgetown left a lasting impression. "It's a melting pot of cultures, and you see that reflected in its food," Brar shares. "At Line Clear, I had an unforgettable plate of nasi kandar. Exploring the street food—from Chinatown to Little India—was a culinary adventure in itself. For me, street food is always the best way to understand the true essence of a place."

Brar takes great pleasure in observing how people today are connecting more deeply with food. "It's wonderful to see people not just eating but also engaging with food, exploring its stories and history," he says. He encourages food enthusiasts to dive into local culinary scenes when traveling. "Talk to the locals. Visit older establishments that have stood the test of time. You'll uncover stories of culinary evolution that no book can teach you." When Brar travels, he brings back more than recipes. His trips are a source of stories, inspiration and cultural understanding. "Every dish I create carries the memory of a place, a flavor, or a conversation," he shares. His travels also fuel his passion for poetry, which he often pens during his journeys.

In Melbourne, Brar found inspiration in an unexpected way. "I got lost in Hosier Lane, mesmerised by the graffiti. Those vibrant colours and the creativity of the artists stayed with me long after I found my way out." When asked to name the best food city, Brar hesitates. "Best would be limiting it. Maybe I'm yet to find one," he says thoughtfully. However, he admits to having a soft spot for Istanbul's rich and diverse food culture, as well as for Lucknow and Kolkata back home.

For Ranveer Brar, every journey is an opportunity to explore, learn and connect—both with people and their food. It's this ethos that makes him one of the most beloved chefs, as he continues to transform his experiences into dishes that tell stories of tradition, innovation and shared humanity.

explored the streets of Lucknow as a young man. The city, rich in culinary heritage, folklore and gastronomic tales, unfolded before him as an endless source of inspiration. It was here that he apprenticed under Munir Ustad, a skilled kebab vendor, who provided Brar with his first formal tutelage in cooking. Lucknow's vibrant food culture, with its rich history and iconic dishes, cemented Brar's connection to cuisine and fueled his desire to pursue it as a career.

After completing his education at IHM Lucknow, Brar began his professional journey with the Taj Group of Hotels.

AI-powered cardiac devices pave way for heart disease management

Adaptive cardiac devices are revolutionising heart disease treatment for real-time monitoring and dynamic therapy adjustments, according to a report.

The report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, showed that these devices offer continuous, precise interventions enabling better patient outcomes. These also present a shift toward more effective and responsive management of heart disease.

In contrast to traditional devices like pacemakers that deliver consistent outputs, the novel adaptive cardiac technologies leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyse heart activity. The adaptive technology also adjusts treatment based on fluctuations in cardiac rhythms, leading to a personalised approach. This ensures that therapy aligns precisely with a patient's evolving condition, providing 24/7 care and better health outcomes.

According to GlobalData forecast, the cardiovascular devices market is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.20 per cent from \$84.8 billion in 2023 to \$140 billion in 2033. This growth highlights the increasing demand for advanced diagnostic and therapeutic tools tailored to cardiac care.

"The cardiovascular devices market is undergoing rapid expansion and diversification. AI-enhanced solutions exemplify the industry's shift toward precision medicine, aligning with regulatory bodies like the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prioritising innovative approaches to improve outcomes in cardiovascular disease management," said Cynthia Stinchcombe, Medical Devices Analyst at GlobalData.

The report projects that advancements in cardiac care, combined with novel therapies, will transform the field, providing new solutions for millions affected by heart disease globally.

"The adoption of cutting-edge technologies in cardiovascular care emphasises the critical role innovation plays in modern healthcare. With these advanced systems, we are moving towards more tailored and effective treatment strategies for heart conditions, improving both quality of life and clinical outcomes," Stinchcombe said.

The report also highlights the synergy between wearable cardiac monitors—such as ECG-enabled smartwatches—and AI-driven devices.

Wearables provide continuous monitoring outside clinical environments, while adaptive implants offer precise therapeutic interventions, creating a comprehensive framework for cardiac health management.

"As cardiovascular diseases remain a leading global health concern, the advancements we're seeing offer renewed hope. Emerging technologies are crucial in expanding diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities. With the FDA's support for AI-driven medical devices, these innovations are set to reshape cardiac care, delivering transformative benefits to patients worldwide," Stinchcombe said.



Turning trauma into triumph

PNS|HYDERABAD

Autism support goes beyond providing care—it's about fostering understanding, inclusion and empowerment for individuals on the spectrum and their families. It encompasses early diagnosis, therapeutic interventions, educational programs and emotional assistance tailored to meet unique needs. Effective support focuses on fostering communication, social skills and independence through methods such as speech therapy, behavioural interventions, and sensory integration. Equally crucial is empowering families by providing resources, counseling and tools to navigate challenges and celebrate progress. Now this is where Leeza app comes to the rescue.

Mohammad Ibrahim Raza, a pioneer in the development of the Leeza App, is driven by a strong sense of personal connection to families living with autism and great desire to transform their existing conditions. With a vision of compassion and innovation, Raza, seeks to create a life-altering experience for families dealing with autism. He explains that the app is a comprehensive autism support service that begins with free preliminary assessments for early signs of autism and continues with appropriate interventions.

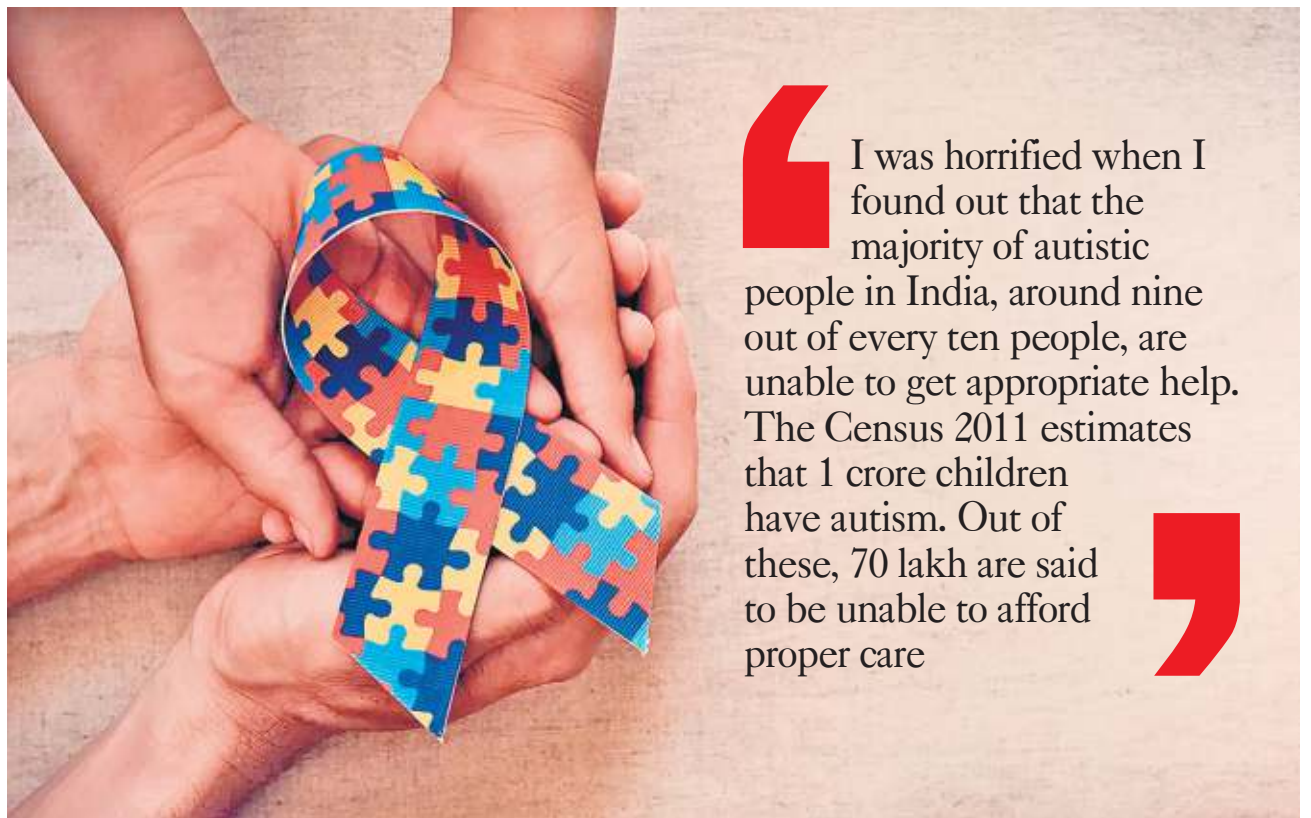
Raza had another story to tell. He shared the story behind Leeza App and expressed how he envisions society to be more inclusive and supportive in an inspiring conversation with us.

The beginning of this engagement was very personal. "I had a cousin who was diagnosed with autism. The struggle that we went through in terms of getting a proper diagnosis and therapy centers was traumatic. We were duped and the void of being understood and supported was so painful." After this experience, Raza felt responsible and decided to do something about autism which led him to conduct research on the condition.

The app was officially launched on January 30, 2024, after a soft launch in October 2023 and an official one in August 2024 where its full features were visible and functional. The development of the app was in progress for some time before people witnessed its official version. "The idea was conceived in October 2023 when we started working on the idea. We hosted an unofficial launch on December 30, 2023, and an official launch on August 2024 when all operations were initiated."

Through the intelligent application of AI, novel techniques in prediction assessments, free counseling's and formal assessments are offered. The app also gives parents the needed tools so that they can work together with the child as partners in therapy. Raza underlines the point by saying: "Our focus is to simplify treatment and decrease the level of dependence on the therapist's profession. As far as we hope, parents can do a lot and they must have the means to do that."

In addition, Raza appreciates the value of



I was horrified when I found out that the majority of autistic people in India, around nine out of every ten people, are unable to get appropriate help. The Census 2011 estimates that 1 crore children have autism. Out of these, 70 lakh are said to be unable to afford proper care

collaborations and partnerships. For instance, Leeza App does not have any formal partnership with the Parents Association for Welfare of Mentally Handicapped Persons (PAWMH), but the two organisations operate within the same ecosystem. Raza states, "During the visa's international phase, I've gone to the USA, Poulsen, and has seen by myself what neurodevelopmental conditions do to families. It made me even more determined to develop the platform for the community that the app strives to build."

As its expands and manages to make an impact, Raza stays focused on the course. "I want the Leeza App to be a light for families who have autism. We are not only an app—we are a network of solidarity which transcends borders." Raza has taken it upon herself and through Leeza App, initiates a new revolution of how families impacted by autism get detection, support and integration.

The diagnosis of his cousin made him more cautious and encouraged him to search for ways that would help people with autism and their families. Raza recalls, "I was horrified when I found out that the majority of autistic people in India, around nine

out of every ten people, are unable to get appropriate help. The Census 2011 estimates that 1 crore children have autism. Out of these, 70 lakh are said to be unable to afford proper care."

The research by Raza brought him to the conclusion, "The parents are kept in the dark and therefore, always remain in denial and confusion in a bid to help their child." He points out, "Parents are the people who are with the child, the child is with them the longest and empowering the parents is critical." This insight triggered the idea of Leeza App where the idea is to enable the services for autism to be available at lower costs.

Raza reflects when he started he was doing something wrong, "I was worried I'd cause more harm than good, because I'm not autistic." He tells a story about thinking about charging the app a nominal fee to use its services. But his mentor, Mirash Rahim, cautioned him against doing so because of the fear and uncertainty parents feel when seeking out assessments for their children. Raza says of an autistic child: "It's a lifelong condition, and their life is going to change completely. We cannot afford to increase their stress."

The parents are kept in the dark and therefore, always remain in denial and confusion in a bid to help their child. Parents are the people who are with the child, the child is with them the longest and empowering the parents is critical

His approach reflects Raza's commitment to empathy and to understanding. He understands how sensitive the matters in question are and how plainly it needs to be said. "I have to be so careful because this topic is really sensitive and I can't do them more harm than good." With Leeza App, Raza aspires to create a supportive ecosystem for families with autism impacting parents to be co-therapists for their children.

He also envisioned partnering with existing therapy centers to offer affordable options, but the reality turned out less than perfect. "The therapy prices were soaring high, with certain centres pricing as high as Rs 40,000 a month," Raza explains. People living below extremely low debt lines hardly manage to spend Rs 9,000 a month on nutrition. How could they pay Rs 40,000?"

This made him re-evaluate and look for different solutions. In his search, he found Bharati Vidyalaya, a teacher training institute and therapy centre. Raza met the founder Ayesha Rubina, and discovered a common vision. "The thing is we picked each other up, and since then we've been impacting families. Therapy is now accessible even to people from low-income backgrounds, like auto drivers."

He is working on enabling the parents to treat their own children as a co-therapist such that financial reasons should not cap their children's development. He says, "Our agenda is whenever a parent comes to us, the last thing that they should be worried about is 'oh but the price or money' - but their biggest headache should be on how to make their child independent."

what's brewing?

Binge-worthy January!

Here's a list of spectacular lineup of fresh content to start your year with excitement on Disney+ Hotstar! Swing into action with *Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man* and laugh out loud with the hilarious standup special *Roy Wood Jr.: Lonely Flowers*. Relive childhood thrills with *Goosebumps: The Vanishing* and experience high-stakes drama with *Gunaah Season 2*.

INDIAN TITLES

Gunaah S2 (January 3)

With heightened stakes, *Gunaah Season 2* takes viewers on a gripping journey of revenge, betrayal and love. As Abhimanyu, Tara, Shiva and JK navigate complex choices, their lives intertwine in unexpected ways, leading to emotional drama and shocking revelations. Directed by Anil Senior and starring Gashmeer Mahajani, Surbhi Jyoti and Zayn Iqbal Khan, this season promises intense twists and turns.

The Secret of the Shiledars (January 31)

A tale of valor, loyalty, and unyielding commitment to kartavya, Disney+ Hotstar brings the first-of-its-kind treasure hunt-based series - *The Secret of the Shiledars*. The series narrates the story of the Shiledars — stalwart defenders and trusted stewards whose unwavering dedication shaped the course of an era.

All We Imagine As Light (January 3)

All We Imagine as Light is an evocative drama that explores the intertwined lives of two Malayali nurses in Mumbai—Prabha, a straitlaced woman yearning for her absent husband and Anu, her outgoing roommate entangled in a forbidden love affair. Through their friendship, the film captures themes of love, identity and the contradictions of life in the city.

MARVEL TITLES

Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man (Season 1) (January 29) (English)

Your Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man is an animated series that follows Peter Parker on his way to becoming a hero, with a journey unlike we have ever seen and a style that celebrates the character's early comic book roots.

HULU TITLES

Roy Wood Jr.: Lonely Flowers (January 17) (English)

In this stand-up special, Roy Wood Jr explores how

lack of connection has sent society spiraling into a culture full of guns, rude employees, self-checkout lanes and why some of us would rather be alone rather than be connected.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TITLES

Blink (January 5) (English, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu)

When three of their children are diagnosed with an incurable disease that leads to severe visual impairment, the Pelletier family embarks on a journey to see the world's beauty while they still can. As they experience breathtaking destinations and once-in-a-lifetime encounters, their love, resilience and unshakeable sense of wonder ensure that an uncertain future does not define their present.

A Real Bug's Life (Season 2) (January 15) (English)

Enter an unseen micro-universe where a charismatic cast of miniature heroes use mind-blowing superpowers to survive—from the fast-legged tiger beetle escaping the heat of Borneo's beaches to the magical metamorphosis of a damselfly on a British pond to the Smoky Mountain luna moth whose quest is to grow wings, find love and pass on his genes all in one short night!

OTHER TITLES

Goosebumps: The Vanishing (January 10) (English)

Goosebumps: The Vanishing begins with fraternal twins Devin and Cece adjusting to life with their recently divorced dad, Anthony. When the duo discovers a threat stirring, they quickly realize that dark secrets are among them, triggering a chain of events that unravel a profound mystery. As they delve into the unknown, Devin, Cece and their friends — Alex, CJ and Frankie — find themselves entangled in the chilling tale of four teenagers who mysteriously vanished in 1994.



● Dimple Hayati



● Lakshmi



● Kavya



● Rachana



● Deepthi



● Saileela

Lakshmi and Kavya, the founders of Lakshmika Jewellers, celebrated the opening of their new store in Hyderabad, marking their first store. The event marked the presence of actresses Dimple Hayati and Divi.



PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



Vega Jewellers hosted a spectacular New Year's Eve Celebration at My Home Bhooja,HITEC City.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



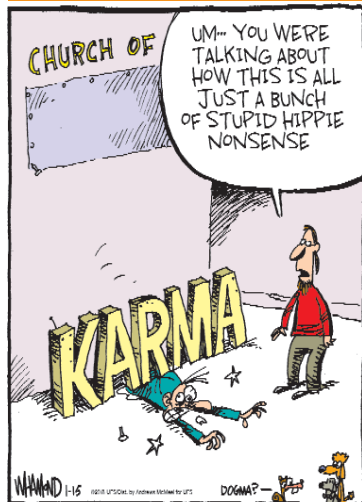
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



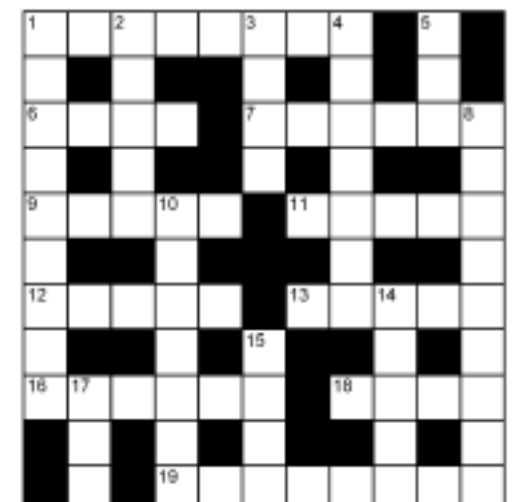
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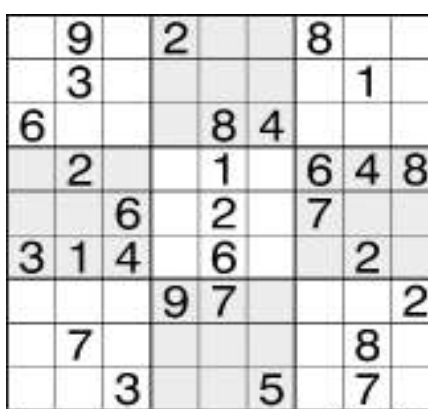
SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

- A tank for live fish
- Mix this with yellow to get green
- Stopped doing something
- A pale purple colour
- A crown-wearing woman
- A female relation
- Workers sit at these in offices
- Hot coals left after a fire
- A list of restaurant meals
- People who work in classrooms

DOWN

- An emergency vehicle
- Normal
- A feeling that makes you want to scratch
- Check the length of
- A female sheep
- Large extinct animals
- Very old
- A person from Sweden
- The largest continent
- Adult males



MAHESH BABU-RAJAMOULI FILM BEGINS, WITH ALL SHUSH!



SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Superstar Mahesh Babu is teaming up with acclaimed director SS Rajamouli for the first time. While the film was officially announced some time ago, the team held a formal pooja ceremony on Thursday at the Aluminium Factory, which houses Rajamouli's office. The event was attended by Mahesh Babu and his family, including his wife Namrata, along with Rajamouli, his wife Rama Rajamouli, music director MM Keeravani and Rajamouli's father, Vijayendra Prasad. Producer KL Narayana and his family members were also present at the ceremony.

Interestingly, Mahesh Babu, who traditionally avoids attending pooja ceremonies for his films due to his personal sentiments, surprised everyone by making an exception for this project. For many of his latest films, his family members would attend such events in his place. Breaking his own tradition, Mahesh's presence at this event added a unique significance.

The pooja was a private affair, attended by assistant directors and unit members. Unlike Rajamouli's usual practice of announcing a film with a formal media conference, this launch was kept entirely low-key. According to sources, Rajamouli may hold a press meet later to share more details about the film.

The shooting for the film is set to commence immediately, with initial plans for locations in India. While earlier reports suggested that filming might begin in South Africa or other international locations, it is not yet confirmed. Rajamouli scouted locations in Odisha, hinting that portions of the film might be shot there as well. Rajamouli has often mentioned

that the story of this film is inspired by an Indiana Jones-style adventure. According to unit sources, Priyanka Chopra has been confirmed as the female lead. Known for her prominence in both Hindi cinema and Hollywood, Priyanka's involvement elevates the project's international appeal.

"This film with Mahesh Babu is being made on a grand scale with international standards. It will be released not only in Indian languages but also in Hollywood," revealed a source. The decision to cast Priyanka Chopra aligns with the film's ambition to reach global audiences.

This collaboration between Mahesh Babu and SS Rajamouli promises to be a landmark project, with the industry eagerly awaiting more details about its grand scale and adventurous storyline.



This film with Mahesh Babu is being made on a grand scale with international standards. It will be released not only in Indian languages but also in Hollywood



Ilayaraja and Keeravani join hands for a film

Yes, you heard it right. Two musical legends, Ilayaraja and MM Keeravani, have come together for a film, but not as co-composers. Instead, their collaboration takes on a unique form in the upcoming movie *Sashtipurthi*. Directed by Pavan Prabha, the film features veteran actor Rajendra Prasad in a key role, with Roopesh playing the lead. National Award-winning actress Archana also stars alongside Rajendra Prasad, marking their reunion on screen after 38 years since their iconic film *Ladies Tailor*. Music maestro Ilayaraja is composing the soundtrack for

Sashtipurthi, while Oscar-winning composer MM Keeravani has contributed by penning the lyrics for a song titled *Edo Ye Jannalodo*, which is set to release soon. Director Pavan Prabha expressed his excitement, stating, "There are five songs in the film. Chaitanya Prasad has written lyrics for four of them, while Keeravani Garu graciously wrote the lyrics for the fifth. We were fortunate that Keeravani Garu had some spare time in Chennai and was kind enough to contribute. This song is especially significant as it represents the coming together of Ilayaraja Garu and Keeravani Garu." Producer Rupesh Chowdary shared his elation, calling this collaboration the best thing to happen for his film.



Pawan Kalyan croons for Hari Hara Veera Mallu

Actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan has been busy serving as the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and it has been a while since we last heard a song from his upcoming film. Now, the makers of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* have announced that they will be releasing a song from the film on January 6. The song, *Maata Vinali*, will be released not only in Telugu but also in other languages such as Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi. What makes this song particularly interesting is that Pawan Kalyan himself has sung it. The track is a powerful and mesmerising song

that showcases his impressive vocal prowess. The music has been composed by MM Keeravani, while the lyrics for the Telugu version have been penned by Penchal Das. What truly sets this song apart is Pawan Kalyan's vocals for the Telugu version. Over the years, he has lent his voice to several memorable tracks in films like *Thammudu*, *Kushi*, *Johnny*, *Attarintiki Daredi*, *Agnyaathavaasi* and a few other films. This song is set to make waves with its electrifying energy and soulful lyrics. The movie is currently in its final stages of shooting and post-production, with only 5 days of shooting left.

7G Brindavan Colony 2 nears completion



Director Selvaraghavan created a sensation with his 2004 film *7G Brindavan Colony*. Starring Ravi Krishna in the lead role alongside Sonia Agarwal, the movie, produced by Ravi Krishna's father AM Rathnam, became one of the most celebrated classics of its time. Now, nearly 20 years later, the much-anticipated sequel, *7G Brindavan Colony 2*, is set for release. Ravi Krishna reprises his role as the male lead, while Anaswara Rajan takes on the role of the female lead. Selvaraghavan, who helmed the first installment, returns to direct this sequel as well.

According to the makers, *7G Brindavan Colony 2* will retain the emotional depth and impact of the original, promising to tug at the audience's heartstrings once again. The sequel features a stellar supporting cast, including the versatile Jayaram, the comedic brilliance of Suman Shetty and the seasoned acting skills of Sudha. Adding to the excitement is the return of Yuvan Shankar Raja, whose music for the original film remains iconic. His compositions for the sequel are expected to recapture the magic while introducing fresh melodies for a new generation. "*7G Brindavan Colony* is a film that touched hearts and holds a special place in Tamil cinema history. With this sequel, we aim to recreate that magic while delivering a fresh and compelling narrative for today's audience," said producer AM Rathnam. Fans of the original and new audiences alike eagerly await the release of *7G Brindavan Colony 2*, which promises to be an emotional and cinematic treat.



Urvashi Rautela sizzles with NBK in Dabidi Dabidi

The words *Dabidi Dabidi* are instantly recognisable and synonymous with Nandamuri Balakrishna. Now, a lyrical song titled *Dabidi* has been released from Balakrishna's upcoming film *Daaku Maharaja*. The film is directed by Bobby Kolli and produced by Suryadevara Naga Vamsi and Sai Soujanya. Urvashi Rautela, known for her glamour, is the actress featured in the song, grooving along-

side Balakrishna. She brings enough oomph to the song, making it a surefire attraction for the mass audience, especially Balakrishna fans. This interesting song is penned by lyricist Kasarla Shyam, who skillfully blends Balakrishna's iconic monologues with Thaman's high-octane beats and dynamic musical arrangement. This song is undoubtedly going to be a favorite among fans.

Apart from Urvashi Rautela, the film also features other talented actresses, including Pragya Jaiswal, Shraddha Srinath and Chandini Chowdhary. Balakrishna is playing a unique role, one that he hasn't portrayed in many years. Director Bobby promises that this film will be the best in Balakrishna's illustrious career. Notably, Hindi actor Bobby Deol plays the villain in the film, which is set to hit the screens on January 12.

Kannada actor Ganesh eyes on Telugu



After a few Kannada actors like Upendra, Shivaraj Kumar, Rishabh Shetty, Yash, Rakshith Shetty, now another popular Kannada actor Ganesh is now widening his market into Telugu. Though the actor did many films in Kannada, the Telugu audience knew very little of him as his films didn't release much in Telugu. Now, the actor is coming up with a film titled *Pinaka* which is made with a black magic and fantasy backdrop. The film's teaser was released on Thursday. Interestingly, this film is produced by TG Vishwaprasad of People Media Factory. So, the film is releasing in Telugu also. B Dhanunjaya, a choreographer, is now turned as director with this *Pinaka* film. The teaser looks promising as Ganesh appeared in a different avatar in this one. The story deals with Kshudra shakti and Rudra Shakti. The visuals and the way they portrayed Ganesh in this teaser is interesting. It seems People Media Factory put a lot of money on this film as it needs a lot of graphics. Apart from Kannada, the makers are planning to release the film in Telugu and other languages too.

VENKY IN FULL PROMOTIONAL MOOD



Senior actor Venkatesh is everywhere, promoting his upcoming film *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*, which is set to release on January 14. He has been making appearances on various channel reality shows, giving video interviews, and even participated in the *Unstoppable* show. Additionally, he took part in a special chat with the film's leading ladies, Aishwarya Rajesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary, along with producer Dil Raju and director Anil Ravipudi. During this chat, they all dressed up as characters from their earlier films, with Aishwarya as Chanti, Meenakshi Chaudhary as 'Bobbili Raja', director Anil Ravipudi as 'Jayam Manadera', and Dil Raju as 'Gharshana'. The film's songs are also going viral on the internet, indicating that Venkatesh is aggressively promoting his film this time around. Last year, his *Sankranthi* release did not fare well, but this time, he has an entertaining film and is leaving no stone unturned. As a result, he is ahead of the promotions compared to the other two films releasing during the Sankranthi festival. Director Anil Ravipudi is known for his expertise in writing comedy scenes. After *F2* with Venkatesh and Varun, he is now coming up with *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*, which promises to be even more entertaining than his previous film, according to the makers. This film has all the ingredients of a perfect Sankranthi release, making it a must-watch during the festival.

Debates in dressing room should stay there: Gautam Gambhir

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Asserting that “debates” in the dressing room should not come out in public domain, India head coach Gautam Gambhir on Thursday said he has had some “honest” conversations with his players and that the ongoing transition in the team will be all-encompassing. Gambhir also side-stepped queries on whether out-of-form skipper Rohit Sharma will get a place in the final XI for the fifth and final Test against Australia starting on Friday. Amid reports of unrest in the dressing room, the head coach sought to douse the fire by declaring that they were “just reports, not truth.” “There were some honest words is all I can say. Honesty is extremely important if you want to go on and achieve some great things,” Gambhir told mediapersons on the eve of the Test match that India need to win to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy and stay alive in

the World Test Championship. The straight-talking former opener refrained from taking names but acknowledged that a transition is in progress and performance will be the sole criteria to stay in the side. “Indian cricket will always be in safe hands as long as there are honest people in that dressing room. Honesty is the most important thing for any transition. And it’s not phasing out senior players and bringing in new players. Ultimately what will keep you in the dressing room is performance,” Gambhir couldn’t be more precise. If one read between the lines, it seemed that even Mohammed Shami’s days as an international cricketer are numbered. Shami could not regain fitness for the current series despite being a rehab for a while. “Earlier when transitions happened it seemed, one department is taking the team forward but (in this case) transition will happen in both



batting as well as bowling,” he said. The question of natural game versus situational awareness cropped up and the coach reiterated his stand that the team’s needs come first. “Only one ideology matters and that’s team first. It’s a team sport and you have got to play how team needs you to play. You can play the natural game but in team sport, individuals only contribute.” When Rishabh Pant’s shot-selection in the Melbourne Test was specifically mentioned, he brushed it aside, saying, “I don’t want to talk about individuals, they know where they stand.” The feisty Gambhir was on full view when an Australian reporter threw a query on why Rohit had not showed up for the interaction as is the “tradition.” “Can you confirm the playing eleven?” he asked. The response was vague when it came to addressing the question on his final XI. “Everything is fine with Rohit and

I don’t think there is anything traditional here. The head coach is here and that should be good enough,” he said. “We will decide on the playing XI after looking at the pitch,” he added. When the same question was repeated, he was more terse. “The answer remains the same.” So, what are the conversations that he has had with Rohit and Virat Kohli, whose dismissals outside the off-stump continue to hurt the team. “There’s only one conversation and that’s how to win matches for India. We all know how important that is,” he said. However, Gambhir said that he doesn’t appreciate dressing room debates get space in public discourse. “Debates between coaches and players should be confined between them. This sport is known for results but conversations between individuals should stay inside dressing room,” he asserted.



Sri Lanka beats New Zealand by 7 runs in the 3rd T20

AP ■ NELSON

Kusal Perera scored Sri Lanka’s fastest Twenty20 International century — from 44 balls — on Thursday to spur his team to a consolation win over New Zealand by seven runs in the final match of the three-match series. Perera’s career-best score in a century partnership with captain Charith Asalanka lifted Sri Lanka to 218-5 — its second-highest T20 score, as it batted first for the first time in the series. New Zealand held a winning 2-0 lead in the series after winning the first match by eight runs and the second by 45 runs. New Zealand needed to achieve its highest run chase in T20s to complete a clean sweep of the series and was given a good start by Rachin Ravindra who made 69 from 39 balls. But it fell just short, held to 211-7. The Black Caps began at a pace to match Sri Lanka, reaching 60-0 in the six-over power play. But Asalanka slammed the brakes on the New Zealand innings when he dismissed Ravindra, Mark Chapman (9) and Glenn Phillips (6) in quick succession. Asalanka had figures of 3-25 after those dismissals but Daryl Mitchell hit four consecutive sixes from his final over to wreck his analysis and bat New Zealand back into the game. Wanindu Hasaranga then dismissed Mitchell Hay (8)

and Michael Bracewell (1) in the 16th over to tip the match back in the visitors’ favor. Asalanka took a superb diving catch to remove Bracewell and managed his bowlers well in a superb all-round performance. “I think it’s a good win for us,” Asalanka said. “I think throughout the series we’ve played good cricket but couldn’t manage to get a win. Finally we got it. I hope this is a momentum shift for us. Adapting to these conditions has been a key for us.” New Zealand came to the last over, bowled by Binura Fernando, needing 22 to win. After taking six runs from the first three balls, one of which was a wide, Zak Foulkes hit the fourth ball for six, leaving New Zealand needing 10 from the last two balls. It was too much and the New Zealand batters managed only three more runs. The start of the match was delayed by 30 minutes by a wet outfield and when it began Sri Lanka lost the toss but had the chance to bat first on a good pitch at Saxton Oval. The tourists lost both openers, Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Mendis, inside the power play. But Perera powered up the Sri Lanka innings in an outstanding batting performance, hitting 13 fours and four sixes in his 101 from 46 balls. One of the keys to victory was the 75 runs Perera and Asalanka hit between the 14th and 18th overs which proved vital in making the run chase just too much for New Zealand.

Australia captain Pat Cummins likely to miss tour of Sri Lanka

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australia captain Pat Cummins hinted that he may skip the tour of Sri Lanka later this month to be present for the birth of his second child. Australia are scheduled to play two Tests in Sri Lanka on January 29 and February 6, around the same time his wife — Becky — is due to give birth. “It’s pretty hard to plan exactly the day, but definitely (I might miss the Sri Lanka tour),” Cummins told ‘The Daily Telegraph’ at the launch of the Pink Test, starting here on Friday. In Cummins absence, Steve Smith or Travis Head will lead Australia. Cummins revealed that his mother’s death last year had a profound impact on reshaping his priorities in life. The pacer had returned



midway through the tour of India to be with his mother when she passed away. “In some ways, it really makes you focus in on what I think is important. It’s family, it’s enjoyment, it’s trying to find joy in life and I think that’s been a slight shift in the way I’ve approached playing and

touring and it’s just given me that real decluttering mindset. “When you go out, you just want to play well, and of course, there’s going to be pressure, but you don’t want to forget what mum and dad used to say to us every time we went out to play as kids: ‘Go and enjoy it. Try your

best, but make sure you enjoy it.’ I try to remind myself of that every time I go on a tour or play.” “Whatever you choose to do, there’s always an opportunity cost,” Cummins reflected. “In the last few years, that’s really rung true. When you go away on tour, you’re missing out on family time or moments. That’s a deliberate choice, so you have to make sure you’re making the most of that tour or that game, if that makes sense.” Cummins has previously admitted that he regretted missing the early weeks of his son Albie’s life due to his commitment to the World Cup. “I missed a big chunk (of Albie’s early days) last time and I want to work out how we can spend a bit more time at home for that initial period this time,” he had said.



Marsh dropped, Starc declared fit for BGT finale

PTI ■ SYDNEY

All-rounder Beau Webster will replace an out-of-form Mitchell Marsh in Australia’s squad for the fifth and final Test against India, home skipper Pat Cummins said here on Thursday. The 33-year-old Marsh scored only 73 runs in seven innings across four Tests and Cummins cited this as the reason for his axing. He has bowled merely 33 overs in the series so far, claiming just three wickets. “We have one change in our side. Beau Webster comes in place of Mitch Marsh. Mitch knows that he hasn’t scored enough runs,” Cummins said at the pre-match press conference. “Mitchie obviously hasn’t quite got the runs or perhaps wickets said he would have liked this series. So, it felt like it was time for a fresher up and Beau’s been with the squad. He’s been great. But I feel like now is a good week for Beau to get a chance.” The 31-year-old Webster, who played against India A in November, has scored 5247 runs and taken 148 wickets in first-class cricket. Webster has been in good form in the Sheffield Shield as well and averaged over 55 last season. “He’s just been one of those star performers for Tasmania with the bat or ball, or in the field. He always seems to have a big impact, quite aggressive. (He) can change the game, like we’ve seen Mitch Marsh or Travis Head or Alex Carey do in that middle order.” Cummins admitted that

Webster’s crafty bowling played a role in the decision. “That was definitely a factor. It’s always nice to have a fifth bowler that bowls quite a lot for Tasmania. So if we need to call on that, we can.” “Firstly, if you’re going to bat six, you picked for your batting, which he’s shown in Shield over the last couple years when he takes the game on, and he’s really changed some games for Tasmania. That pace bowling of Beau’s going to be handy,” said Cummins. However, Cummins asserted that the Boxing Day match will not be Marsh’s last Test for Australia. “Particularly here in Australia, when a batter misses out or gets dropped, it’s always seen as a big thing, but it’s not the case. We love pulling a squad of players together who we can call on at different times, and we thought the time was right for Mitchy to have a fresher-up and miss this one. “But doesn’t mean that he won’t be back in the team at some point,” the skipper said. Starc fit Cummins also put to rest the speculation surrounding Mitchell Starc’s fitness, saying the left-arm pacer will play the game. “He went for scans yesterday. But he got the all clear to play this match. He is good to go,” Cummins said. The 34-year-old’s fitness was the main concern for the hosts after he battled through sore ribs in the Boxing Day Test but still managed to bowl effectively with help from the team’s physios.

Arsenal moves up to 2nd place in Premier League with 3-1 win over Brentford

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal is back into a second place in the Premier League and in no rush to add players in the transfer window. Mikel Arteta’s team beat Brentford 3-1 on Wednesday to leapfrog Nottingham Forest and close the gap on league leader Liverpool to six points. “If there’s an opportunity, we’ll look at it,” Arteta said of the January window. “I really like my players. I really value what we have, because it’s a lot of quality and a lot of commitment from all of them.” That includes 17-year-old Ethan Nwaneri, who got his first Premier League start in place of the injured Bukayo Saka. The teenager was involved in second-half goals by Mikel Merino and Gabriel



Martinelli. Bryan Mbeumo put the home team ahead in the 13th minute at Gtech Community Stadium, but Gabriel Jesus made it 1-1 just before the half-hour mark — his sixth goal in the past four games. Merino scored in the 50th minute and Martinelli added

a third three minutes later. It was Arsenal’s second straight win without Saka, who is likely to be sidelined until at least March. The England winger tore his right hamstring in a 5-1 win over Crystal Palace on Dec. 21. Arsenal extended its unbeaten streak to 12 games

in all competitions. Liverpool has a game in hand on the Gunners, who play at Brighton on Saturday. Liverpool hosts Manchester United on Sunday. Brentford remained in 12th place and has lost three of its past four Premier League matches. **HAVERTZ SENT HOME WITH ILLNESS** Several Arsenal players were dealing with a virus before and during the game, Arteta said. Kai Havertz was sent home, and Declan Rice only entered the game as a substitute in the 78th minute. “These things happen. There are always things thrown at you, infections, viruses, so I try to delay the lineup as late as possible because you can get up in the morning and unfortunately have a surprise like this,” the manager said.

Unfortunate that India aren’t travelling to Pakistan for Champions Trophy: Shane Watson

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson termed India’s inability to travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy as “unfortunate” but said the ICC showpiece will offer star batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma a chance to liberate themselves from a prolonged form slump. The global governing body has adopted the “Hybrid” model for this edition of the CT with India scheduled to play its matches at a neutral venue in Dubai. “It’s unfortunate that things have worked out that way for sure. But there’s no doubt that what everyone loves seeing — the India-Pakistan games. Whenever they come together, whether it’s an ICC event, it is a really special time because we’ve got a sense of what’s on the line,” Watson told the media here during the Champions Trophy Tour. “It’s unfortunate that India aren’t travelling to Pakistan for this Champions Trophy. But, unfortunately, that’s just the way it is right now,” he added. Watson said the CT offers cricket a

fresh context, breaking the long lull of four years between two ODI World Cups. “The CT is a critically important tournament in world cricket because the One Day World Cup is only once in every four years. It is great because it breaks up those four years,” he noted. The 43-year-old also said the CT keeps the ODI format alive amidst the rightful prominence Test cricket receives and the upsurge of T20s. “You keep giving one-day cricket the energy that it needs because it is a great game. It’s a great format. It provides that balance between Test cricket and T20 cricket. “We never want to lose the format of one-day cricket, but there needs to be context as often as possible. And the CT certainly provides that.” “When you play a CT where there’s only eight teams, there is something riding on every ball. And as a team, you have to hit the ground sprinting. Otherwise, you’ll be out like it was for the Australian team in 2013.” Then defending champions Australia had finished at the



bottom of Group A with a solitary win and crashed out of the tournament, which India won eventually under MS Dhoni. Current form no worry for Rohit, Kohli

Both Rohit and Kohli were part of that victory in England 12 years back, but now these two superstars are finding it tough to make big runs as they did in the past. But Watson was not worried over

the Indians’ patchy form for talks surrounding their retirement. “I don’t think it (current poor form) will really play a part at all with Rohit Sharma and Virat’s impact in one-day cricket. It’s

going to be different conditions where they’re playing in Dubai. One-day cricket does really free them both as well,” said Watson. He placed his faith in Kohli’s extraordinary ODI numbers — 295 ODIs, 13906 runs, Average: 58.18 with 50 hundreds and 72 fifties. “Kohli is an absolute master of one-day cricket.” “Yes, he’s a master of all formats, but especially ODIs. You see his extraordinary numbers over a long period of time, averaging around 57 and a strike rate of 93 over a long period of time. It’s crazy to think the control that he has over his innings.” Watson said Rohit could be back to his best in ODIs. “We’ll see that again in the Champions Trophy. Rohit, like we saw in the one-day World Cup (2023), when he was at his very best, he was taking on the game. “It’s more difficult to be able to do that in Test cricket. He hasn’t been able to find that balance here in Australia. But when he goes out for the batting in one-days, he lets loose. That’s when we see the very best of Rohit Sharma.”

“So I’d be very surprised if he doesn’t perform really well in the Champions Trophy, knowing that he probably doesn’t have a lot of time left, whatever that is, but a lot of time left in international cricket. So I’m sure he’ll let the handbrake off,” he added. Pat for Nitish Kumar Reddy Watson said Nitish Kumar Reddy who made a hundred in the Boxing Day Test, will have to improve as a bowler to realise his full potential as an all-rounder. “It’s exciting to see a young all-rounder coming through, be able to do what he did in the IPL just from a batting perspective. (because of) The impact player, which is sort of one of the rules that I don’t particularly like...Someone like Reddy didn’t get an opportunity to be able to really bowl much. “But now we’re seeing it in Test cricket and he will fit beautifully into one-day cricket and T20 cricket because of the versatility he provides. He’s got all the gears from a batting perspective and his bowling is only going to get better the more exposure he gets,” he concluded.