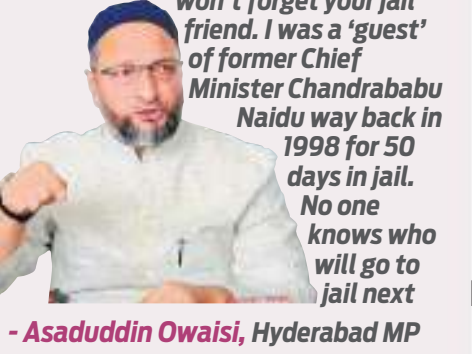


Some people who haven't gone to jail should go. No double meaning intended but politicians should go to jail. Only then can they understand the people's pain and suffering. The CM met his cook in jail. That is much appreciated. When you go to jail, you won't forget your jail friend. I was a 'guest' of former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu way back in 1998 for 50 days in jail. No one knows who will go to jail next



- Asaduddin Owaisi, Hyderabad MP

Time not far for first bullet train to run in India: PM



GRACE IN MOTION, BALANCING TRADITION



Director Shankar's compliments are like an award for me ANJALI



DON'T MISS...

'Nothing to panic, govt alert on HMPVs'

The Human Meta Pnuemo Virus (HMPV) is not a new virus, as it was first identified in 2001. Since then, it has been present globally, causing mild effects on the respiratory system. The virus spreads primarily through droplets expelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Reports suggest a significant rise in HMPV cases in China this year. While there have been no alarming trends in India, the State government is closely monitoring the ...

-PAGE: 3

PK held for 'illegal' fast-unto-death

Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor was on Monday arrested for his "illegal" fast-unto-death and sent to jail upon refusal to accept bail, granted by a court here with conditions that were deemed "unreasonable". The 47-year-old, who was last week booked for holding 'Aamran anshan' (fast unto death) at Gandhi Maidan, in violation of a Patna High Court order that forbids any such demonstration at a place other than Gardani ...

-PAGE: 5

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 10.98 L cr

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 10.98 lakh crore on Monday as markets crashed due to across-the-board selloff amid concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and foreign fund exodus. The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. During the day, it plunged 1,441.49 points or 1.81 per cent to 77,781.62. The NSE Nifty slumped 388.70 points ...

-PAGE: 8

'End superstar culture in team'

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has urged the BCCI to end the "superstar culture" in the team and pick players for future assignments solely on the basis of performance and not on reputation. Harbhajan's stinging remarks came after India's 1-3 Test series defeat to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade. "There is a superstar culture which has developed. We don't need superstars, we need performers. If the team has them ...

-SPORTS



Sanction Regional Ring Rail for Hyd
 CM Revanth appeals to PM Modi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to sanction a Regional Ring Rail like the Regional Ring Road for Hyderabad. The Chief Minister made the request during his speech delivered at the virtual inauguration of the new railway terminal at Charlapalli in Hyderabad by the Prime Minister. Stating that a 370-km long Regional Ring Road is proposed around Hyderabad, he said the Centre has already invited tenders for a 170-km corridor. He requested the Prime Minister to sanction the remaining work of the Regional

Ring Road and the Regional Ring Rail. He said these two projects would turn 60 per cent of Telangana into urban areas attracting more investments. Asserting that the Railways play a crucial role in the country's progress, he said a landlocked state like Telangana relies heavily on railways. The Chief Minister also sought a dedicated greenfield highway and dedicated rail connectivity to the Bandar Port in Andhra Pradesh. He pointed out that the Bandar Port is the nearest port to Telangana and that dedicated road and rail connectivity can boost

Continued on Page 2

FORMULA E CASE
 KTR skips ACB questioning

Submits statement outside the office • High drama unfolds as his lawyer denied entry

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

High drama unfolded at the Telangana Anti-Corruption Bureau office here on Monday, after BRS Working President KT Rama Rao who was summoned in connection with the investigation into the Formula E Race case, was denied the company of his lawyer, prompting him to submit his statement outside the ACB office. KTR reached the ACB headquarters shortly after 10 am and was barred from entering the premises by the police, who objected to the presence of his lawyer.

The BRS leader spoke to officials seated in his car. He handed over his written statement intended for submission to an ACB official, outside the office and returned without appearing before ACB officials. Asserting his fundamental right to legal representation KTR told the media that he insisted on his lawyer's presence and claimed that the ACB was planning to raid his residence. "Now they (officials) are saying you can't take the lawyer inside. So, I have given my statement whatever I had to give inside the office. I have given my statement to a DSP rank officer of ACB. He has given me acknowledgement," he said.



He also insisted that he would provide the information sought by the ACB in the presence of his lawyer.

"They have in the past created situations where statements which have not been made by our leaders were attributed to them," KTR claimed.

He expressed concern over being denied the company of his lawyer during the inquiry by the ACB and said the government might manipulate his statements like in the case of what happened to former BRS MLA Patnam Narendar Reddy. Patnam was arrested in connection with an attack on government officials in Vikarabad district last November. Calling Revanth Reddy a 'third-rated criminal,' he said he suspected that the ACB is acting as per the CM's directives.

"As a law-abiding citizen, I will cooperate in the matter, subject to constitutional and legal rights as provided by law (of having a lawyer during questioning)," he said.

ED grants more time to KTR

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has accepted BRS Working President KT Rama Rao's (KTR) request for additional time to appear for questioning in connection with the Formula E Race case. KTR cited the pending High Court verdict on his petition seeking an order to quash the ACB FIR against him as the reason for his inability to attend the January 7 summons.

In an email to the ED, KTR emphasised his respect for the judiciary and requested that he be given time until the High Court delivers its verdict, which is expected on January 7 at 10:30 am. The ED responded positively, agreeing to postpone the questioning and stating that a new date for

the interrogation would be intimated soon. The Formula E Race case, which has drawn significant attention, involves allegations of irregularities. The ACB FIR forms the basis of the ED's investigation. KTR's petition to quash the FIR has led to a reserved HC judgement. The HC had earlier directed that no arrests should be made until the verdict is pronounced.

PM inaugurates Hyd's Charlapalli Railway Terminal

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated the Charlapalli Railway Terminal in Hyderabad on Monday and said that it would accelerate development. Charlapalli is the fourth terminal station in Telangana after Secunderabad, Hyderabad and Kacheguda. The new terminal in Medchal-Malkajigiri district on the eastern side of Hyderabad is a coaching terminal along with provision for a second entry at a cost of around Rs 413 crore. The Prime Minister highlighted its potential to accelerate regional



development by connecting to the Outer Ring Road. "This station, connected to the Outer Ring Road, will significantly boost development in

Excitement grips BJP as TG party president race heats up

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD

Excitement gripped Telangana's BJP activists regarding who is going to become the new president of the party's state unit. Discussions are going on at the State BJP office as well as among party leaders and cadres across Telangana. Hopfuls who are in the race for the Telangana BJP president post were also gripped by tension as some



of them are making all-out efforts to grab the post. However, some leaders said they would not lobby for the post but would accept it if the party gave it. "Yes, we are excited as it is the right time for the high command to take a decision if it wants to come to power in the next Assembly elections. The selection of the party president will decide the fate of 50 per cent of the seats in the next Assembly elections. The new president's

Continued on Page 2



Two persons burnt alive as car catches fire in Hyd

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two persons travelling in a car were burnt alive after the vehicle caught fire near here on Monday evening, police said. The incident happened at around 5.30 pm when the vehicle was proceeding to Bacharam from Ghatkesar, when flames suddenly erupted and the two persons inside were caught in the blaze and died, a police official at Ghatkesar police station said, based on preliminary investigation. Fire department personnel extinguished the flames. One of the deceased person was a man, while the body of the second person was completely burnt, the official said. The exact cause of the fire was being investigated. A further probe is on

Telangana's New Energy Policy on Jan 9

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government is set to unveil its New Energy Policy on January 9, aimed at attracting domestic and international investments and positioning the state as a leader in power generation. The policy is expected to lay the foundation for robust energy initiatives that will drive Telangana's development. The announcement was made during a ceremony held at the Rajiv Gandhi statue near the secretariat, where 315 newly recruited Assistant Engineers (AEs) of GENCO received their appointment letters. Speaking at the event, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka

emphasised the need for a forward-looking energy policy, highlighting Telangana's achievements in ensuring uninterrupted quality power supply over the last year. The upcoming policy, approved during a recent Cabinet meeting, incorporates inputs from energy policies across the country and emphasises renewable energy. The government has outlined plans to meet a peak electricity demand of 22,448 MW by 2030 by expanding transmission infrastructure. Telangana is also gearing up to produce 20,000 MW of green energy to establish itself as a surplus energy state. Officials revealed plans to set up a thermal power plant at Ramagundam in collaboration with GENCO and SCCL.

8 cops, driver killed as Naxals blow up SUV in Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ BIJAPUR

Eight jawans of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and a civilian driver were killed after Naxals blew up their vehicle with a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Monday, police said. This was the biggest strike by Maoists on security forces in the state in the last two years and the first assault in 2025. Maoists detonated the IED near Ambeli village under Kutru police station area



Sacrifice won't go in vain: Shah

2



TPCC Chief B Mahesh Kumar Goud addressing the party's extended meeting of Adilabad Parliamentary Constituency on Monday

Get ready for local body elections, says Mahesh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that Congress leaders would get good news after Sankranti, TPCC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud appealed to all party leaders and activists to get ready for local body elections. He asked Congress leaders to work hard to get 100 per cent results in local body elections. Candidates who are going to contest should move forward along with others, he added.

Addressing the Adilabad Parliament constituency party unit's meeting on Monday, Mahesh said the Congress came to power after 10 years due to the hard work of its workers. The party is like a family and it is common for differences to arise between leaders. The leaders should move forward after solving their problems and discussing it in party forums, he said. Mahesh said that the mental condition of BRS leaders is not good after losing power. Continued on Page 2

ONBOARD ISRO'S POEM-4

Cowpea seedlings sprout first leaves in space

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Cowpea seedlings onboard PSLV-C60 POEM-4 module sprout their first leaves in space, signifying a milestone in space-based plant research, ISRO said on Monday. According to India's national space agency, the Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies (CROPS), developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), is an automated platform designed to cultivate and sustain plant life in the microgravity environment of space. One of its recent experiments involved growing cowpea (Vigna unguiculata) seeds within a controlled, closed environment equipped with active thermal management, said ISRO.



The system monitored various parameters, including oxygen and carbon dioxide levels, relative humidity, temperature, and soil

One of its recent experiments involved growing cowpea (Vigna unguiculata) seeds within a controlled, closed environment equipped with active thermal management, said ISRO

According to the space agency, this setup successfully supported the germination and development of cowpea plants up to the two-leaf stage in space. "This accomplishment not only demonstrates ISRO's capability to grow plants in space, but also provides valuable insights for future long-duration missions," ISRO said in a post on the social media platform X. Understanding on how plants adapt to microgravity is crucial for developing life support systems that can produce food and regenerate air and water for astronauts, ISRO added. "The success of the CROPS experiment marks a promising step towards sustainable human presence in space," the space agency said.

No cuts in Rythu Bharosa funding, says Tummala

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

There are no cuts in 'Rythu Bharosa' as some newspapers and opposition leaders say, Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao said. Tummala visited Sardarnagar and Shabaad Mandal on Monday.

"Opposition parties are criticising the government saying that they are unable to swallow and gag after seeing the government's announcement," Tummala said.



Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao visits Sardar Nagar of Shadnagar mandal on Monday

He asked opposition leaders to reveal whether giving Rs 12,000 per acre of cultivable land is cutting allotment. "Why are opposition parties shouting when the Congress Government says that it will not give Rythu Bharosa to stones and rocks, real estate ventures, roads, crusher mills, industrial lands?" he asked.

Tummala said that giving Rs 12,000 per family per year as per the Indiramma Athmeeya Bharosa to landless farm labourers shows the importance the Congress

Government is giving to all sections. He said the Congress government gave Rs 10,444 crore for free power, Rs 12,413 crore for grain procurement and it transferred Rs 28,833 crore to the bank accounts of farmers in the very first year. He said the government also spent Rs 1,965 crore on various schemes for the welfare of farmers.

Tummala said that BRS leaders did less but cam-

aigned a lot. The BRS government passed time without fulfilling the assurances it had given in its election manifesto, he said.

Targeting the BJP, Tummala said that the BJP announced in its 2014 manifesto that they would link the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Scheme to agriculture to make agriculture profitable but that has not been done.

Those who haven't gone to jail should go, says Asaduddin

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad MP AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi sparked discussions with his comment, "Some people who haven't gone to jail should go," during an event in the presence of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.



The remark which raised eyebrows was delivered with a smile as Asaduddin commended the Chief Minister for meeting his former Cherlapally jailmate, Nagayya, on New Year's Day.

Appreciating the gesture, he said, "No double meaning intended, but politicians should go to jail. Only then will they understand people's pain and suffering."

The statement comes at a time when political tensions

are high, with BRS leader KT Rama Rao facing scrutiny from the ACB and ED and speculation of his possible arrest mounting.

Asaduddin also reflected on his own jail experience, recalling his 50-day imprisonment in 1998. "I was a guest of former Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu back then," he said, adding, "No one knows who will go to jail or not."

The comment gains significance in the context of Revanth's past, as he was arrested during KCR's tenure in the 2015 cash-for-vote case.

Asaduddin's statement delivered with a mix of humour and insight appears to have touched on the broader narrative of how political figures navigate legal challenges.

Applicants receive calls, others face technical snags

INDIRAMMA HOUSING SCHEME

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

For the past one week Indiramma Housing Scheme applicants are receiving calls and teams are visiting them at their houses.

They are clicking pictures of the women who have applied for it and informing them that their house is confirmed.

Ravali, living in Meerpet explained to The Pioneer, "I have received a call and later a team has visited me, asked details of what I have filled in the form. They have taken my photo and confirmed that my name is in the list and within less time I will be allotted a house."

However, several applicants of the Indiramma Housing Scheme have expressed disappointment as their names did not appear in the lists despite meeting eligibility criteria.

Errors during online data entry are suspected to be the primary reason for the omissions. Complaints have also arisen about discrepancies, such as residents of one village being listed under another village in the survey.

Frustrated applicants have been running between gram panchayat and mandal parishad offices, urging authorities to re-register their details.

In two such cases when The Pioneer spoke to, Swapna from

Shamirpet said, "My tenant has been getting calls but I did not get. My name is not in the list. I also fill the eligibility criteria. As I work as a teacher in primary school I could not visit the office. But I am seeking help from others who have not been listed so that I can contact right officers."

In another case in Medchal-Malkajgiri Radhika, a maid, "We have been getting awareness due to our neighbours getting calls about Indiramma houses. My name is there in the list but caste is not right. May be due to that I did not get it. I have spent a whole day in the office nodal office in Malkajgiri asking officials how can it be rectified but received no response."

Sacrifice won't go in vain, says Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday vowed to eliminate Naxals from the country by March 2026 and asserted that the sacrifice of those killed by the extremists in Chhattisgarh will not go in vain.

Shah's comments came after eight jawans of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) and a civilian driver were killed after Naxals blew up their vehicle with a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district.

"I am deeply saddened by the news of the loss of DRG soldiers in an IED blast in Bijapur (Chhattisgarh). I express my deepest condolences to the families of the brave soldiers. It is impossible to express this grief in words, but I assure you that the sacrifice of our soldiers will not go in vain. We will end Naxalism in India by March 2026," he said in a post on 'X' in Hindi.

This was the biggest strike by Maoists on security forces in the state in the last two years and the first assault in 2025

BRS, Congress clash over Greenko electoral bonds

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The controversy surrounding the Greenko electoral bonds has intensified with the BRS and Congress trading allegations.

The Telangana Chief Minister's Office (CMO) has issued a statement alleging that Greenko, which organised the Formula E Race, paid Rs 49 crore to the BRS through electoral bonds.

The CMO said Greenko and its affiliated companies purchased electoral bonds 41 times between April 8 and October 10, 2022, each time buying bonds worth Rs 1 crore. The statement implied that these payments were linked to discussions surrounding the Formula E Race.

The BRS rebutted the criticism with data, stating that "340 companies across India contributed Rs 1,351 crore to the Congress through electoral bonds."

The BRS asked whether an ACB probe would now be launched against Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. BRS leaders argued that electoral bonds were approved by Parliament and questioned the Congress government's stance on their legitimacy. They accused the Congress of running a smear campaign in Telangana and asked for accountability regarding the large sums received by the Congress nationwide.

BRS MLA KT Rama Rao said both the BJP and the Congress too got electoral bonds from Greenko in 2022.

Final electoral roll published with over 3.35 crore electors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) of Telangana, C. Sudharshan Reddy, announced the publication of the final electoral roll after the Special Summary Revision-2025, with January 1, 2025, as the qualifying date. The roll, published on January 6, covers all 119 Assembly constituencies in the state.

As per the final roll, the total number of electors stands at 3,35,27,925, comprising 1,66,41,489 male voters, 1,68,67,735 female voters, and 2,829 third-gender voters.

There are 15,872 service electors, 5,45,026 young voters aged 18 to 19, and senior voters 2,22,091 who are aged 85 and above, and 5,26,993 voters with disabilities (PwD).

The revision process, which began with the draft electoral roll on October 29, 2024, witnessed 2,19,610 inclusions and 1,17,932 deletions during the claims and

objections period that ended on November 28, 2024.

The total number of polling stations has increased to 35,907, reflecting a net addition of 551 stations compared to the previous year.

The total number of polling stations has increased to 35,907, reflecting a net addition of 551 stations compared to the previous year. Urban polling stations now stand at 14,750, while rural stations number 21,157

Urban polling stations now stand at 14,750, while rural stations number 21,157. Similarly, the total number of polling locations has risen to 20,034, with additions in both urban and rural areas.

Polling station-wise final electoral rolls are available on the Telangana CEO's website, <https://ceotelangana.nic.in>.

Newly enrolled voters and applicants who submitted Form-8 for corrections will receive their EPIC cards at

their doorsteps free of cost.

The CEO emphasized that new enrolments, corrections and roll purification will continue during the updation period. Eligible citizens turning 18 on subsequent quality-



Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Telangana IT Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu at the inauguration of Cherlapally Railway Terminal on Monday

Sanjay hails IT Minister Sridhar Babu

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"When I was a corporation councillor, despite belonging to a different party, my brother, IT Minister Sridhar Babu, extended tremendous support to me. Although I would like to openly praise him, I hesitate, fearing it might cause some discomfort due to our differing political affiliations," the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, said.

Sanjay, who is known to be outspoken, showered praises on the Telangana IT Minister D. Sridhar Babu at the opening of the Cherlapally Railway Terminal on Monday.

Later, Sanjay continued his speech on Railways saying that exactly 10 years ago, whenever we thought of any railway station, what came to mind were stinking toilets, railway tracks filled with filth, people suffering due to lack of basic facilities, and passengers tense about when the train would arrive. Even 100-year-old railway stations hadn't seen minimum development. Without the construction of new railway stations, stations from the British and Nizam eras remained in a dilapidated condition, he added.

"But thanks to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the face of railway stations and

railways in the country has completely changed. Particularly in Telangana, the construction of new railway lines and the transformation of railway stations are remarkable. In the last decade alone, around ₹32,000 crore has been spent on railway development in Telangana. In this financial year alone, ₹5,336 crore have been allocated to railways in the state. Perhaps such a large amount has never been allocated in the history of the state. That's possible only with Modi," Sanjay said.

He said that recently he was astonished to see the modernisation of Secunderabad Railway Station, being developed at a cost of ₹720 crore into a world-class facility. Similarly, ₹350 crore is being spent on changing the face of the Nampally Railway Station, Sanjay added.

"Under the 'Amrit Bharat' scheme, about 40 railway stations in the state are being developed with an investment of nearly ₹2,000 crore. If you visit Karimnagar Railway Station, you will see how it has completely changed. It is being modernized magnificently. Similarly, five Vande Bharat trains are operating from our state. Passengers travelling on these trains reach their destinations quickly enjoying excellent facilities," he said.

8 cops, driver...

Continued from page 1

at around 2.15 pm when DRG personnel from Dantewada district were returning in their Scorpio vehicle after an anti-Naxalite operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said.

All eight DRG jawans travelling in the SUV and the driver of the vehicle were killed on the spot, the official added.

The DRG is a unit of the state police and its personnel are mostly recruited from local tribal population and also from surrendered Naxalites.

Reinforcement was rushed to the spot and the bodies of the deceased were being evacuated, he said.

A search operation has been launched in the area by security forces, the IPS officer informed.

These DRG personnel were involved in an anti-Naxalite operation carried out for three days on the borders of Narayanpur, Dantewada and Bijapur districts by joint teams of security personnel, the IG said.

BRS faces demand for more BCs in leadership

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS is facing increasing demands from its Backward Class (BC) leaders for greater representation in its leadership. Prominent voices within the party, including senior leaders, have urged KCR to prioritise inclusivity by appointing a BC leader to a significant post.

Influential BC leaders and Parliamentarians have conveyed to KCR the importance of addressing the hopes of the community to prevent any disconnect with the party's base.

Adding momentum to the demand, a poster has emerged in Karimnagar

showcasing Gangula Kamalakara, a prominent BC leader and minister, as a potential candidate for the BRS chief's role. It is extensively getting circulated among BRS WhatsApp groups.

While the poster highlights Kamalakara's contributions to the region, it underscores a broader sentiment within the party for more inclusive representation at the top. A prominent BC leader said, "A BC as chief may be a distant dream. But there are other posts in the party where they can be accommodated."

The BRS may keep in view welfare and social jus-

tice this time around when reorganising it after party formation day celebrations.

Addressing the community's hopes through leadership representation is seen as vital for maintaining connect with voters and strengthening the organizational framework.

It may be mentioned here that BJP leader Sanjay's remarks about making a BC party chief didn't come out of the blue. On Sunday, Sanjay said, "Give the LoP post to BC Gangula Kamalakara or Talasani Srinivas Yadav. If you want to give it to a Reddy, give it to Prashanth Reddy or Jagadeeshwar Reddy. Or give it to Harish Rao."

KTR skips...

Continued from page 1

The ACB in its notice asking him to appear before it on Monday had asked KTR to provide information and documents pertaining to the case.

In the statement submitted to the ACB, KTR said since the matter has been reserved by HC for orders, the ACB may consider deferring the questioning till the judgement is pronounced in the case and proceed further in accordance with law subject to the orders of the High Court which heard the arguments thoroughly from both the government and his sides.

He said the ACB in its notice had not given any details of the information and documents sought from him pertaining to the case.

KTR said the ACB should give details of the documents sought so that he can take action at his end after giving a reasonable time.

KTR's lawyer Soma Bharat Kumar told reporters that having an advocate as an assistant is an undeniable

fundamental right.

Last week, the Telangana ACB issued a notice to KTR to appear before it on January 6 after he was named the prime accused in the FIR.

On December 19 the ACB registered a case against KTR over alleged payments, some of it in foreign currency without approvals, to conduct the race in 2023.

The case was registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act and IPC dealing with criminal misappropriation, criminal misconduct, criminal breach of trust and criminal conspiracy that allegedly resulted in a loss of about Rs 55 crore to the exchequer. Although the race was supposed to be held in February 2024 as well, it was cancelled after the Congress government came to power in December 2023.

KTR who was Municipal Administration Minister during the BRS admin, was summoned by the ED too for questioning on January 7 over irregularities in conducting the race.

Sanction Regional ...

Continued from page 1

industrial development, especially in sectors like automobiles and pharma.

He said that Telangana accounts for 35 per cent of the bulk drugs manufactured in India and requested the Centre for support to develop Telangana into a one trillion dollar economy.

"We are determined to transform Telangana into a one-trillion-dollar GDP economy. This will contribute to India's goal of becoming a five-trillion-dollar economy," the CM said.

Thanking the Prime Minister for completing the new railway terminal at Charlapally, the Chief Minister urged him to sanction railway lines from Vikarabad to Krishna, Kalwakurthy to Macharla and two railway lines from Donrakkal. He also requested the Centre to speed up work on the Kazipet integrated coach factory and to help in the expansion of the Hyderabad Metro Rail. He said the TG government has already sent to the Centre the proposal for Hyderabad Metro Rail's second phase.

Get ready ...

Continued from page 1

"How can BRS MLC Kavitha come to Adilabad district? Why didn't she look after the interests of the people of the erstwhile Adilabad district during their 10-year rule, he asked.

AICC in-charge General Secretary Deepa Das Munshi and Adilabad in-charge Minister Seethakka were also present.

Later, addressing the media, Mahesh challenged BRS leaders KTR and Kavitha regarding the one-year rule of the Congress Government.

"The fight between Kavitha and KTR has peaked. Already their followers are raising slogans like 'Kavitha CM' and 'KTR CM'. Senior BRS leader Harish Rao is in limbo in the fight between Kavitha and KTR. It is better for Harish Rao if he charts his own way. Why is KTR afraid of the Formula E-Car case if he has not done anything wrong? It is ridiculous for KTR to say that he will attend the probe only if his lawyers allow him. KTR's arrogance has not come down even after losing power," he said.

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City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | TUESDAY | JANUARY 7, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

Annual Day celebrations

of Sri Saraswathi High School

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
January 7,
(9 am to 1 pm)

Dance School Festival

Abhinayavani Nritya Niketan

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
January 7,
(1:30 pm to 10 pm)

Radical Vulnerability: Development, translation, Justice

Book Discussion

Venue

Lamakaan
January 7, (6:30 pm)

Tuesday Night

With DJ Salman

Venue

36 Downtown Brew Pub (Vapour)
January 7, (8 pm)

Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

Venue

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

Thorrur CI arrested by ACB for bribery

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has arrested Karri Jagadish, Circle Inspector of Police, Thorrur, Mahabubabad district, for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe. According to the ACB, the officer sought a bribe of Rs 4 lakh from a complainant to extend official favours, including instructing the Sub-Inspector of Police at Danthalpalli not to arrest the complainant in a pending case and to issue a 35(3) BNSS notice.

The officer initially accepted Rs 2 lakh as part of the bribe while demanding the remaining amount. The ACB stated that Jagadish acted dishonestly, abusing his official position to gain undue advantage.

For security reasons, the details of the complainant have not been disclosed. Following the arrest, Jagadish will be presented before the III Additional Sessions Judge for SPE and ACB Cases in Warangal. The investigation into the matter is ongoing.

The ACB has urged citizens to report demands for bribes by public servants by contacting the toll-free number 1064 to take action under the law.

Intimate us before an hour: Police to Allu Arjun

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Ramgopalpet and North Zone Police had once again said in a notice addressing Allu Arjun that if he intends to visit the minor victim of a stampede and his father, currently under treatment at the KIMS hospital, he can inform before one hour.

Police officials had earlier received confirmation that the visitor would comply with all conditions set by authorities to maintain public order inside and outside the hospital premises. However, the visit was cancelled at the last moment after the individual's manager informed the police of the change in plans.

Reaffirming their readiness, the police stated that they are fully prepared to facilitate the visit to the hospital at any time, even within an hour's notice. Authorities requested that the visit, if rescheduled, remain confidential to ensure public order and prevent crowding.

Ramgopalpet Police assured that they would provide full escort and maintain peace throughout the trip.

Further updates on the visit are awaited as the team of Allu Arjun has not responded yet.



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Zoo park - Aramghar flyover was opened for public in Hyderabad on Monday.

The longest flyover of Telangana, the P V Narasimha Rao Express highway was built by former chief minister Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy during the previous Congress regime.

The present Congress government constructed the second largest flyover in the city. This flyover construction completion in record time is a proof of the highest onus Congress government under CM Revanth Reddy is placing on urban development and re-imagining of the capital as part of mission Hyderabad Rising.

Soon after coming to power, the Congress government made all-out efforts to solve every problem of the metropolis.

During the Nizam rule, Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar were built to address drinking water problem in Hyderabad. CM Revanth Reddy, as part of the Vision 2050, is leading initiatives of provide drinking water for the city for next few decades in a sustainable way.

The Metro Rail expansion and Musi rejuvenation project are meant not only for the development of Hyderabad city but to ensure long-term environment sustainability and an answer to climate

DECIDES TO NAME IT AFTER MANMOHAN SINGH

CM opens Hyd's 2nd longest flyover



Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy inaugurating the Zoo park - Aramghar flyover in Hyderabad on Monday

crises.

"We are ready to join hands and work in tandem with everyone for the development of Hyderabad. We will move forward with the MIM for city development. We pursue politics only during the elections and move together with everyone for Hyderabad development. Development must

become a people's movement," Revanth Reddy said.

Telangana will develop further once the Regional Ring Road work is completed. This is not an old city but the original city and original Hyderabad. Government will take up the construction of a cable bridge over Mir Alam Tank and develop it as the

most attractive tourist spot, he said.

"We are prepared to provide funds for development and the responsibility of completing the work lies with the public representatives. Foundation stone for the construction of Osmania Hospital at Goshamahal will be laid soon," he said.

OLD CITY METRO TO BE READY IN 4YRS

41 owners paid Rs 20 cr towards land acquisition

We will wholeheartedly cooperate in the construction of Metro: MP Asaduddin Owaisi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Government of Telangana has paid Rs 20 crore compensation to 41 owners of 34 affected properties on the 7.5km MGBS - Chandrayangutta route. Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi, HAML MD NVS Reddy and Hyderabad District Collector Anudeep Duriseti participated in the cheque distribution program on Monday.

HAML MD NVS Reddy said that appropriate compensation is being paid to those who lose their properties for road-widening and construction of the Metro Rail in the Old City as per the orders of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, and that the suggestions of MP Asaduddin Owaisi have been taken into consideration in this process.

He said that the second phase of the metro construction will be undertaken with more facilities than the first phase, with which the Old City will be transformed. He said that as per the suggestion of the MP, modern facilities such as skywalks and footpaths will be provided from the proposed Metro stations to tourist areas like Charminar, Lad



HAML MD NVS Reddy, Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi and District Collector Duriseti Anudeep distributing compensation cheques to owners

Bazaar and Salar Jung Museum. He said that the CM's directive is for the development of the Old City and accordingly Metro is being made available to the residents there.

NVS Reddy said, "We are ready to fulfill the CM's resolve to complete the seven-and-a-half kilometer Old City Metro in four years at an estimated cost of Rs 2,741 crore." He revealed that arrangements are also being made to start the advanced multi-level parking project with German Puzzle Technology in Nampally next month, which will also be the gateway to the development of Old City.

MP Owaisi said that the Metro Rail, which the residents of Old City have been waiting for a long time, is now being implemented and he is grateful to the Chief Minister for this. He made it clear that they will extend full cooperation with the efforts being made by Metro MD NVS Reddy. He suggested that if skywalks are constructed at the proposed Salar Jung and Charminar Metro stations to the monuments, it will not only be convenient for tourists but also for the locals. Owaisi appealed to the Metro MD to give due priority to the affected land losers to set up businesses at the upcoming Metro stations.

HM inaugurates workshop on e-Aushadhi in city

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha has inaugurated e-Aushadhi Workshop at MCRHRD on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, Raja Narasimha said that the health department plays a crucial role in people's daily lives. "We have suggestions from staff and officials in consideration and efforts are underway to provide necessary HR and equipment support," he said.

Central Medical Stores have been set up in all districts and vehicles have been arranged for distribution of medicine. Computers and internet facilities are now available in CMS and pharmacy stores.

"Despite efforts to supply all required medicines, reports of shortages persist. Hospital superintendents and higher authorities must identify the causes of medicine shortages.

Strict action will be taken against negligent staff or officials responsible for any lapses.

The government is taking this issue seriously and will impose stringent measures if patients face difficulties," said the Health Minister.

Three-member committees will be established in



Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha speaking at the e-Aushadhi workshop

each district for regular monitoring of medicine availability. These committees will include the District DMHO, DCHS and Superintendent of the local teaching hospital. Pharmacists are encouraged to report issues to these committees for resolution.

The workshop was attended by Health Secretary Christina, Commissioner RV Karnan, TGMSSIDC MD Hemant and Director of Public Health Ravinder Naik.

'Nothing to panic, govt alert on HMPVs'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Human MetaPneumoVirus (HMPV) is not a new virus, as it was first identified in 2001. Since then, it has been present globally, causing mild effects on the respiratory system. The virus spreads primarily through droplets expelled when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Reports suggest a significant rise in HMPV cases in China this year. While there have been no alarming trends in India, the State government is closely monitoring the situation in coordination with the Union Ministry of Health and other states, said Health Minister D Raja Narasimha.

Officials from the State Health department are in regular communication with Central authorities to stay updated on the developments.

The Health Minister assured the public that there is no need for panic regarding HMPV at this time. The State is equipped with all necessary medical facilities and resources to handle any situation that may arise. He emphasised that the government and the health department are fully prepared to tackle any eventuality, with strengthened disease surveillance systems and enhanced readiness across districts.

The Minister also warned against spreading false or unverified information on social media that may cause unnecessary fear among the public. Such actions will be dealt with seriously by the government.

The Health Department has instructed senior officials and district-level authorities to remain vigilant and ensure the State is prepared with all required resources to manage HMPV cases effectively.

Facial recognition software to aid Operation Smile-XI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cyberabad Police, in collaboration with the Women & Children Safety Wing (W&CSW) and the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), has introduced "Darphan", a facial recognition software, to identify and reunite missing children with their families. The technology is a key feature of "Operation Smile-XI", a month-long initiative launched on January 6, 2025, to rescue and rehabilitate children involved in begging, rag-picking, child labor, and traffick-

ing. Addressing a convergence meeting at the Cyberabad Commissionerate office, DCP (W&CSW) K Srujana explained that "Darphan" would play a critical role in identifying missing and unidentified children. "This software will help locate children separated from their families and facilitate their safe return," she noted.

Operation Smile-XI, which runs from January 1 to January 31, 2025, involves 11 special teams composed of Sub-Inspectors and police constables, including women officers.

Prof Edward from Melbourne visits OU, shares expertise in Commerce

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The University College of Commerce and Business Management (UCC&BM), Osmania University hosted a thought-provoking session by Professor Edward Buckingham from Monash Business School, Melbourne.

He was invited by Prof M Kumar, Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University, to deliver a series of motivational lectures for students and faculty between January 6 and 9.

Renowned for his expertise in global business practices and leadership development, Professor Edward engaged the students of commerce and business management in an

interactive session that was both enlightening and motivational.

The session, facilitated by Prof I Sekhar, Principal of UCC&BM and Prof Y Jahangir, Head Department of Business Management, focused on fostering entrepreneurial thinking, leadership capabilities and preparing students to navigate the complexities of a dynamic business environment.

Prof Edward emphasised the importance of innovation, adaptability and ethical decision-making in shaping successful careers in commerce and business.

His engaging style, coupled with practical insights drawn from years of academic and professional experience, left the students inspired



Professor Edward Buckingham from Monash Business School, Melbourne, in an interactive session with the students

and better equipped to meet the challenges of the modern corporate landscape.

In addition to student-centric sessions, Prof Edward will deliver a special lecture for the principals, deans, directors and heads of departments at Osmania University on "The Future of Higher Education: Considerations for Capabilities, Demographics, Operations, and Investment Over the Next 20 Years." This session aims to provide strategic insights into shaping the future of higher education in India and beyond, addressing critical aspects like resource optimization, demographic shifts, and academic innovations.



HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath interacts with the public while they submit grievances

83 complaints on first day of HYDRAA Prajavani

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Prajavani has received 83 complaints on its first day on Monday.

The residents of various localities have travelled to the HYDRAA office at Budha Bhawan to submit their grievances.

HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath oversaw the grievance redressal process from 11 am till late in the evening. Complainants were issued tokens and seated in the visitors' room. He interacted with the complainants, understood their issues and immediately contacted local authorities to seek resolutions.

There were complaints beyond HYDRAA's jurisdiction which were politely redirected, while grievances related to other departments were forwarded to the authorities concerned. For systematic monitoring and resolution, district-level committees were set up comprising the DMHO, DCHS and the superintendent of the teaching hospital in the district.

A three-week timeline was given to address the complaints. Officials were directed to follow up and ensure grievances were resolved efficiently.

Several complaints highlighted encroachments on parks, lakes and government properties meant for public use. For instance, retired soldier P Seetharama Raju alleged that a local woman encroached on a government-allotted house site and a park in his area.

Another complaint by Mukesh Kumar revealed the illegal sale of government lands in Jawaharnagar reducing 6,000 acres to just 2,500 acres.

Chandranagar residents complained about untreated sewage being released into rejuvenated lakes, turning them back into polluted sites despite significant investments. There were complaints about forged layouts and unauthorised sales of land designated for public purposes were rampant.

Encroachments on floodwater channels in Chilkalguda and Uppal areas were also brought to light.

The grievance cell will continue to operate every Monday, offering a platform for citizens to voice their issues and seek timely resolutions.

'BRS disbursed Rythu Bandhu funds to non-farmlands'

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar accused the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government of misusing public funds under the guise of the Rythu Bandhu scheme. Speaking at a public event, he alleged that during the BRS regime, financial aid meant for farmers was misappropriated and even allocated to non-agricultural lands like trees, hills, and roads. He further stated that the people of Telangana no longer trust the promises and strategies of the BRS party.

MLA Veerlapalli Shankar emphasised that after the Congress party came to power, citizens in Telangana have experienced peace, equality, and freedom. He assured the people that the Congress government is committed to supporting farmers through loan waivers and initiatives like Rythu Bandhu and Rythu Bharosa for those actively engaged in agriculture.

He also criticized the so-called "Liquor Queen" of the BRS, who, according to him, exploited the state and is now trying to gain support with a new focus on Backward Classes (BCs).

He pointed out that BRS leaders have ignored the BC community for 10 years and are now raising slogans for political gain. He challenged the party to appoint a BC leader as its president or working president if they genuinely care about the community.

Advisee State Coordinator P. Raghu Konkalla, Town President Chennaiiah, and other prominent leaders were present.

Congress govt expands electric bus fleet in Telangana

PNS ■ HANMAKONDA

The state government is working diligently to put the Road Transport Corporation (RTC) on the path to profit, said Transport and Backward Classes Welfare Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar.

On Monday, in the presence of several Ministers, including Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy and Minister for Endowments Konda Surekha, a fleet of 112 electric buses allocated by the state government for the Warangal region was flagged off at the Hayagrivachary Ground in Hanmakonda.

During this event, Ponnamp Prabhakar said that while the previous government tried to undermine the RTC, the Congress government has transformed it into a vibrant organisation. He added that after the Congress government came to power, it initiated compassionate appointments and provided jobs to 3,000 people in the RTC. He highlighted that the state government has purchased 1,000 new buses, including environmentally friendly electric buses.

In the first phase, these electric buses will operate from district centres to Hyderabad. For Hanamakonda district, 112 electric buses have been allocated, with 50 buses being assigned to the Warangal region in the initial phase. The government would allocate another 30 buses by Sankranti, the Minister said. He also mentioned that the government has introduced free RTC bus travel, benefiting 127 crore women across the State, which has imposed an additional financial burden of Rs 4,500 crore on the RTC. To support the management of electric buses, the government has invested Rs 10 crore in establishing charging stations in the district. While the previous government undermined the RTC, the Indiramma government is working hard to lead it towards



Ministers Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Ponnamp Prabhakar and Konda Surekha at the launching of electric buses in Hanmakonda on Monday

progress, and in the future, RTC will see better days, he added.

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy stated that the previous government had tried to privatise the RTC but had to backtrack under pressure. He assured that by Sankranti, Indiramma houses would be allotted to every constituency and highlighted various welfare schemes the government is implementing for the betterment of the people. He mentioned that the government would offer a 40 per cent increase in hostel mess charges and a 200 per cent subsidy on cosmetic charges for students. He also mentioned that the Indiramma government will provide a Rs 500 bonus for sanitary workers, construct 4 lakh houses annually, and work towards completing the construc-

tion of the 20 lakh houses that are under construction.

Endowments Minister Konda Surekha noted that the free bus service provided by the government is being used by millions of women across the state. She pointed out that women are now travelling free of charge by RTC buses for medical purposes to Hyderabad and other cities and are also visiting pilgrimage sites.

Warangal MP Kadiyav Kavya said that the state government is striving to strengthen the RTC. The government is also committed to ensuring the welfare of all sections of people.

Warangal West MLA Naini Rajender Reddy and Waradhannapet MLA KR Nagaraj and others also spoke.

'Expedite construction of antenatal care ward'

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has directed the officials to speed up the construction of the new building for the Antenatal Care (ANC) at the Government General Hospital in Nalgonda.

The building is being constructed to assist pregnant women visiting the hospital daily for prenatal care, as well as those admitted for delivery and their attendants. The Minister emphasised the importance of quality construction and a quick completion timeline, directing the contractor accordingly. During his visit, the Minister also inspected various hospital wards and emphasised the establishment of a ward for postnatal care. He directed the installation of air conditioners in the ward under the Prake Foundation's guidance. The ward will



Roads and Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy inspecting Government Hospital in Nalgonda on Monday

serve to educate parents about post-delivery care for mothers and babies. Additionally, the Minister suggested measures to support hospital staff working on depression-related issues and assured the employees that the shortage of gynaecologists and general surgeons, besides staff nurses, would be addressed soon. District Collector Ila Tripathi announced a 15,000 monthly reward for the best-performing doctor at the hospital.

Encourage students to speak in English fluently: Collector

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

District Collector Muzammil Khan on Monday emphasised that every student studying in government schools should be trained to speak English fluently.

The District Collector, along with Additional Collector P Sreeja, and trainee Collector Mrinal Shrestha, participated in the VK Learn Workshop held at Konijerla Mandal Parishad High School.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector mentioned that the programme was initially launched in 16 schools in the district and later expanded to another 18 schools. He also said that 61 high school teachers were trained through a one-day workshop.

The Collector stressed that teachers should focus on teaching students spoken English in a way that would align with their daily life conversations. He further mentioned that spoken English would help in boosting students' confidence.

During his school visits, the Collector observed that although some students have knowledge of English, they are hesitant or shy to speak. He emphasised the need to address the issue. He advised the teachers to encourage students even those sitting at the back of the classroom, in



District Collector Muzammil Khan participating in the VK Learn Workshop held at the Konijerla Mandal Parishad High School in Khammam on Monday

the learning process and added that the programme has been designed accordingly.

The Collector advised teachers to ensure that students speak English in classes, encourage conversations in different contexts and make efforts to have more conversations with the children. He emphasised the importance of preparing students to communicate in English about everyday events.

The Collector pointed out that knowing English would make it much easier for students to communicate with others in the competitive world. District Education Officer Somasekhara Sharma, AAMO Ravi Kumar, Mandal Education Officer Abraham, School Headmaster Shanta Kumari, VK Learn Workshop Chief Mentors Asr and Pavitra Dikshit, Program District Coordinator J. Jagadish, and other officials.



Assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar and Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao inaugurating shopping complex and warehouse in Chevella constituency on Monday

Shopping complex, warehouse inaugurated

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a significant development aimed at benefiting local farmers, a shop complex and warehouse shops were inaugurated at Chevella Centre under the Chevella Constituency in Ranga Reddy district. The event was attended by several prominent leaders, including Telangana State Legislative Assembly President Gaddam Prasad Kumar, Telangana State Agriculture Cooperative and Textile Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao, Telangana Chief Whip Mahender Reddy and Chevella MLA Kale

Yadaiah. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao assured farmers that the shops would remain accessible at all times and would supply quality products. He also announced that further measures to support farmers would be introduced after the Sankranti festival.

The event saw participation from DCMS Chairman Patholla Krishna Reddy, District Library Chairman Eluganti Madhusudan Reddy, as well as public representatives, party leaders, and activists.

Software couple dies by suicide

PNS ■ PATANCHERU

In a heart-breaking incident on Sunday night at Sriram Hills Colony in Ameenpur Municipality limits, a software couple was found deceased in their home. The deceased were identified as Jangili Sandeep (36) and Keerti (30), both worked for multinational corporations in different roles. Originally from Warangal, they leave behind two young children, both under the age of five.

Police arrived at the scene after reports of the incident were received. The police registered a case and investigation is underway.

A heated argument between the couple allegedly led to Keerti committed suicide by hanging and Sandeep too died by suicide later.

Friends, colleagues expressed their shock and sorrow over the couple's death. The bodies were shifted to Patancheru Government Hospital for post-mortem.

Collector, SP inaugurate 'Jan Maitri' sports competition

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

District Collector Adarsh Surabhi and District Superintendent of Police Girdhar Rao stated that sports would play a significant role in fostering a friendly atmosphere between the police and the people. On Monday, at the SP office ground, a sports competition named 'Jan Maitri' was inaugurated by the District Collector Adarsh Surabhi and SP

Girdhar Rao on the occasion of the Sankranti festival. It was organised by the police department. As a symbol of peace, pigeons and balloons were released into the air. Volleyball and badminton competitions took place.

The Collector and SP also participated in cricket and volleyball games.

During the event, Collector Adarsh Surabhi mentioned that sports are highly beneficial in

creating a friendly atmosphere between the police and the public.

He emphasised that sports not only help in maintaining physical health but also mental health. He advised the youth to participate in sports during their holidays to avoid getting involved in other negative activities.

He also highlighted that sports help in preventing diseases like diabetes and high blood pressure. Therefore, he urged everyone to participate in sports.

SP Girdhar Rao stated that people should not be afraid of the police and that the police treat the public in a friendly manner. He emphasised that people can approach the police without fear.

Additional Collector Sanchit Gangwar, AR Additional SP Veera Reddy, DSPs Venkateswara Rao and Uma Maheswara Rao, District Youth Sports Officer Sudheer Reddy, police personnel, athletes and other officials were present.



Wanaparthy Collector Adarsh Surabhi and Superintendent of Police Girdhar Rao at 'Jan Maitri' sports competition in Wanaparthy on Monday

REVIVAL OF NIZAM SUGAR FACTORY

Farmers told to take up sugarcane farming on large scale

- Nizam Sugar Factory was established in 1937 during the reign of the last Nizam of the Kingdom of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali
- It was sold to a private company, Delta Paper Mills, in 2002 by the then government

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

As part of the process to revive the Nizam Sugar Factory (NSF), MLAs held a meeting with farmers. They have made it clear that the factory revival will take shape only if the farmers give a commitment that they will cultivate sugarcane on a large scale. If farmers take up sugarcane cultivation on a large scale, a steady supply of raw material required for NSF can be ensured, according to political leaders and officials.

The state government paid Rs 190 crore out of Rs 400 crore bank loans under a one-time settlement. A special committee has been conducting meetings with farmers. The government has also formed a committee to begin the process of NSF revival. The farmers have, however, sought an assurance from the government that the minimum support price is guaranteed for the produce.

To restart crushing operations at the Nizam Sugar Factory, a minimum of 3,500 metric tonnes of sugarcane is required every day for crushing to keep the unit running in a season which means 130 days in a year. Meanwhile, the ruling party MLAs have stated that, as promised ahead of the elections, the Nizam Sugar Factory will be reopened.

The Nizam Sugar Factory units were sold to a private company, Delta Paper Mills, in 2002 by the Chandrababu Naidu government. During the 2014 election campaign, the then TRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao promised to make Nizam Sugars a government entity. However, on December 23, 2015, three of the factory's units were shut down due to layoffs. Despite a yield of 35,000 tonnes of sugarcane in 2005-2006, the factory, which had a yield of 100,000 tonnes in 2017, was closed. As a result, farmers shifted towards paddy culti-



vation. Now, if farmers in the Nizam Sugar Factory's surrounding regions such as Bodhan, Muthyampet, and Mambhoji Pali show interest in cultivating sugarcane, the government is more likely to expedite the reopening of the factory.

If the factory is reopened, the local economy is expected to grow. The question remains whether the factories will be operated under the private

sector, the government, or a cooperative model.

Many in the district believe that reopening the factories will benefit all sectors.

As per the election promises, the MLAs from the ruling party have stated that they are ready to reopen the Nizam Sugar Factory, and they have also held meetings with farmers.

The MLAs have assured the farmers that the government will support farmers who are willing to engage in sugarcane cultivation. There is a strong belief that reopening the Nizam Sugar Factory is essential for the welfare of farmers in the area.

The government has already paid Rs 190 crore loan and the farmers are expected to support sugarcane farming for the factories to be revived.

In a meeting attended by Bodhan MLA Sudarshan Reddy, Banswada MLA Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, and other MLAs along with the District

Collector, discussions were held with farmers. They emphasised that if about 16,000 to 18,000 acres are cultivated with sugarcane, crushing operations can be carried out. Farmers are willing to start sugarcane farming if subsidies are provided.

Farmers are requesting that the government provide subsidies for sugarcane farming and prompt payments for their produce.

Farmers state that, in the absence of the factory, they have been selling their sugarcane to private buyers at lower prices.

They believe that if the factory reopens, many farmers will return to sugarcane farming.

Some farmers also suggest that scientists should provide guidance and recommendations to help them improve sugarcane cultivation. They believe that if they continue to grow sugarcane every year, it will be profitable.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA

OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

FORM-F

Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML

(See rule 7 (c))

No. C6/106/2024 - LHS (176 to 200) Dated: 06-01-2025

Where a notification was issued vide No. C6/106/2024 - LHS (176 to 200) Dated 07.12.2024 and published in the Gazettee Hyd.-HAML No.40 dated 07-12-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shar-E-Hyderabad Village Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows.

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq.Yds
1	2	3	4
1) Syed Mohd Hussain Hashmi, 2) Syeda Faqrunnisa Hashmi, 3) Syed Omer Hussain Hashmi	RHS 191	23-2-454	11.09

Represented by :
Sri. Syed Mohd Hussain Hashmi
R/o. 23-2-137/shalibanda Road Mughalpura, Chamaraj, Hyderabad. TG.500002.

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District /Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoulpura, Hyderabad within the seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 13-01-2025.

Sd/-
Special Deputy Collector, LA,
HAML, Rasoulpura, Hyderabad.

Date: 06-01-2025

DIPR No. 568/LA-PP/Advt/Agency/2024-25

KARIMNAGAR BRANCH

3-5-335, Gandhi Road

Phone: 0878-2260086, 9948125184

KARIMNAGAR - 505001

APPENDIX-IV-A (See proviso to rule 8 (6) / 9(1))

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) 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/Constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Indian Bank, Karimnagar Branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whichever here is" on 06.01.2024 for recovery of Rs. 15,48,047/- (Rs. 15,48,04,700/-) due to the Indian Bank, Karimnagar Branch, Secured Creditor, from Mrs. Gangula Krishnaveni, W/o Venkata Kankaraju. The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed Description of the Property
Plot No 303 having plinth area of 740.00 sq ft (including common area) RCC structure in second floor with an undivided share of 25.00 sq yards land in the total land 611.00 sq yards or 510.79 sq mts in Sy No 1316 relating to R/R Endorse in premises of H-No-3-7-682 and 3-7-685 situated at locality of Karimnagar within the limits of Municipal corporation, Karimnagar under the jurisdiction of sub district and district registration Karimnagar. Boundaries of land/Plot: Plot of others, South:37-07 Wide Road, East: House of Chandu and Davit, West: House of Hameed and Ahmed. Boundaries of Plot/North: Joint wall and Plot No.302, South: L/R and Open to sky, East: 37-07 Wide Corridor West: Open to Sky.

Encumbrances on property	Mortgaged to INDIAN BANK
Reserve Price	Rs. 17.11 Lakhs (Rupees Seventeen Lakhs and eleven thousand rupees only)
EMD Amount	Rs. 1.71 Lakhs (Rupees One Lakh Seventy One Thousand Rupees only)
Bid incremental amount	Rs. 0.18 Lakhs (Rupees Ten thousand only)
Date and time of auction	14.02.2025 - 10AM to 4.00PM
Property ID No	IDIB0504344738680

Bidders are advised to visit the website (https://baanet.com) of our e-auction service provider PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance, please call 0291220220. For Registration status and EMD status, please email to support.baanet@psballiance.com. Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with https://baanet.com. Terms and conditions of e-auction is available in the website (https://baanet.com).

Place: KARIMNAGAR, Sd-Authorised Officer, Indian Bank

Date: 06.01.2024

ACROSS THE STATES



NDRF rescues nine family members from drowning

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel stationed at the Maha Kumbh Mela site rescued nine members of a family from drowning in the Ganga River on Monday, officials said. An NDRF official stated that Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Manoj Kumar Sharma was visiting Arail Ghat on Monday when he noticed a boat carrying nine individuals drifting uncontrollably in the strong current. The family members on the boat were shouting for help. "Upon hearing their cries, DIG Sharma immediately directed the NDRF team to enter the river and rescue the stranded family. The team successfully brought all nine individuals to safety," the official said, adding that those on board were members of the same family. Around 40-45 crore visitors are expected during the Maha Kumbh, which is being held from January 13 to February 26 after a gap of 12 years.



Women voters outnumber men in Puducherry

Women voters continue to outnumber men in all the thirty Assembly constituencies in the Puducherry Union Territory. There are 5,39,125 women, 4,74,788 men and 157 transgenders in the latest electoral roll of the union territory whose total strength stands at 10,14,070 as per the official figures released on Monday. Special summary revision of photo electoral rolls 2025 conducted in all the constituencies from 29 October 2024 to 28 November 2024 with January 1, 2025 as the qualifying date, show these figures, a release from office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said. This exercise is done in accordance with the directives of the Election Commission of India (ECI). The electorate strength of the union territory as on October 29 last year (draft publication of electoral rolls) was 10,15,379. While 22,154 applications received during the summary revision were admitted for inclusion, 23,463 names were deleted and the total number of voters stands now at 10,14,070. Region wise break up of voters: Puducherry (with 23 Assembly constituencies) has 7,76,815 voters, Karaikal (with 5 Assembly constituencies) has 1,68,185 voters, Mahe has 29,448 voters and Yanam has 39,622 voters, the release stated.



'Rename India Gate as Bharat Mata Dwar'

BJP's minority morcha president Jamal Siddiqui has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, urging him to rename India Gate as "Bharat Mata Dwar". Siddiqui in his letter claimed that the government under Modi has worked to heal the wounds inflicted by "Mughal invaders" and "British robbers", saying it has made the country happy by erasing the taints of slavery. "Renaming India Gate as Bharat Mata Dwar will be a true tribute to thousands of patriots, who made the supreme sacrifice and whose names are inscribed on its structure," he said. He noted that the Modi government has rechristened the road named after Aurangzeb as A P J Kalam Road and replaced the statue of King George V in India Gate with Subhas Chandra Bose. Raj Path was renamed as Kartavya Path, lining it with the Indian culture, he said, adding the name Bharat Mata Dwar can be given to India Gate in a similar vein.

Time not far for first bullet train to run in India: PM

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The time when the first bullet train will run in India is not far, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday as he underlined the "rising" demand for high-speed trains from across the country and the sector's "historic transformation" under his government.



More than 136 Vande Bharat trains are running on over 50 routes, he said, referring to a recent trial run in which the train clocked a speed of 180 kilometres per hour. "The time when the first bullet train will run in India is not far."

Launching a slew of rail projects, including inauguration of the Jammu division, Modi said the Railways had undergone a historic transformation in the past decade. It has led to a change in India's image and a boost in people's morale, he said in a video address, with the chief ministers of Telangana, Odisha, and Jammu and Kashmir, besides other dignitaries, joining the programme from their respective states.

People increasingly want to spend less time covering long distances, leading to a rise in

the demand for high-speed routes, he said, referring to a recent trial run in which the train clocked a speed of 180 kilometres per hour. "The time

when the first bullet train will run in India is not far."

With Modi launching a number of infrastructure projects in the past few days, he said India maintained a fast pace in connectivity in the new year.

It is a big day in "new-age connectivity" for many parts of the country, he said of the projects launched on Monday.

The entire country is moving forward in lockstep, and this is what is "sabka sath, sabka vikas", he added.

Modi asserted that the modernisation of infrastructure, providing modern amenities to passengers, boosting connectivity to all parts of the country, and supporting employment and industry were the ideas guiding the development in the rail sector.

He also gave details of the expansion of the Metro network and changes brought in the Railways.

HMPV not a new pathogen, cases have been reported worldwide

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV) is a globally recognised respiratory virus that recently gained attention after its outbreak was reported in China.

Two cases of HMPV were recently reported in Karnataka as part of routine surveillance by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Here is an explainer on the HMPV:

WHAT IS HMPV?

HMPV is a viral pathogen that causes respiratory infections in people of all age groups. First discovered in 2001, it belongs to the Paramyxoviridae family and is closely related to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). HMPV spreads through respiratory droplets from coughing or sneezing, as well as by touching contaminated surfaces or coming into direct contact with infected individuals.

This virus is known to cause illnesses ranging from mild respiratory discomfort to severe complications, especially in vulnerable populations such as infants, older adults and individuals with weakened immune systems. It is prevalent globally and tends to peak during late winter and early spring in temperate regions, although it circulates year-round in some areas.

SYMPTOMS OF HMPV

The symptoms of HMPV vary depending on the individual's age, general health and immune response. Mild cases typically present with a runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever, resembling a common cold. Moderate symptoms may include persistent cough, wheezing and fatigue.

In severe cases, especially in

infants, older adults, and those with chronic illnesses, HMPV can lead to complications such as bronchitis, bronchiolitis or pneumonia. Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) requiring hospitalisation may also occur. These severe presentations are particularly concerning for high-risk groups.

TRANSMISSION AND PREVENTION

HMPV spreads in ways similar to other respiratory viruses such as RSV and influenza. Transmission occurs primarily through respiratory droplets from infected individuals or contact with contaminated surfaces. To prevent the spread of HMPV, practising good hand hygiene is essential, including frequent handwashing with soap and water.

Respiratory etiquette, such as covering the mouth and nose while sneezing or coughing and wearing a mask, can also limit the spread. Avoiding close contact with infected individuals and regularly disinfecting frequently touched surfaces are additional preventive measures.

HOW LONG DOES HMPV LAST?

Mild cases of human HMPV usually last a few days to a week. In severe cases, it will probably take longer to feel better. However, lingering symptoms, like a cough, may take longer to go away.

DIAGNOSIS OF HMPV

Diagnosing HMPV based solely on symptoms can be challenging, as it mimics other respiratory infections like RSV and influenza. Reverse Transcription Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR) is the gold standard diagnostic tool for detecting HMPV RNA, while antigen detection assays offer quicker results.

PK arrested for 'illegal' fast unto death, refuses bail



PNS ■ PATNA

Jan Suraj Party founder Prashant Kishor was on Monday arrested for his "illegal" fast unto death and sent to jail upon refusal to accept bail, granted by a court here with conditions that were deemed "unreasonable".

The 47-year-old, who was last week booked for holding 'Aamaran anshan' (fast unto death) at Gandhi Maidan, in violation of a Patna High Court order that forbids any such demonstration at a place other than Gardani Bagh locality in the city, declared that he would "continue" his agitation from behind bars. Senior lawyer Y V Ghin, who is actively associated with Kishor's

party, said the bail was granted with an "unreasonable" condition that Kishor must give a written undertaking, which would have been tantamount to "admitting guilt".

The former poll strategist, who started his fast unto death on January 2, demanding, among other things, cancellation of the Combined Competitive Examination conducted last month by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC), was rounded up along with supporters early in the morning.

Talking to reporters before being taken to the Beur Central jail on the outskirts of the city, Kishor alleged, "After being picked up at 4 AM, I was taken

to AIIMS, Patna, for medical examination but doctors refused to do the needful because of reasons best known to them".

"Between 5 AM and 11 AM, the police kept driving me along in their ambulance, never bothering to disclose the location. When I inquired, they said they were trying to get me examined at PMCH or NMCH (both government hospitals in the city)", claimed Kishor.

The Jan Suraj Party founder also claimed that he was finally taken to a community health centre in Fatuha on the outskirts of the city where he refused to give consent for a medical test.

"The doctors refused to accept the request of the police to issue a bogus certificate," he alleged.

"Be that as it may, I urge all of you not to quarrel with the policemen who are doing what they have been told by higher authorities. The government believes it can charge the baton on those making legitimate demands. If opposing such a regime is a crime, then I am ready to commit such an offence".

CBI will raid Sisodia's house in next few days: Kejriwal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing "reliable sources", Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Monday claimed that a raid by the CBI is going to be conducted at party leader Manish Sisodia's house in the next few days.

Kejriwal's accusation comes ahead of the elections for Delhi assembly's 70 seats due next month. The Election Commission is likely to announce the poll schedule in near future. All the three major political parties -- AAP, BJP and the Congress -- have declared candidates for some constituencies and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed the Delhi people twice in the first week of the New Year.

No immediate reaction was available from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) over the claim made by the former Delhi chief minister.

Congress promises Rs 2,500 to women if voted to power in Delhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday announced 'Pyari Didi Yojana', promising a monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 to women if voted to power in Delhi.

The scheme would be rolled out on the lines of the model adopted by the Congress government in Karnataka. Announcing the scheme, Karnataka Deputy



Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said it aims to financially empower women, promising

that it would be implemented at the first Cabinet meeting of the new government.

Indian fishermen beaten up in Bangladesh jail: Mamata

PNS ■ SAGAR ISLAND (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday alleged that some of the 95 fishermen, who were released by the Bangladesh government recently, were beaten up in jail in the neighbouring country.

Banerjee felicitated the fishermen, who had been arrested for illegally entering Bangladesh waters, and described them as "victims of circumstances". "I found some of them were limping. When asked, the fishermen told me that they were assaulted in jail with their hands tied. As a result, they have injuries below the waist and the legs... They were crying while talking to me," Banerjee said.



The chief minister, who was in Sagar Island to oversee the preparations for the upcoming Ganga Sagar Mela, asked the district authorities to provide the fishermen with medical treatment.

Six-year-old Reyansh swims his way into record books

PNS ■ THANE

Reyansh Khamkar, a six-year-old from Thane, has etched his name in the record books by becoming the youngest swimmer to complete a challenging 15-kilometer stretch in the sea.

He swam from Malpe Jetty to Waghotan Jetty in Vijaydurg in an impressive three hours, the achievement earning him recognition from the India Book of Records. Reyansh, who is trained by coach Kailash Akhade at Starfish Sports Foundation, completed the feat in his first-ever sea swimming competition, attracting attention for his remarkable stamina and skill at such a young age.

His success has been widely celebrated, with accolades pouring in from various public figures and institutions.

Minister for Cultural Affairs and Information Technology, A. Ashish Shelar, President of Thane District Amateur Swimming Association, Adv. Niranjana Dawkhare, and Vice President of the Maharashtra State Amateur Swimming Association, Rajesh More, all congratulated the young swimmer and wished him success for his future endeavours.

Reyansh's school, Saraswati English Medium School in Naupada, Thane, also lauded his achievement, recognising his talent and dedication.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY COLLECTOR, LA,
HYDERABAD AIRPORT METRO LIMITED,
HYDERABAD.

FORM-F
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML
(See rule 7 (c))

No. CB/12/2024 - LHS (174-200) Dated: 06-01-2025

Where a notification was issued vide No. CB/12/2024 - LHS (174-200) Dated 07-12-2024 and published in the Gazette Hyd. HAML No.40, dated 07-12-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from NGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shar-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows:

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds.
1	2	3	4
Sri. Mohammed Akbar Alam, S/o. Late Mohammed Osman Ali, R/o. 23-2-370/1/A Moghalpura, Chammar, Hyderabad. TG.500002.	LHS 156	18-7-205/D/1	99.45
Sri. Mohammed Farooq, S/o. Late Mohammed Hafeez, R/o. 18-7-205/A, Moghalpura, Talabhatta, Hyderabad. TG.500002.	LHS 186	18-7-205/A	45.11

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections (if any) to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 13-01-2025.

Sd/- Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.

Place: Hyderabad Date: 06-01-2025. DPCR No.562/LA/PIA/ADVT/1/2024-25

India ranks above global average in speaking English

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India ranks above global average in speaking English with Delhi leading the chart followed by Rajasthan, according to Global English Proficiency Report by Pearson.

The report released on Monday is an in-depth analysis of English proficiency trends across India, the Philippines, Japan, Egypt, Colombia and Europe.

The Pearson Global English Proficiency Report 2024 aggregated and analysed data from approximately 750,000 Versant tests conducted worldwide, offering a detailed snapshot of current skill levels and emerging trends. Versant by

Pearson is an English Language assessment tool that accurately and efficiently evaluates candidates' English language proficiency, assisting businesses in hiring the best talent suited for their needs.

The report cited that while India's average English skills score (52) is lower than the global average English skills score (57), the country's average English speaking score (57) is higher (54).

The report also said India's average English writing score (61) is equivalent to the global average writing score (61).

Delhi led with the highest English speaking score (63) followed by Rajasthan (60) and Punjab (58).



"In today's global economy, English proficiency is not just a skill but a strategic asset. The Pearson Global English Proficiency Report 2024 provides business leaders with the data-driven insights they need to make informed decisions about

hiring and developing their workforce. By integrating these insights into their talent strategies, organizations can enhance their competitive edge and drive growth," said Giovanni Giovannelli, president of Pearson's English Language Learning division.

According to the report, the Indian market has experienced significant growth in English skills in recent years, which is predicted to continue, with an emphasis on voice-based testing.

"Indian Business leaders know that accurately testing English skills reduces the cost of mis-hires and protects credibility, particularly when hiring at scale. India's average

writing score is 61, matching the global average, reflecting steady improvements driven by increased digital communication and the necessity for written English in global business contexts," it said.

In India, the finance and banking sector leads with the highest speaking score of 63, surpassing the global average of 56, it said.

"Conversely, Healthcare has the lowest score (45), influenced by its rapid expansion and the focus on increasing access to jobs... Other sectors like Tech, Consulting and BPO show strong performance, consistently aligning with or exceeding global benchmarks," the report said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

E-student visa initiative

Special visa categories for international students would make it easier for them to pursue their education in India

India has taken a significant step to attract international students by introducing two special visa categories: the e-student visa and the e-student-x visa. This initiative not only streamlines the process for students seeking education in India but also demonstrates the country's commitment to becoming a global hub for higher education. The e-student visa is designed specifically for foreign learners registered on the "Study in India" portal. This platform facilitates admissions for international students into a variety of Indian institutions offering long-term and short-term courses. The e-student-x visa, on the other hand, caters to dependents of these students, ensuring families can stay together during their academic journey. To apply for these visas, students need to secure admission to a partner institution listed on the 'Study in India' portal. Once the admission is confirmed, they can use their 'study in India' identification number to authenticate their identity and complete the visa application process at the official portal. These visas are valid for up to five years, depending on the duration of the chosen course.



By welcoming a diverse cohort of international students, Indian universities can elevate their global reputation, fostering cultural exchange and enhancing their academic standing on the world stage. Increased enrollment of international students contributes to revenue generation, which can be reinvested in research, infrastructure, and faculty development. The influx of students from different countries enriches the campus environment, promoting global perspectives and intercultural dialogue. With a range of courses across disciplines, international students can find programmes tailored to their interests and career aspirations. Studying in India provides an unparalleled opportunity to experience its rich cultural heritage, traditions and diversity. Globally, countries like the US and the UK have long-established student visa frameworks that have attracted millions of international learners. The US for example offers the F-1 visa for academic students and the M-1 visa for vocational or technical students. These visas allow students to work part-time on campus and participate in Optional Practical Training (OPT) programmes, enabling them to gain work experience in their field of study. The UK's Tier 4 student visa permits full-time study and part-time work during term time. Post-study work options, such as the Graduate Route, allow students to stay and work in the UK for two years after graduation. India's introduction of specialised student visa categories is a strategic move to position itself as a global education hub. By simplifying the visa process, the country is poised to attract a significant number of international students. With affordable fee structure, India can attract good number of students from across the world. However, a lot more needs to be done in terms of quality of education and infrastructure. University campuses that are foreign student friendly will go a long way in making India an international education hub.

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PICTALK



Flocks of pelicans and cormorants congregate at Man Sagar Lake, in Jaipur

Gandhi's arrest: A turning point in the global fight for freedom



RAJDEEP PATHAK

His arrest, far from quelling resistance, galvanised the nation, showcasing the power of non-violence as a tool for liberation and freedom

On January 4, 1932, Mahatma Gandhi was arrested after the Congress Party had decided to resume a civil disobedience movement in the wake of emergency measures imposed by the British government. The arrest marked a pivotal juncture in India's struggle for independence and left an indelible impact on global movements for justice and equality. Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and civil disobedience not only reshaped India's freedom struggle but also served as a blueprint for resistance movements worldwide. The Civil Disobedience Movement, initiated by Mahatma Gandhi in 1930, was a landmark moment in the Indian nationalist struggle. It was launched with the historic Salt March (Dandi Yatra) - where Gandhi defied British-imposed salt taxes, a symbol of colonial exploitation - foot-marching from Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat to the river Dandi, a journey of 241 miles. This movement aimed to undermine British authority through non-violent means such as boycotting British goods, refusing to pay taxes, and disobeying oppressive laws.



By the early 1930s, the movement had gained mass participation but faced severe repression from the British administration. Lord Willingdon, the Viceroy of India, adopted a policy of suppression, seeing Gandhi's leadership as a threat to the stability of British rule in India. On January 4, 1932, Gandhi was arrested under the 'Defence of India Act' for his role in perpetuating 'civil disobedience' - after it was decided by the Congress Party to resume a 'civil disobedience' movement in the wake of emergency measures imposed by the British government in the form of a series of Viceroy's ordinances. The arrest of Gandhi had immediate repercussions in India, sparking a wave of protests and acts of defiance. Historian Bipan Chandra in his book 'India's Struggle for Independence' (Penguin Books, 1989), writes that Gandhi's detention was a "turning point that revitalized the waning momentum of the movement". The arrest was perceived as an attack on

India's moral and political conscience, galvanising people from all walks of life to resist British rule. Women, in particular, stepped into leadership roles during this period. Kasturba Gandhi, Gandhi's wife and Sarojini Naidu led marches and protests, ensuring that the movement did not lose steam.

Acts of civil disobedience, such as the refusal to pay land revenue and the boycott of British institutions, intensified across the country. The arrest also amplified the moral and symbolic power of Gandhi's leadership. His willingness to endure imprisonment demonstrated his steadfast commitment to non-violence and truth. The Indian masses responded with unprecedented solidarity, reinforcing the idea that freedom could be achieved through peaceful resistance. Gandhi's arrest in 1932 was widely reported in the global press, drawing attention to the Indian struggle for independence.

In Britain, the arrest sparked wide debate. While the colonial government justified the move as a necessary measure to maintain law and order, prominent intellectuals like Bertrand Russell and George Orwell criticized the repression. Orwell in his book 'As I Please: Essays' (1943); Tribune Publishing remarked, "The



GANDHI'S ARREST BECAME A BEACON FOR OPPRESSED PEOPLES WORLDWIDE, INSPIRING MOVEMENTS FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE. NELSON MANDELA, WHO WOULD LATER LEAD THE ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA, CREDITED MAHATMA GANDHI AS THE PIONEER OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

paradox of Gandhi's imprisonment lay in the fact that a man advocating peace was treated as a threat to the empire". The arrest also resonated with leaders of other anti-colonial and 'civil rights movements'. Years later, Martin Luther King Jr. would cite Gandhi's arrest as an example of how moral authority could triumph over systemic oppression. King said, "Gandhi's life and sacrifices teach us that non-violence is not only a method but a philosophy of life"; adding, "The non-violent resistance of Gandhi was the guiding light of our struggle for justice in America".

Gandhi's arrest became a beacon for oppressed peoples worldwide, inspiring movements for freedom and justice. Nelson Mandela, who would later lead the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa, credited Mahatma Gandhi as the pioneer of non-violent resistance. In his autobiography "Long Walk to Freedom", Mandela wrote, "The spirit of defiance Gandhi embodied in India was equally relevant in South Africa's fight against apartheid".

Historians and political theorists have studied Gandhi's detention in 1932 as a case study in the dynamics of resistance and power. British historian Judith M. Brown, in her seminal work "Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope" (1989) also

points out that Gandhi's imprisonment highlighted the moral contradictions of British colonialism. "By incarcerating Gandhi, the British sought to delegitimise him, but instead they exposed their own vulnerability to ethical critique". International British historian Erik Hobsbawm situates Gandhi's arrest within the broader context of anti-colonial movements. In "The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, (1914-1991)", Hobsbawm notes that "The imprisonment of Gandhi was not merely an Indian event; it marked the erosion of imperial authority on a global scale".

Today, as the world grapples with challenges like systemic injustice, racial inequality, and climate change, Gandhi's principles of civil disobedience remain a guiding light. Some movements such as 'Extinction Rebellion' (a UK-founded global environmental movement) and 'Black Lives Matter' draw on the strategies of non-violent protest that Gandhi exemplified. Mahatma Gandhi's example serves as a reminder that moral courage and non-violent resistance are humanity's most potent tools for building a just and equitable society.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

RSS CHIEF ROOTS FOR UNITY

Madam —Apropos of the article 'Bhagwat champions unity as path to India's Vishwaguru vision' (Jan 6), the Mahakumbh at Prayag is the biggest manifestation of glamour, valour and cultural prosperity of the Sanatan with no discrimination of caste, sects, beliefs, regions and religions. What else is required to prove inclusivity, tolerance and omnipresence of the Sanatan? Sikhs are mainstream Hindus and calling them a minority is anti-thesis of both the religious faiths. Sikhs never claim any minority status and both Hindus with Sikh brethren visit temples and Gurudwaras with the strongest faith and devotion. The political conundrum and vote bank politics are hell-bent upon dividing Hindus on caste lines so much so that even a caste census is demanded in utter disregard to the Sanatan and Hindu beliefs.

The main problem of the explicit divide in Hindus, Muslims and Christians is propelled by the Hindu politicians always craving for power on caste and religious divisions and provoking the Muslim fundamentalist leaders to widen such divide. I bet if Hindu politicians adhere to the Sanatan values, there is absolutely no reason for confrontation in different religions and the fundamentalists of any religion will not dare to surge. The current controversies of the excavation of mosques built upon temple remnants and ruins are also the result of oppression of Hindus and discrimination even after seven decades of independence. RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's message is loud and clear and shows tolerance among hundreds of disputes. However, it is true that local Hindus are aggrieved by the loss of their temples during their lifetime and in the ages of their forefathers. How can they be pacified? It is a very difficult problem and looks unstoppable. The illegal occupation of temples was a deliberate act to humiliate the Hindus in a colonial mindset and such illegal occupations should be surrendered voluntarily.

Vinod Johri | Delhi

A Journey from poverty to prosperity



The SBI Research report unveils a transformative narrative of India's poverty eradication journey, with the poverty rate falling below 5 per cent in 2024. This milestone reflects not just economic progress but a holistic reconstruction of India's socio-economic fabric under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership. Rural poverty has significantly declined from 25.7 per cent

in 2012 to 4.86 per cent in 2024, showcasing the impact of government schemes.

Initiatives like MGNREGA provided consistent rural employment, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana ensured safe housing, and the Ujjwala Yojana improved women's health and energy efficiency through free LPG connections. Rural India, the nation's backbone, has played a pivotal role in this success. Urban poverty, too, witnessed a dramatic drop from 13.7 per cent in 2012 to 4.09 per cent in 2024. Revolutionary measures like Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and Jan Dhan Yojana eliminated corruption, enhancing financial inclusion and enabling direct cash benefits for millions.

R K Jain | Barwani

JUSTICE FOR MUKESH CHANDRAKAR

Madam —It is sad that the new year began on a tragic note for India's media fraternity, as a young journalist Mukesh Chandrakar was found murdered, with his body seen lying in a septic tank in Bijapur. The journalist was allegedly killed for his ground reporting of the Maoist conflict in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region. It was reported that Mukesh, a seasoned journalist and the creator of the popular YouTube channel Bastar Junction, garnered millions of views for his investigative reports. The global toll of journalist fatalities reached 179 in 2024, spanning 25 countries. India reported four journalist killings last year, all from central India, a region fraught with challenges for the press. Mukesh Chandrakar's untimely death has once again spotlighted the perils faced by journalists in conflict zones and the urgent need for stronger protections for media professionals in India. But every attack on the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression only adds to the strength of the Fourth Estate in our country.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

HEALTHCARE SYSTEM NEEDS ATTENTION

Madam — Health services, once considered a noble and selfless profession, have now largely turned into a business, making the situation worse than before. Citizens, especially the poor, find themselves unable to access even basic services, including in government hospitals. The inexplicable anguish caused by long queues, deplorable conditions, and unprofessional behaviour of some practitioners leaves a lasting stigma on healthcare. While people place their hopes on free medicines to alleviate their suffering, hospitals often provide only cheaper medicine and for expensive medicines, patients are compelled to visit private pharmacies, forcing them to spend beyond their means. As a result, the poor are often left to endure prolonged illness and deteriorating health. This issue needs attention, as healthcare should be accessible and equitable for all, irrespective of financial status.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Resilience redefined: The art of bending without breaking

Far from avoiding pain, resilience teaches us to embrace it as a catalyst for self-discovery and renewal

Resilience is often misunderstood as an unshakable strength, but its true essence lies in flexibility and growth. It is not about avoiding pain or adversity but learning to navigate them with courage and purpose. Resilience is the whisper within us that says, "You can rebuild."

Take Priya (name changed), a 36-year-old software engineer whose life unravelled after an unexpected layoff. "I thought I had lost everything—my confidence, my identity," she admitted. Beneath her professional stress lay years of self-worth tied to external validation. Through journaling and cognitive reframing, Priya discovered her worth extended beyond achievements. The layoff became not an ending, but an opportunity to redefine herself.

Psychologist Ann Masten calls resilience "ordinary magic," highlighting that it is not an extraordinary trait but a skill we can all cultivate. In today's unpredictable world, resilience is no longer optional—it is essential. **The Building Blocks of Resilience**



Resilience is not about bouncing back but about moving forward, transformed by challenges. Its foundation rests on four key elements:

1. Self-Trust: Believing in your ability to navigate life's storms.
2. Emotional Agility: Acknowledging and processing emotions without being consumed by them.
3. Relational Anchors: Relying on meaningful connections for support and safety.
4. Hopeful Realism: Balancing acceptance of hardship with faith in better outcomes. Consider Rohan (name changed), a 50-year-old attorney overwhelmed by work stress. Grounding techniques like mindful breathing helped him regain

clarity. "It reminded me that even in chaos, I could find stillness," he shared. These elements are accessible to everyone. Resilience is not about extraordinary strength; it's about ordinary choices made consistently.

Practical Tools for Resilience Building Resilience starts with small, intentional actions. Journaling allows us to process emotions and uncover patterns. Prompts like "What does my fear want me to learn?" or "What would I tell my younger self about this moment?" can reframe challenges into opportunities for growth. Mindfulness anchors us in the present. Aditi (name changed), a single mother, found solace in a simple prac-

tic: placing her hands over her heart and repeating, "I am safe. I am enough."

Creative expression, like art or movement, helps release emotions that words cannot. Samaira (name changed), a 19-year-old dancer, choreographed a piece to process grief after losing a loved one. "It became a way for my body to tell the story I couldn't speak," she reflected.

The Gift of Resilience Resilience is deeply human. It is found in the small decisions to try again, the connections that remind us we are not alone, and the ability to see hope in uncertainty. As Viktor Frankl observed, "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." Resilience is not about being unbreakable—it is about learning to bend without breaking and trusting that, no matter how many times we fall, we can rise again.

(The writer is a psychologist specialising in trauma and inner child healing. She writes and speaks extensively about mental health and resilience; views are personal)



KAVITA KABIR





FIRST COLUMN THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF YOGA

Hatha Yoga emphasises holistic well-being, nurturing the body, mind and spirit in harmony



RAVI VALLURI

Hatha Yoga lays emphasis on the overall well-being of the body while nurturing the mind and spirit of the seeker. The bedrock of this yogic technique is strongly based on the traditional eight limbs of yoga as expounded by Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras. These are 10 quotes on yoga by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar which help one to appreciate the depth of yoga.

1. "Like a flower bud, human life has the potential to blossom fully. Blossoming of human potential to fullness is yoga." Yoga is a discipline that is both gentle and powerful for uniting body, breath and mind in awareness. It integrates elements from all the different paths of yoga where you get a glimpse of Raj Yoga, Ashtanga or Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga as well as Gnana Yoga making the yogic experience wholesome.
2. "Yoga brings knowledge, passion and action together." Yoga is not just doing some body-twisting postures – it is experiencing the union of the body, mind and breath.
3. "Yoga is a study of life, study of your body, breath, mind, intellect, memory and ego; study of your inner faculties." The practice of yoga has been known for centuries to produce benefits in the areas of health, mental clarity and spiritual connection.
4. "Withdraw your senses from the object to its source, then the union happens, then the yoga happens." One must learn the correct way of doing asanas and pranayama.
5. "Peace is our very nature, and yoga leads you to inner peace." Yoga teaches one how to pay attention to what one experiences inside and what is the state of mind. Declutter the mental chatter.



6. "The purpose of yoga is to stop suffering even before it arises." Yoga is a holistic way of energising and integrating mind, body and spirit.
7. "Yoga is not just weight-loss programme; it is a science to make one feel lighter. It helps to lose the mental stuff of anger, jealousy, hatred, greed, etc." During the Sri Sri Yoga basic programme that is taught in 10 to 12 hours at the Art of Living Retreat, certified teachers help to experience the real depth of yoga that brings benefits not just at the physical level but at the mental, emotional and spiritual level too.
8. "One of the rules of yoga is to cultivate the practice of being happy." Everybody ultimately wants to be happy. But what is real happiness? The wise say that shifting gears from the pursuit of happiness to being happy makes happiness a journey rather than the destination, which is the key.
9. "The wisdom of yoga transforms one from arrogance to self-confidence; meekness to humility; from dependence to a realisation of interdependence." One may wonder if yoga is a self-help programme. Taught at various levels, yoga programmes connect one with ancient wisdom and nourish one's inner beauty as a human being.
10. "The wisdom of yoga transforms one from craving freedom to recognition of the 'unboundedness', from limited ownership to oneness with the whole." Does it seem incredulous? But yes, this is indeed the real potential of yoga. Simple yogic postures, rejuvenating breathing techniques, and blissful meditations integrated with the invaluable ancient wisdom of yoga put one on the path of genuine life transformation. As a yoga explorer with over a decade and a half of experience, I can state that all fellow explorers can dive deeper and experience what it takes to be a real yogi (or yogini).

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living)

Turning Canada's crisis into India's opportunity



DINESH SOOD

India holds the potential to become a global talent powerhouse by addressing skill gaps and aligning training programs with international demands



For years, Canada has been a top destination for Indians, especially Punjabis, seeking quality education and better employment opportunities. However, as Canada grapples with various socio-economic challenges, the situation has created a ripple effect with unforeseen opportunities for India. While the crisis in Canada poses significant concerns, it also presents a moment for introspection and action for India's young workforce. India stands at a unique vantage point, with its burgeoning youth population and a growing demand for skilled workers across key sectors like IT, hospitality, transportation, beauty and wellness, and retail.

The current global workforce shortages highlight India's potential to bridge these gaps while empowering its workforce to meet domestic and international demands. With over 65 per cent of its population under 35, India boasts one of the world's youngest and most vibrant workforces. This demographic advantage positions the country as a potential global talent hub. However, the critical challenge lies in transforming this potential into a skilled, job-ready workforce. While India's youth are ambitious and eager, many lack access to industry-relevant skills and training. Bridging this skills gap is crucial for ensuring employability and driving economic growth.

Canada's challenges serve as a wake-up call for India to accelerate its focus on skill development, especially in sectors that align with global demand. **Global Demand Beyond Canada** While Canada's crisis has brought attention to the workforce, opportunities extend far beyond North America. Countries in Europe, as well as South Asian nations like Taiwan and Vietnam, are also facing workforce gaps and require skilled, hardworking individuals. With its demographic advantage and growing focus on skill development, India is well-positioned to fill these gaps. By aligning training programs with the specific needs of these markets, India can



WHILE INDIA'S YOUTH ARE AMBITIOUS AND EAGER, MANY LACK ACCESS TO INDUSTRY-RELEVANT SKILLS AND TRAINING. BRIDGING THIS SKILLS GAP IS CRUCIAL FOR ENSURING EMPLOYABILITY AND DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

cement its reputation as a global supplier of talent. Bridging the Skills Gap with Policy Support India has already made strides in skill development through initiatives like Skill India, Digital India, and the National Skill Development Mission. However, these efforts must be scaled and aligned with global standards to capitalise on emerging opportunities, and the private sector truly should be able to design certification programmes that meet international benchmarks. Hands-on training, internships, and industry-specific curricula ensure that Indian workers are both employable and competitive globally. Equitable access to skill development programmes is critical. Government subsidies, partnerships with educational institutions, and digital learning platforms can make high-quality training accessible even in rural areas. Technology can be a game-changer in India's skill development journey. Online learning platforms, virtual reality simulations, and AI-driven personalised training modules can revolutionise how skills are imparted. These tools make training accessible to even the country's remotest corners, enabling millions to participate in the economic mainstream. Skill development should focus on employment and fostering entrepreneurship. For instance, a trained beauty and wellness professional could start a salon, or a logistics expert could launch a delivery service. With mentorship and financial support, such ventures can create jobs and spur regional economic growth. **Key Sectors with Growing Opportunities** **1. Information Technology (IT):** India's IT sector is already a global leader, but the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and cyber secu-

rety require a highly skilled workforce. As digital transformation reshapes industries worldwide, there is a pressing need for talent proficient in emerging technologies. Training programmes should focus on data analytics, AI applications, and cyber security protocols to meet global standards. **2. Hospitality and Tourism:** With increasing international and domestic travel, the hospitality and tourism sectors demand professionals with strong soft skills, cultural competence, and customer service excellence. Vocational training in these areas, coupled with language enhancement programs, can help Indian youth secure lucrative positions both at home and abroad. **3. Transportation and Logistics:** The transportation industry is a vital economic pillar, requiring skilled personnel for logistics management, safety protocols, and infrastructure operations. By offering targeted training in these areas, India can create a workforce ready to address the growing demand in this sector. **4. Beauty and Wellness:** Often overlooked, the beauty and wellness industry has witnessed exponential growth globally. This sector offers immense opportunities, from cosmetology to spa therapies and holistic wellness. By blending traditional Indian practices with modern techniques, India can produce skilled professionals catering to diverse cultural needs worldwide. **5. Retail:** The rise of e-commerce and the evolution of traditional retail have created a demand for skilled workers in inventory management, customer relations, and digital marketing. Training programmes focused on these areas can help India's youth tap into this dynamic sector. A Collaborative Effort Capitalising

on these opportunities requires a coordinated effort between the government, private sector, and educational institutions. Policies should focus on creating industry partnerships, providing financial incentives for skill development, and ensuring that training programs are aligned with market demands. At the same time, private enterprises must invest in upskilling initiatives and collaborate with training institutes to design job-ready curricula. International partnerships can also be vital in providing Indian workers with exposure to global best practices. Seizing the Moment India's youth stand at the cusp of a transformative moment. By equipping them with the right skills, the nation can address unemployment, meet global workforce demands, and drive economic growth. The current challenges faced by countries like Canada remind us of the interconnectedness of global economies and the opportunities that lie within crises. This is an opportunity for India to fill workforce shortages in other nations and elevate its standing as a global talent powerhouse. By focusing on skill development today, India can ensure a brighter, more prosperous tomorrow for its young generation and the nation. As the world navigates economic uncertainties, it is not the crises that define us but how we respond to them. This is a moment for India to turn challenges into opportunities and empower its youth to shine within the country and on the global stage. *(The writer is co-founder and MD of Orane International, a training partner of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and a network Member of India International Skills Centres, an initiative of GoI. The views expressed are personal)*

Cooperative entrepreneurship: A pathway to inclusive growth and social justice

By fostering self-reliance, financial inclusion and social equity, cooperatives have the potential to drive sustainable development

Cooperative entrepreneurship is emerging as a transformative mechanism to address social and economic challenges, especially for marginalised communities. By integrating economic activities with social objectives, it fosters self-reliance, financial inclusion, and social equity, making it a key pillar for sustainable development.



BINOD ANAND

Cooperatives operate as dual-purpose entities-economic organisations and member-centric institutions-with the aim of maximising member benefits while maintaining operational efficiency. Their governance structures emphasize democratic decision-making and resilience, making them particularly relevant in regions like Eastern India,

where socio-economic disparities hinder development. By aligning member incentives with enterprise goals, cooperatives drive regional economic growth and nurture local entrepreneurship. Worker cooperatives and employee-owned businesses exemplify how collective ownership transforms workplaces. Through reinvesting profits locally and prioritising social

objectives over profit maximisation, cooperatives contribute to community development and social impact. Eastern India can draw inspiration from dairy cooperatives like Amul and the Amreli Model, which have uplifted rural communities by ensuring fair pricing, market access, and technological support. The historical evolution of cooperatives highlights their relevance in modern economies. Grounded in principles of democratic governance, voluntary participation, and equitable resource distribution, cooperatives ensure equal decision-making power for all members, irrespective of socio-economic status. This inclusivity can significantly impact Eastern India by

bridging developmental gaps and fostering socio-economic resilience. Research underscores how cooperative structures promote innovation through shared ownership and long-term perspectives. Their resilience during economic downturns, supported by collective decision-making, creates an environment conducive to entrepreneurial activities. Innovations in worker cooperatives worldwide, such as those studied by Virginie Pérotin, offer replicable models for Eastern India to boost creativity and efficiency in community-driven enterprises. Cooperatives integrate economic, social, and environmental objectives, aligning closely with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By addressing socio-econom-



ic disparities and promoting equitable wealth distribution, cooperatives serve as engines of inclusive growth. Policy recommendations advocate for robust frameworks to amplify their impact on sustainable development. In Eastern India, cooperatives can tackle regional challenges like agricultural inefficiencies and lack of industrialisation, fostering local enterprises and generating jobs. A recent government decision to extend

PM Fasal Bima Yojana benefits to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) marks significant progress in financial inclusion and risk mitigation for marginalised groups. This initiative ensures access to crop insurance, protecting vulnerable farmers from losses due to unpredictable weather patterns. In Eastern India, where agriculture forms the backbone of rural livelihoods, this extension can stabilise incomes and encourage cooperative farming ventures. Historical evidence shows that regions with robust cooperative farming models have achieved significant socio-economic upliftment. Cooperatives enable collective bargaining for better input prices and market access, while

providing small and marginal farmers with resources to modernise agricultural practices. Eastern India can build on these successes by developing region-specific cooperative frameworks to address local agricultural challenges and enhance farming resilience. Amul Dairy Cooperative in Gujarat serves as an exemplary model, organising millions of dairy farmers to ensure fair prices and market access while uplifting rural communities. Another noteworthy example is the Lijjat Papad Cooperative, run by economically disadvantaged women, showcasing how small-scale production can evolve into a globally recognised enterprise. Cooperatives are crucial for fostering social justice in

Eastern India by addressing systemic inequities and promoting inclusive growth. They enhance financial inclusion by offering microfinance options, enabling marginalised groups to access entrepreneurial capital. By eliminating middlemen, cooperatives ensure fair pricing for products and services, advancing economic equity. Their governance structures also help members develop leadership skills, strengthening their role in community affairs. Women-centric cooperatives, in particular, provide financial independence, leadership opportunities, and platforms to address gender-specific challenges. *(The writer was the member of the MSP committee formed by the central government; views are personal)*

IN BRIEF



ICICI Securities settles case with Sebi

Brokerage firm ICICI Securities on Monday settled a case pertaining to the alleged violation of stock brokers rules with capital markets regulator Sebi, after paying Rs 40.2 lakh towards settlement charges. The order came after ICICI Securities proposed to settle the matter without "admitting or denying the facts and conclusions of law", through a settlement order. "In view of the acceptance of the settlement terms... The adjudication proceedings initiated against applicant (ICICI Securities) vide show cause notice (SCN) dated May 17, 2024 is disposed of in terms of the settlement regulations," Sebi's adjudicating officer Amit Kapoor said. The order came after the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) initiated adjudication proceedings against ICICI Securities for the alleged violation of Stock Brokers regulations. Thereafter, a show cause notice was issued by the markets watchdog to the applicant on May 17, 2024 for the alleged violation. The SCN alleged that applicant had failed to monitor its authorised person (AP), as trading terminals of five users, allocated to the AP were being operated from unknown places, which were not reported to the exchange.

Centre: Prioritise oil palm cultivation targets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Monday urged state governments to prioritise oil palm plantation targets under the NMEO-OP scheme by addressing bottlenecks and mobilizing available resources.

The National Mission on Edible Oils - Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) was launched in August 2021, with the primary objective of enhancing domestic production of palm oil and reducing reliance on imports. The mission aims to bring 6.5 lakh hectares under oil palm plantations by 2025-26.

"While significant progress has been made in certain regions, others need to accelerate their efforts," Chouhan said in a statement.

The under utilization of allocated funds and delays in achieving plantation targets underscore the urgency for a more focused and coordinated approach, he said.

Chouhan emphasized the need for states to prioritize achieving their plantation tar-



gets by addressing bottlenecks and mobilizing available resources.

With substantial unspent funds under NMEO-OP, the minister urged states to enhance resource utilization for infrastructure development, farmer support, and plantation expansion.

He said states must also intensify farmer engagement, tackle challenges such as misinformation, and expedite the disbursement of assistance to ensure farmer satisfaction and sustained participation.

To improve transparency

and efficiency, the government has introduced initiatives such as digital monitoring through geo-mapping and drone surveillance.

The minister urged states to fully cooperate with these measures.

Additionally, the Viability Price (VP) mechanism has been introduced to safeguard farmers against market volatility. "States must ensure the timely signing of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) to facilitate this benefit for farmers," he added.

Market crash makes investors poorer by Rs 10.98 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth tumbled Rs 10.98 lakh crore on Monday as markets crashed due to across-the-board selloff amid concerns over third-quarter earnings growth and foreign fund exodus.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex tanked 1,258.12 points or 1.59 per cent to close below the 78,000 level at 77,964.99. During the day, it plunged 1,441.49 points or 1.81 per cent to 77,816.62.

The NSE Nifty slumped 388.70 points or 1.62 per cent to 23,616.05.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dived Rs 10,98,723.54 crore to Rs 4,38,79,406.58 crore (USD 5.11 trillion).

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Steel, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Power Grid, Zomato, Adani Ports, IndusInd Bank, Asian Paints, ITC and Reliance Industries were among the biggest laggards.

Titan, HCL Tech and Sun Pharma were the gainers.

"The Indian equity markets are witnessing a sharp decline today, with both Nifty and Bank Nifty slipping below their 200-day moving averages (DMA). The sell-off can be attributed to a rise in Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) selling and concerns surrounding the upcoming Q3 earnings season.

"Additionally, fears related to the new HMPV

have added to the bearish sentiment, triggering fresh rounds of selling after the recent counter-trend pullback rally," Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investment, said.

FIIs offloaded equities worth Rs 4,227.25 crore on Friday after a day's breather, according to exchange data.

The BSE smallcap gauge cracked 3.17 per cent and midcap index fell by 2.44 per cent.

"Indian equities faced intense selling pressure amid concerns regarding the outbreak of HMPV virus and sharp fall in banking stocks post lacklustre quarterly updates," Siddhartha Khemka, Head - Research, Wealth Management at Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

All BSE sectoral indices ended lower, with utilities tumbling 4.16 per cent, power (3.73 per cent), services (3.45 per cent), metal (3.15 per cent), oil & gas (3.15 per cent), energy (3.03 per cent), industrials (2.97 per cent) and commodities (2.74 per cent).

As many as 3,474 stocks declined while 656 advanced and 114 remained unchanged on the BSE. "Emerging markets are undergoing consolidation due to uncertainties surrounding new US economic policies, the Fed's hawkish stance on future rate cuts, potential upward revision for CY25 inflation, and a strong dollar, all of which are negatively impacting market sentiment.



RBI adds 8 tons of gold to its reserves

Central banks around the world collectively, in November 2024, added 53 tonnes of gold to their reserves, of which the Reserve Bank of India's addition was 8 tonnes, the World Gold Council (WGC) said in a report on Monday. In 2024, central banks - mostly those from emerging markets - remained keen buyers of gold, driven by the need for a stable and secure asset amid global economic uncertainties. "Assessing the final act of 2024, central banks around the world continued to play a leading role in the demand for gold. November represented another solid month of gold buying as central banks collectively added a net 53 tonnes to global official holdings," WGC said in a report - Central bank gold statistics November 2024. The gold price dip in November, following the US election, may have provided some central banks with added impetus to accumulate, WGC said. WGC further noted that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) continued with its 2024 buying streak, adding a further 8 tonnes to its gold reserves in November.



Gold slumps Rs 700 to Rs 79,000 per 10 gm

Gold prices plunged Rs 700 to Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal had ended at Rs 79,700 per 10 grams on Friday. However, silver prices rose from Rs 300 to Rs 90,700 per kg on Monday. The white metal settled at Rs 90,400 per kg in the previous session. The price of gold with 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 700 to Rs 78,600 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 79,300 per 10 grams on Friday. In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery decreased Rs 247 or 0.32 per cent to Rs 77,070 per 10 grams. However, silver futures for March delivery appreciated Rs 479 or 0.54 per cent to Rs 89,700 per kg on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX). On Monday, Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to consider implementing mandatory hallmarking for silver and silver artefacts following consumer demands.

Vedanta secures 2nd place in S&P Global CSA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vedanta Aluminium said the company has been recognized for its sustainability efforts, securing the second position in the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment (CSA) for the aluminium sector globally.

With an overall score of 77, based on the robust Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) parameters, this achievement marks a significant milestone for the company in its ongoing commitment to sustainability. Vedanta Aluminium said in a statement.

This is the fourth year in a row when Vedanta Aluminium features among the top companies globally in these rankings.

"Securing the 2nd position globally in the S&P Global Corporate Sustainability Assessment reflects not only our unwavering commitment to sustainability but also the passion and hard work of our teams who strive to make a meaningful difference every day," Priya Agarwal Hebbur, Non-executive Director at Vedanta Ltd said.

Govt mulls mandatory hallmarking for silver jewellery

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to consider implementing mandatory hallmarking for silver and silver artefacts following consumer demands.

"There is a demand from consumers for mandatory hallmarking of silver. You (BIS) can deliberate and take a call," Joshi said at the 78th BIS Foundation Day event.

The work in this direction has already begun and the government will take a decision after completion of stakeholder consultations and feasibility assessment by BIS, the minister told reporters on the sidelines of the event.

"I have asked BIS to work

BIS to assess feasibility



out feasibility and take reactions from consumers and ornament dealers. We will consult all stakeholders and start the process," he added.

Silver hallmarking, which certifies the purity of the white metal, is currently voluntary.

BIS Director General

Pramod Kumar Tiwari told PTI that the Bureau could be ready to implement mandatory silver hallmarking within 3-6 months, adding that the stakeholder discussions were underway.

"Several rounds of discussions were held with stakeholders and they are in favour

of it. The discussion on printing a unique six-digit alphanumeric code is going on," Tiwari said.

The move follows successful implementation of mandatory gold hallmarking introduced in June 2021, which now covers 361 districts.

The existing system includes a unique six-digit alphanumeric code (HUID) certifying gold purity.

According to the minister, about 90 per cent of jewellery being purchased is now hallmarked. More than 44.28 crore gold jewellery items have been hallmarked with unique IDs since the launch.

Stakeholders from Gujarat, Karnataka and other states have requested the extension of mandatory hallmarking to silver, the minister added.

Govt to soon take decision on increasing sugar MSP: Food Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Monday said the government will soon take a decision on increasing the minimum support price (MSP) of sugar.

The MSP of sugar remains unchanged at Rs 31 per kg, a rate established in February 2019. However, industry bodies have demanded for an increase due to rising pro-



duction costs and economic pressures faced by sugar mills.

"There is a demand. The department is seized of the matter. We will take a deci-

Titagarh Rail delivers India's first driverless 'Make-in-India' trainset

PNS ■ KOLKATA

Titagarh Rail Systems Ltd on Monday handed over its first driverless, Made-in-India trainset to Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation's Yellow Line, marking a significant milestone in India's urban mobility journey.

The company built the trainset in its metro manufacturing facility in Uttarpara in West Bengal.

"The automated train with a stainless steel body, designed for state-of-the-art performance, will operate on the 18-km stretch linking Electronics City to the rest of Bengaluru. Union Minister for Housing and



Urban Affairs, Manohar Lal, who joined the celebrations virtually, commended Titagarh Rail Systems.

"As we inaugurate Bengaluru Metro's new trainset and surpass 1,000 kilometres of operational metro rail, we celebrate a significant milestone in India's urban mobility journey... With India now ranking third globally in metro rail, we aim to surpass the United States within five years," he said. Titagarh Rail Systems' Managing Director, Umesh Chowdhary, said the train incorporates advanced automation that enables it to operate in driverless mode.

India's services sector growth hits 4-month high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's services sector growth touched a four-month high in December, supported by new business inflows on strong demand conditions and easing inflationary pressures, a monthly survey said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index, rose from 58.4 in November to 59.3 in December, highlighting the strongest rate of expansion in four months.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print

above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

According to the survey, demand buoyancy continued to drive new business inflows higher, which in turn supported output growth and prompted firms to recruit additional workers.

"India's services companies expressed strong optimism in December as business activity growth surged to a four-month high. Forward-looking indicators such as new business and future activity suggested that the strong performance will likely continue in the near



future," Ines Lam, Economist at HSBC, said.

On the price front, there was a softer increase in cost burdens, though panellists continued to report greater outlays on food, labour and materials.

Selling price inflation also eased in December.

"The easing of input price inflation in the month also supported business sentiment. Strength in the services PMI stands in contrast with the

growing signs of a slowdown in the manufacturing industry," Lam noted.

India's manufacturing sector growth fell to a 12-month low in December, as new business orders and production expanded at softer rates.

Service providers remained confident that output would increase over the course of the coming 12 months. The overall level of positive sentiment fell from November's six-month high but remained above its long-run average.

The combination of new business growth, upbeat forecasts and rising capacity pres-

ures supported another round of job creation across the service economy.

"The rate of employment growth softened from November, but was sharp and among the strongest seen since data collection began in December 2005," the survey said.

Meanwhile, private sector companies in India posted a faster increase in output at the end of the calendar year. At 59.2 in December, up from 58.6 in November, the HSBC India Composite Output Index signalled the strongest rise for four months.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL DEPUTY
COLLECTOR, LA, HAML, HYDERABAD

FORM-F
Notification by the Collector (LA), HAML
(See rule 7 (c))

No. C6/39/2024 - RHS (01 to 25) Dated: 06-01-2025
Where a notification was issued vide No. C6/39/2024 - RHS (01 to 25) Dated 16-11-2024 and published in the Gazette Hyd.-HAML, No.25 dated 16-11-2024 for acquisition of the property for the public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Shar-E- Hyderabad Village, (Bahadurpura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the said notification, the following affected persons (property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the selling affected persons are as follows:

Name and address	Sitkh No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. yds
1	2	3	4
Sri Syed Abdul Wahab, S/o. Late Syed Abdullah, P/O. 6-1-57, Flat No. 1101, Mount Nasir, Sakrabad, Hyderabad, Hyderabad.	RHS 4	22-6-32	234.70

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/ Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 13-01-2025.

Signature of:
Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad.
Date: 06-01-2025

DPR RO NO. 55/LA/PP-Adv/Agency/2024-25

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

NOTIFICATION
Dt: 06-01-2025

Inviting Request for Quotations, Filing of TDS returns as 200(3), Form 24Q and 26D, Form 16 and 16A for Electrical work in Wanganery Circle are as follows: (1) Bid downloading starts from 01-01-2025 @ 03:00PM. Bid Submission Due Date and time: 17-01-2025 @ 03:00 PM on e-Procurement portal (tender.telanganagov.in). Opening of the Proposals and Technical bids: 17-01-2025 @ 04:00 PM. Address of the office concerned: Executive Engineer- Division 14, GHMC 5th Floor, Akshay Parking Complex, Hyderabad. Further details can be seen at www.tender.telanganagov.in. Therefore the eligible agencies may submit their quotations during above period with details of package along with insurance period.

R.O.No:3735/PPL/Adv/2024-25 Dt: 06-01-2025

Circle-14, GHMC

SOUTHERN POWER DISTRIBUTION COMPANY OF TELANGANA LIMITED

SHORT E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
TENDER SPECIFICATIONS- W-01/2024-25

Bids invited from eligible vendors for Tender Notice: 003/2024-25, Specification No: W-01/2024-25 for Electrical work in Wanganery Circle are as follows: (1) Bid downloading starts from 01-01-2025. (2) Bid Download closing date & time online: 08-01-2025, 14:00 Hrs. (3) Bid submission last date & time: 23-01-2025, 14:30 Hrs. (4) Last date & time for Hard copies along with CDW: 05-01-2025, 15:00 Hrs. (5) Technical bid and Price bid opening date & time: 22-01-2025, 15:30 Hrs. For further details regarding Tender Notice please visit www.tender.telanganagov.in & www.spsouthpower.org.

R.O.No:3874/PPL/Adv/2024-25 Dt: 06-01-2025

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Operation Circle: Wanganery

GRACE IN MOTION, BALANCING TRADITION

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Grace, tradition and artistry find their perfect expression in Shinjini Kulkarni, a prodigious talent born into the revered Kalka-Bindadin lineage of Kathak. As a ninth-generation torchbearer of this celebrated heritage, Shinjini began her journey under the legendary Pt. Birju Maharaj at the age of five and performed her first solo recital at just eight years old.

"Being born into this lineage hasn't just influenced my journey—it has completely shaped it," Shinjini begins, reflecting on her unique position in the world of classical dance. "It instilled in me a deep reverence for the art form. Kathak isn't just something I practice; it's my way of life, my identity."

She stresses that Kathak's essence lies in its storytelling. "Kathak means 'katha vachan'—the art of storytelling. It's not just about dazzling movements or intricate footwork; it's about evoking emotions, or rasa, in the hearts of the audience. That's what makes it so profound."

Her foray into dance began as a playful exploration, with Maharaj weaving lessons into small games and activities that captivated the young Shinjini. "In those early years, I didn't even realize I was training," she recalls with a smile. "It was only in my teenage years that the training became more rigorous, and I began to understand the intricacies of the art form. Despite the challenges, those years under Maharaj were the golden days of my life."

Notable milestones include a performance in Muzaffar Ali's film *Jaanisaaar*, under the dance direction of Pandit Birju Maharaj and a solo for the Bengali movie *Har Har Byomkesh*, with music by Pandit Bickram Ghosh. Her contributions to Kathak have earned her several prestigious awards, including the Nritya Shiromani Award at the Cuttack Mahotsav and the Parampara Samman by Sangeet Kala Niketan. Despite these accolades, Shinjini remains deeply humble, attributing her success to the divine energy she feels while performing. "There's a sense of surrender I experience on stage. After all the preparation, when you're in front of an audience, it's no longer just you. There's a divine energy at play that guides your movements, creates the atmosphere, and evokes emotions in the audience. Despite rehearsing a piece hundreds of times, it can feel completely different on two different evenings. It's truly humbling."

Initially, Shinjini viewed Kathak as a profession—a career to build. But over time, the art form has become her identity. Reflecting on her formative years, she describes her time training under Pandit Birju Maharaj as transformative. "He was the most comforting, compassionate teacher," she shares.

"He never scolded us, but his sheer presence and love for the art inspired complete surrender to it. Those years were the most golden days of my life."

Shinjini's journey has taken her to some of the world's most iconic cities—New York, London, San Francisco, Oslo and Dubai, to name a few. Performing on global stages has been an enriching experience, one that deepened her appreciation for the universal appeal of Indian classical music and dance. "Audiences abroad have immense respect and regard for the science embedded in our art forms," she observes. "Indian classical dance is not just an artistic expression; it's a spiritual journey. It's been practiced for over 5,000 years, offering a pathway to inner peace and mental wellness, something the world is only now beginning to recognise."

Performing on prestigious stages has always been humbling for Shinjini. "These are platforms where my grandfather and elders once performed. To uphold their benchmark is both challenging and exhilarating. One of my most cherished memories is performing at Jashn-e-Rekhta in Dubai, where I



HAVING TRAINED UNDER THE LEGENDARY PT. BIRJU MAHARAJ, SHINJINI KULKARNI BELIEVES KATHAK IS MORE THAN JUST A DANCE—IT'S A WAY OF LIFE, A FORM OF STORYTELLING THAT TRANSCENDS TIME AND CULTURE. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH THE PIONEER, SHINJINI, THE NINTH-GENERATION TORCHBEARER OF THE KALKA-BINDADIN LINEAGE, OPENS UP ABOUT HER ARTISTIC JOURNEY, THE SPIRITUAL DEPTH OF KATHAK AND MORE

shared the stage with the Sufi legend Abida Parveen. Her surrender to God and spirituality have deeply influenced me and to receive her blessings for my performance was surreal."

Interestingly, Shinjini notes a greater receptivity among Indians living abroad compared to domestic audiences. "Sometimes, Indians settled overseas are more attuned to our classical traditions. But it's heartening to see the younger generation in India embracing this legacy. I truly believe this century will mark a renaissance for Indian classical music and dance." Her memories of her first performance remain vivid—a mix of humor and humility. "I was supposed to perform a piece called Holi, written by my ancestor Pandit Bindadin Maharaj, after whom our gharana is named," she recalls. "It was for a school event, and when I saw the packed audience, I panicked. I ended up doing Bhangra steps instead of Kathak and left the stage halfway through. My mother was far from pleased," she adds with a laugh. "That moment taught me the importance of taking my art seriously."

Her latest performance, a piece on Krishna where she played the role of Radha, was a marked improvement. "That experience solidified my commitment to Kathak. It wasn't just about dancing anymore; it was about embodying a story and evoking emotions that connect with people."

She believes that the universal themes of Indian classical dance—love, devotion, joy, and spirituality—resonate deeply with global audiences. "Even in countries like France or Germany, where people might not understand Hindi or Braj Bhasha, they feel the essence of Radha and Krishna's love. It transcends language and touches the heart," she explains.

However, Kulkarni is acutely aware of the need for evolution in traditional art forms. "Any art form that doesn't evolve risks stagnation and losing relevance. It's crucial to address contemporary themes and create space for representations that resonate with today's youth."

Whether it's exploring themes of faith, love, romance, or spirituality, these emotions are universal and can bridge generational and cultural divides. "When rooted in timeless

emotions, Kathak tugs at the heartstrings of audiences across the world," she says. "It's this ability to connect with people of all ages and cultures that makes it so powerful. Step one is always about skilling yourself to the utmost perfection. It's about spending time with your guru and surrendering completely to their wisdom. But it doesn't end there. It's equally important to let your own creative voice guide you. If you merely parrot what you've learned, you do a disservice to the art. True growth happens when you bring your unique perspective and creativity to the form."

Shinjini emphasises that experimentation is a double-edged sword. "Experiments may succeed or fail, and that's fine as long as your intentions are pure. But if done without the right attitude, they can lead to a crossroads where the very essence of Kathak is at risk." Discussing the evolution of Kathak, she observes, "The dance form is undergoing a metamorphosis. There are liberal borrowings from other art forms and cross-cultural influences, which can enrich Kathak. However, maintaining the purity of its grammar while experimenting with new themes is a delicate balance. My aim is to walk that thin line—to honor the ancient texts while keeping the form relevant to today's cultural and social realities."

Shinjini has also explored Kathak through film, having performed under the direction of Muzaffar Ali in *Jaanisaaar*. "Performing for the camera is a completely different experience from live performances," she explains. "On stage, there's an uninterrupted rhythm and energy that carries you. In front of the camera, there are multiple takes and long waits between shots, which disrupt that flow. However, the camera captures the minutest expressions, especially those conveyed through the eyes, and that's a beautiful challenge in itself."

Being directed by Muzaffar Ali, a maestro with such a profound aesthetic sensibility, was an honor. His work in films like *Umrao Jaan* has left an indelible mark, and to contribute to his vision was humbling.

Awards, for Shinjini, are both gratifying and a reminder of the responsibility she carries. "They recognize the countless hours of riyaz, rehearsals, and effort that go into a performance. But they also set a benchmark. Every award raises the audience's expectations' and as an artist, you're compelled to meet and exceed them. It's thrilling, but it also means there are no slow or easy days. You're constantly pushing yourself to create something of greater value."

"KATHAK MEANS KATHA VACHAN - THE ART OF STORYTELLING. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT DAZZLING MOVEMENTS OR INTRICATE FOOTWORK; IT'S ABOUT EVOKING EMOTIONS, OR RASA, IN THE HEARTS OF THE AUDIENCE. THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT SO PROFOUND"

Reviving Telangana's artistic legacy

NIRMAL PAINTINGS FROM TELANGANA SHOWCASE A RICH ARTISTIC TRADITION KNOWN FOR THEIR VIBRANT COLOURS, INTRICATE DESIGNS AND DISTINCTIVE USE OF GOLD LEAF. ARTIST THOTA LAXMINARAYANA HAS PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN REVIVING THE ART FORM AND TODAY WE HAVE HIM ONBOARD AS HE DISCUSSES MORE ABOUT THE ART FORM

VAISHNAVI TIKKA
vaishnavi.tikka@gmail.com

India, a land of vibrant art and culture, boasts of a history steeped in creative expression that spans centuries. From ancient temples to contemporary art forms, the country offers a treasure trove of artistic wonders. Among these, Nirmal paintings from Telangana stand out for their bright colours, intricate designs and the distinctive use of gold leaf, which lend them an unmatched visual appeal. These paintings encapsulate the creativity and rich traditions of Indian art, showcasing the country's profound cultural heritage.

Thota Laxminarayana, an artist from Hyderabad, has been instrumental in blending traditional folk art with a modern aesthetic. Born in 1973 in the Nirmal district of Telangana, Laxminarayana trained under Guruji Shri Ravinder Sharma, a luminary in art and design education. His unique artistic style combines a vibrant color palette with subtle tonal nuances. Some of his notable works include *Untitled (Vol 1)*, *Sri Krishna*, and *Selfie*.

Speaking about the history of Nirmal paintings, Thota shared insights into the region's rich heritage: "Nirmal, a town in Telangana, has a storied artistic tradition dating back to the Kakatiya dynasty. King Nima Naidu, a patron of the arts, invited skilled craftsmen known as 'nakashis' from Rajasthan to create exquisite wooden toys. These toys often depicted village deities, or gramadevatas."

One distinctive feature of these toys was



the use of puniki katte, a special wood found only in Adilabad. This wood was treated with chinthaginjala, a local gum mixed with wooden powder, to form a durable base. "All these toys are made with puniki katte and are bonded using chitambari, a local adhesive," Laxminarayana explained.

The toys were then meticulously using natural colors derived from trees, flowers, and avasalu (linseed oil). Zinc was used to create white pigments, masi (lampblack) for black, and turmeric was processed to yield vibrant red kumkum. "These natural colors bring a unique vibrancy and authenticity to the toys," he added.

Beyond toys, the Kakatiya era also saw the creation of chitrapatalu—long, painted scrolls that depicted stories and traditions of various castes and sub-castes. These scrolls served as a vibrant visual encyclopedia of social history and inspired theatrical performances. "Each chitrapatam tells a story and was often



the basis for skits and plays," he noted.

Unfortunately, the artistic legacy of Nirmal experienced a decline after the Kakatiya period. The lack of consistent royal patronage likely contributed to its diminishing prominence. Reflecting on this, Laxminarayana expressed his sorrow: "After the Kakatiya period, wooden sculptures and scrolls lost their significance, and fewer people knew about Nirmal's wooden toys and paintings."

Today, while Nirmal paintings still exist, their production has undergone significant changes. Many artisans lack formal training in drawing and rely on pre-made molds, painting them with commercial synthetic colors. This shift has raised concerns about the authenticity and artistic integrity of contemporary Nirmal paintings. "In recent times, people are less skilled. They use molds and paint them with synthetic colors in the name of Nirmal paintings," he lamented.

Despite these challenges, efforts are underway to revive traditional techniques and promote the region's rich artistic heritage. By supporting local artisans and encouraging the use of traditional materials and methods, the legacy of Nirmal can be preserved for future generations. "Nirmal paintings hold a special place in many hearts. Artists are working to revive old methods and support local painters. This will ensure the survival of this art form," Laxminarayana concluded.

The timeless beauty of Nirmal art continues to inspire and captivate, serving as a testament to India's enduring cultural richness.

Protect your wallet with smart shopping

Online shopping offers convenience, variety, and sometimes even better prices than traditional brick-and-mortar stores, with global retail eCommerce sales expected to reach \$8.15 trillion by 2026. However, this growth has also led to a rise in cybercrimes such as phishing scams, mobile spam calls, and credit card data theft. In fact, 54% of consumers have encountered suspicious online activities, with 21% concerned about credit card theft.

While online shopping is generally safe, but cybercriminals use tactics like social engineering to steal personal information, leading to financial loss. North America's online payment fraud rate is 42%. Protect yourself by using secure websites, avoiding suspicious emails, and connecting to encrypted Wi-Fi. Staying vigilant ensures a safer shopping experience.

ONLINE SHOPPING RISKS

1. Identity Theft and Fraudulent Transactions
2. Fake Online Stores
3. Data Privacy Concerns
4. Unsecured Wi-Fi
5. Phishing and Fake Reviews
6. Unencrypted Data

TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE WHILE SHOPPING ONLINE

1. SHOP FROM REPUTABLE WEBSITES

One of the best ways to protect yourself when shopping online is to buy from trusted, well-known brands. Look for signs of legitimacy, positive customer reviews and secure payment options. Beware of unfamiliar websites offering products at unreasonably low prices, as they could be fraudulent. Check for "HTTPS" and a padlock icon in the URL, which indicates encryption for data protection. If these signs are missing,



refrain from entering sensitive information.

2. BE CAUTIOUS OR AVOID USING PUBLIC WI-FI

While public Wi-Fi is safe for basic browsing, avoid using it for sensitive tasks like online payments or banking. Cybercriminals can hack into these networks to monitor activities and steal your login credentials. It's safer to use a mobile connection for such transactions.

3. USE A SECURE VPN

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) encrypts your online activities, protecting your data from hackers on public Wi-Fi. It also masks your IP address, making it harder for cybercriminals to track you. Always use a VPN when accessing sensitive information on public networks.

4. USE STRONG PASSWORDS AND ENABLE TWO-FACTOR AUTHENTICATION

To minimise the chances of your account being compromised, use strong, unique passwords for each of your online shopping accounts. Additionally, many online retailers offer two-factor authentication (2FA), which adds an

extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, such as a code sent to your phone, before granting access to your account.

5. USE CREDIT CARDS, NOT DEBIT CARDS

Credit cards are safer than debit cards for online transactions because they aren't directly linked to your bank account. If fraud occurs, credit card companies provide faster dispute resolution and financial protection.

6. MONITOR YOUR CREDIT CARD STATEMENTS

After making an online purchase, regularly check your credit card and bank statements for any unauthorised transactions. If you notice any suspicious activity, report it immediately to your bank or card issuer. Many credit card companies offer fraud protection, which can help minimise losses in the event of a scam.

7. CHECK REVIEWS AND SELLER RATINGS

Before making a purchase, take the time to read customer reviews and ratings of the product and seller. However, be mindful of fake reviews, which can manipulate your decision. Look for reviews from verified purchasers, and if possible, cross-reference them on third-party review sites to get a more accurate picture of the product's quality and the seller's reliability.

CONCLUSION

Shopping online can be a convenient and enjoyable experience when you take the necessary precautions to safeguard your personal and financial information. Using secure websites, opting for credit cards or trusted payment gateways and regularly monitoring your bank statements are key steps in reducing the risk of fraud or unauthorised access. By following these best practices, you can ensure that your online shopping is both safe and stress-free.

(The author, **Shibu Paul**, is the Vice President - International Sales at Array Networks)



● Navneeta



The "Sky Full of Stars" annual couple event was held at the Glasshouse in Necklace Road. The evening began with Nidhi Bhuraria extending a warm welcome, followed by a collective singing of Mahesh Vandana. Founder Sangeeta Lohiya then officially welcomed the guests, after which President Rajani Marda delivered a speech.



● Rajani Marda



● Ashita



● Abhilasha



PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary

Visionaries and industry leaders unite as jury for Red Lorry Film Festival's second edition

Following its highly successful inaugural edition in 2024, Red Lorry Film Festival, the country's premiere international film festival curated by BookMyShow, is set to return with an even grander celebration of cinema. Expanding its cinematic universe, this year's festival will not only dazzle Mumbai audiences but also make its debut in Hyderabad with Red Lorry Film Festival: Parallel Verse. Scheduled from March 21st to 23rd, 2025 the festival promises an enthralling celebration of global cinema, with over 120 titles showcasing diverse stories across languages, genres and cultures.

The second edition of Red Lorry Film Festival is brought to you by BookAChange, a BookMyShow Foundation, empowering emerging artists through the transformative power of cinema.

This year, the festival introduced its much-anticipated Competition Segment, a platform designed to recognise and celebrate exceptional talent and artistry in filmmaking inviting submissions for the same. The segment honours groundbreaking cinematic craft while providing a global stage for both emerging and established filmmakers across two key categories. It aims to celebrate the power of storytelling and amplify fresh voices that can redefine creativity in our cinema-loving country.

The Front Runners (Best Film): Recognising the best feature film that showcases groundbreaking storytelling and technical mastery

Fresh Frames (Best Debut Film): Honouring first-time filmmakers who bring new visions and bold narratives to the screen

The Jury for the upcoming edition of the Red Lorry Film Festival brings together a remarkable group of visionaries from various artistic fields, each renowned for their distinctive contributions to storytelling and cinema.

Visionaries like Vikramaditya Motwane, Ashwiny Iyer Tiwari, Atul Sabharwal, Kaveree Bamzai, Sanjeev Kumar Biji, Prachee Shah Paandya along with honorary juror Ashish Hemrajani join the Jury Panel. Experience the best of global cinema at Red Lorry Film Festival Take 2 in Mumbai and its debut Red

Lorry Film Festival: Parallel Verse in Hyderabad, from March 21st to 23rd, 2025



Samajwadi Party's national president Akhilesh Yadav has appointed Madire Narsing Rao as the party's SC/ST state president for Telangana. This appointment was made official in a ceremony held at the party's central office, where Narsing Rao received his appointment letter from Samajwadi Party's ST Cell president and former minister Vyas G Gond.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

- 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

- The least dangerous
- Become larger
- A great river in Egypt
- A black symbol on playing cards
- Alters
- A bright red colour
- An archer fires at this
- Do a sketch
- The capital city of Italy
- Every twelve months
- Cleaned with soap and water
- Comes into sight
- Bumped
- Quicker
- Extreme fear
- A percussion instrument
- Absent

DOWN

- ___ and daughters
- Extremely dirty
- Very impolite



GINGER MEGGS



DIRECTOR SHANKAR'S COMPLIMENTS ARE LIKE AN AWARD FOR ME: ANJALI

Ahead of the much-anticipated *Game Changer's* release, actress Anjali shares her experience working with Ram Charan, her thoughts on the film and the challenges she overcame

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com



When Shankar sir appreciated my performance during the shoot, I felt like I had already won an award. I always wanted to work with directors Shankar and Mani Ratnam.

Telugu actress Anjali continues to reach new heights with her exceptional performances and her carefully chosen projects in both Telugu and Tamil cinema. Currently, she is playing a major role in *Game Changer* opposite Ram Charan. Her character, Parvathi, is paired with Appanna, portrayed by Ram Charan.

"This role is very close to my heart because my character's name is Parvathi, which is also my mother's name, Parvathi Devi. So, I personally connected to this role and relate to it deeply. I have put a lot of hard work into it," Anjali shared about her role in *Game Changer*. The actress also stated that in her 18-year career, this role is particularly special for many reasons.

For her performance as Parvathi, many from the film's unit believe she is deserving of a National Award. When asked about it, Anjali said, "Many have said the same, and I have also thought so. Let's hope for the best." She added, "When Shankar

sir appreciated my performance during the shoot, I felt like I had already won an award. I always wanted to work with directors Shankar and Mani Ratnam. Now that I've worked with Shankar sir in *Game Changer*, it's a dream come true. There are a few emotional scenes in the film, and after we shot them, Shankar sir told me, 'Anjali, you did a good job, very nice.' Words like these from him are an award for me."

Anjali also emphasised that playing Parvathi was a significant challenge for her. "This role has so many shades. I believe an actor connects with a character through personal experiences, seeing similar situations, or hearing about them. But for this role, I had neither experienced nor heard of such situations. It required me to work extremely hard to make the character believable. It's one of the biggest challenges I've faced in my career," she explained.

Reflecting on her previous roles, Anjali said, "In *Journey*, many girls wanted to be like my character. In *Seethamma Vakitlo Sirimalle Chettu*, where I played Seetha, people admired her long hair and grace. But my role in *Game Changer* is completely dif-

ferent from anything I've experienced in real life."

She spoke highly of her co-star Ram Charan, saying, "He is a wonderful actor and the best co-star. I generally try to create a comfortable environment for my co-actors to ensure the scenes come out well, and I expect the same from them. Ram Charan is incredibly down-to-earth and treats everyone—from the light boy to the director—with respect. Working with him has been an amazing experience."

Anjali revealed that the core of *Game Changer* lies in the relationship and bonding between Appanna and Parvathi, played by Ram Charan and herself. "There are many surprises in the film, as Shankar sir has said. The relationship between Appanna and Parvathi is beautifully portrayed and forms the heart of the movie," she added.

The actress expressed her excitement about being part of the film for multiple reasons. "Firstly, it's Shankar sir's film. Secondly, it's produced by Dil Raju garu. And thirdly, I'm acting opposite Ram Charan for the first time. I'm truly happy about this opportunity. When the trailer was released, I received so

many calls and messages—more than I've ever received for any other film. People loved it so much, and I'm confident that the audience will see the beauty of this film on January 10," she said.

When asked about being chosen for the role of Parvathi, Anjali said, "When Shankar sir narrated the role to me, I didn't question why he chose me. I just wanted to give my best and use my skills to deliver a strong performance." She added that *Game Changer* will be a milestone not just for her but for everyone involved in the film.

Anjali admitted she initially doubted whether she could pull off the character. "When I first heard about the role, my immediate thought was, 'Can I do justice to this? It has so much depth that I had to think twice. But eventually, I gave it my all,'" she shared. She also mentioned that this role has influenced her approach to choosing future projects.

Speaking about Chiranjeevi's appreciation for her performance, Anjali said, "I've heard that Chiranjeevi garu has appreciated my work. I'm now trying to meet him in person. When I do, I'll definitely ask him about

the possibility of working together."

When reminded that she has already worked with Pawan Kalyan and now with Ram Charan, Anjali smiled and said, "I hope to complete the family by acting with Chiranjeevi garu someday!"

In conclusion, Anjali expressed her gratitude for being part of *Game Changer*. She is hopeful that the film will be well-received by audiences and looks forward to its release on January 10.



TRAGEDY STRIKES

Two fans die in bike accident after Ram Charan's *Game Changer* event

Tragedy struck again in the Telugu film industry when two young fans, Aarava Manikanta (23) and Thokada Charan (22), lost their lives in a bike accident after attending the pre-release event of Ram Charan's upcoming film *Game Changer* in Rajahmundry. The event was attended by Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and actor Pawan Kalyan, who had emphasised the importance of safety during the event.

The two fans, hailing from Kakinada district's Gaigolupadu, were riding a bike when a van hit them near Vadisaleru, resulting in their tragic deaths. Ram Charan was deeply saddened by the incident and expressed his condolences, sending his team to support the grieving families and announcing financial aid of Rs 5 lakhs each to both families.

Pawan Kalyan had appealed to the fans to prioritise safety dur-

ing the event, but unfortunately, this incident occurred. Ram Charan shared his grief, saying, "We always pray that our fans who attend the event go back home safely.. This is a very unfortunate incident. I can understand the pain of the grieving families. I am going through the same pain. My heartfelt condolences to them."

Producer Dil Raju also announced financial aid of Rs 5 lakhs each to the two families and pledged to support them in any way possible. This incident brings back memories of the Sandhya Theatre



stampede in Hyderabad, where a woman lost her life and a child was severely injured. The film industry and fans are still reeling from these tragic events.

"Vishal's shivering video sparks health concerns, diagnosed with viral fever"



Sundar C's wife, actor and politician Khushbu, with whom he shared a warm hug and conversation. Following the event, Vishal's team released a medical report stating that the actor is suffering from viral fever and has been advised to take bed rest. The report, issued on the letterhead of Apollo Medical Centre, Apollo Hospitals, attributed Vishal's attendance at the event to his commitment to promoting the film, which has faced a decade-long delay due to financial issues and is now slated for release during Sankranti. As per a source, "The film's release was delayed by a decade due to some financial issues. Now, it is being released for this Sankranti and Vishal wanted to promote it on his part, so he came to this event, though he is suffering from fever." Here's wishing Vishal a speedy recovery in the coming days.



Kingston to hit the screens globally in March

Indian cinema is set to score big with *Kingston*—the country's first sea-horror action-adventure thriller! The film is billed as a grand pan-India trilogy; it promises to deliver an immersive cinematic experience with breathtaking visuals like never before. The first look of this ambitious project, produced, fronted, and scored by the multi-talented GV Prakash Kumar, has just been unveiled.

The film is slated for a theatrical release on March 7, 2025, in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu and is poised to take the audiences into a completely new world that is thrilling.

Blending spine-chilling horror with high-octane action set against the mysterious

depths of the ocean, *Kingston* promises to be an edge-of-the-seat spectacle. The film directed by Kamal Kumar Prakash features Divya Bharathi and is also produced by Zee Studios along with GV Prakash's Parallel Pictures Universe. *Kingston* is an epic three-part saga.

The film is primed to be a landmark in Indian genre cinema, with a mix of myth, mystery and action that positions it as a project that can appeal to both mass and class audiences.

Kajal Aggarwal brings divine charm as Parvathi Devi

The makers of Vishnu Manchu's upcoming film *Kannappa* have unveiled Kajal Aggarwal's look as Goddess Parvathi. This Monday's reveal marks the latest update from the film and it showcases Kajal in a mythological role for the first time. As Parvathi Devi, the powerful mother who rules over the three worlds, she embodies the Trishakti - the divine force that protects her devoted followers. In the sacred temple of Sri Kalahasti, Parvathi Devi is the holy presence of Gnana Prasunambika, symbolising wisdom and grace. The film's makers describe Kajal Aggarwal as bringing an enchanting aura to the role, exuding divine charm. Her character plays a pivotal role in the narrative of this grand, larger-than-life story inspired by true events. *Kannappa* boasts an impressive ensemble cast, including Mohan Babu, Prabhas, Akshay Kumar, Mohanlal and Sarath Kumar, among others. Directed by Mukesh Kumar Singh, the film is set to hit the screens on April 25, 2025.

Tamil and Telugu actor Vishal recently made an appearance at a promotional event for his upcoming film, *Madha Gaja Raja*, directed by Sundar C and co-starring Anjali and Varalakshmi Sarath Kumar. However, his appearance raised concerns about his health as he struggled to hold the microphone due to shivering and trembling hands. A video of the event has gone viral on the internet and social media, prompting fans to post "Get well soon Vishal" messages.

Vishal's appearance also sparked worries among his fans and well-wishers. Despite his frail condition, he interacted with attendees, including director

Harbhajan Singh urges BCCI to end 'superstar culture' in team

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India spinner Harbhajan Singh has urged the BCCI to end the "superstar culture" in the team and pick players for future assignments solely on the basis of performance and not on reputation. Harbhajan's stinging remarks came after India's 1-3 Test series defeat to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time in a decade. "There is a superstar culture which has developed. We don't need superstars, we need performers. If the team has them (performers), it will move forward. Whoever wants to become a superstar should stay at home and play cricket there," the spin great said on his YouTube channel. "There is a tour of England coming up. Now everyone has started talking about what will happen in England, who will go, who will not go. For me, it is a simple matter. Only players who are performing should go. You

can't keep picking players on their reputation. "If you do that, then you should take Kapil Dev sir and Anil bhai also. Here, the BCCI and the selectors will have to be firm and act tough. I don't think that the superstar attitude is taking the team forward." Captain Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli were woefully out of form during the just-concluded Test series against Australia. The series defeat resulted in the team losing out on qualifying for the World Test Championship final. Kohli could manage only 190 runs in his nine innings in the series Down Under, repeatedly offering edges to the slip cordon or keeper. Harbhajan said the struggling players should play some form of cricket and prove themselves if they wish to be picked for the England Test tour. "It should be based on performance only, whether it is Virat, Rohit or anyone. No player is bigger than the game, even if he



thinks in his mind that he is a big superstar. If we have to take Indian cricket forward, we have to ask tough questions. "I am not saying that you should drop them but if you take them on tour, they (struggling players) should play some form of cricket whether county cricket or something before England tour. "This will be a challenge for the selectors, but it's time for selectors to wake up and take some action. "I don't say that any player be dropped, and unnecessarily start chopping and dropping but at least there should be a procedure as to who will get how many chances and for how long, because in India there is a long queue of talents." He also spoke about Kohli's struggles in the past few years. "Virat has played 11 Tests in 2024 and scored 440 runs. The average is 23.15, with one hundred and one fifty. Such an average may be unheard of because he is a very big name. This stat is obviously very low. When I saw it, it was a shocking stat for me too.

"If you give a youngster an opportunity, I feel he will also be able to do this much (match the stats of Kohli)." Harbhajan said India would have lost the series 0-5 or 0-4 if Jasprit Bumrah was not part of the team. "He was used like you squeezed juice from sugarcane. It was like Travis Head has come, give the ball to Bumrah, Marnus has come, give the ball to Bumrah, Steve Smith has come, give the ball to Bumrah. "How many overs will Bumrah bowl? He has been reduced to such a condition that he was not available at the end. If he was there, Australia may have won the fifth Test but they would have lost eight wickets, it would have been tough for them. "You broke his back and the management should have decided on how many overs he should be given." Harbhajan also criticised the team selection for the fifth Test in Sydney which India lost by six wickets.



Toughest SCG pitch, I got chainsawed: Smith on missing 10,000 Test runs milestone

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Veteran Australian batter Steve Smith has said he had never encountered a wicket like the one at the SCG, after falling one run short of reaching 10,000 career runs in the five-match Test series against India for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. In Australia's first innings of the fifth Test here, Smith edged a delivery to slip just five runs shy of the landmark. In the second innings, Prasidh Krishna's delivery rose sharply from short of a length and Smith advanced down the pitch, only to fend it into the gully to be dismissed on 9999 Test runs. "I got chainsawed didn't I! Pretty nasty delivery actually; back of a length, I thought 'oh, there's one to punch through point' and it just took off," the former Australian captain told 'Triple M' after their six-wicket win on Sunday that gave them the trophy after a decade. "It wasn't to be (reaching 10k Test runs), but that's alright we got the result we were after. "Absolutely (toughest SCG pitch I've played on). By a mile. It was two-paced, up and down, seaming all over the place, swinging. I've never played on a wicket like that at the SCG before. It was incredibly difficult to bat. Smith made 33 in the first innings and 4 in the second edged, failing to sign off on a high after notching two

hundreds in the series. "I love the game, it's been a fun series, India are an unbelievable team. There's been some great challenges, Bumrah in particular. It's been great fun and fortunate to get the result in the end," the 35-year-old added. Left-arm quick Mitchell Starc highlighted that everyone had "worked our backsides off" to get to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy series, emphasising the collective effort of the squad, support staff, and families for the successful result. "Five Test matches against India, they're always gruelling, particularly four and five always close together," Starc told Fox Cricket. "We've all worked our backsides off to get to this series, we knew it was a big one on the calendar and I think that's just reward for all the hard work from the support staff, the families to the extended squad and everyone that's taken part. It's a fantastic result, today caps it off. "I like staying out of the scanner but sometimes I'm made to get in there. It's always 'if I can make it worse, what's worse look like?' and if not, then kick on. I always want to be a part of it, if I can contribute - I don't want to leave the guys a man short so that's always a question - but as soon as I knew I wouldn't leave them short I was ready to go."

ICC, BCCI, CA, ECB explore possibility of two-tier Test system

PTI ■ SYDNEY/NEW DELHI

The ICC in collaboration with cricket boards of India, Australia and England is exploring the possibility of a two-tier Test system to facilitate more series between big three nations. The Age reported that Jay Shah, the new ICC chairman, is set to meet Cricket Australia chair Mike Baird and his England counterpart Richard Thompson later this month to discuss the finer points. "Any plan for a move to two divisions in Test cricket would kick in after the end of the current Future Tours Program in 2027," the Age reported quoting its sources. The BCCI is currently gearing up for its Special General Meeting on January 12 in Mumbai where interim secretary Devajit Saikia is expected to get a full-time role. Saikia was appointed in



the interim role after Shah vacated his post last month to take over as ICC chairman. A BCCI official indicated that the discussion floated around the ICC corridors in 2016, the first-time when a two-tier Test system was seriously considered. "We don't have any news of any such move as yet. Currently, preparations are being made for SGM and the recent tour to Australia too needs to be discussed. "There was such a move sometime back, but we haven't heard anything since," a BCCI source told PTI. The BCCI and cricket bodies of Zimbabwe and Bangladesh opposed the move, citing the possibility of decreasing revenue.

They had also argued that smaller nations would miss out on the opportunity of playing against top teams if such a system comes into existence. However, nine years down the road the modalities have changed and even some of the reputed experts such as former Indian skipper Ravi Shastri are supporting the division. "I've been a firm believer in that if you want Test cricket to survive and be alive and thriving, I think that's the way to go. "The top teams play against each other more often, so there is a contest; you want contests," Shastri told SEN during the recent fifth Test between India and Australia. Even some of the top players such as England Test skipper Ben Stokes had criticised the current model of World Test Championship.



Speechless: Beau Webster gushes after a 'dream debut' in Sydney against India

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian all-rounder Beau Webster is feeling "speechless" after his impressive debut against India during the fifth Test here, which the hosts won by six wickets to reclaim the Border-Gavaskar Trophy after a decade. Webster made 57 and unbeaten 37 in the two innings of the Sydney Test, important contributions in the match's context, besides taking the wicket of Shubman Gill in India's second innings. "I'm a bit speechless, honestly. If you told me a week ago that all this would happen in the last few days, I wouldn't have believed you," Webster told cricket.com.au. "It's been a dream debut and to get the win there inside three days is a hell of a feeling. I'm sure the boys will celebrate accordingly," he added. The Tasmanian had a nice ending to his debut Test when he smashed spinner Washington Sundar for a boundary down the ground to collect the winning runs. The 31-year-old said he would cherish that moment forever. "When I hit that cut-shot boundary, I saw we only needed four (to win) and I thought, 'It's got to be one of these two balls - how many chances are you going to get to hit a boundary for the winning runs for your country?' "I was going to go no matter

where that ball was, that last one, and managed to make connection. I looked straight at 'Heady' (batting partner Travis Head) and he was up and about," he noted. "It was a great moment, probably one I'll never forget. That's something that might never happen again - especially a boundary on the fifth Test of a decider. It doesn't get much better than that," he added. Webster replaced an out of form Mitchell Marsh in the Australia eleven for the New Year Test, and the all-rounder admitted that initially he felt a bit "awkward." "It was a bit of an awkward moment. I sort of came to training at the last minute, and I didn't think that they'd change the team. I hadn't heard anything right up until the training (the day) before the game, and I just expected it to be the same XI. "Then we got to the ground and asked Mitch what he was doing, and he said, 'I'm waiting to see if I'm playing.' That hit me by surprise a little bit and then in the next hour or so, we were fumbling around until I went back in the change rooms. "He (Marsh) had a big grin on his face and just said, 'You're in mate'. And he couldn't have been happier. He's been unbelievable this week," Webster said, explaining the situation surrounding his entry into the Australian team.

Australia's tactics to break down Rohit were successful, says Kerry O'Keeffe

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma wilted under the traditional Australian tactic of mentally breaking down the opposition captains during the just-concluded Border-Gavaskar Trophy, said former spinner Kerry O'Keeffe. India lost the five-match series 1-3 and Rohit made just 31 runs from three Tests at an average of 6.20. "They couldn't bring down (Jasprit) Bumrah. He was too good. But then the baton was passed to Rohit Sharma and they brought him down straight away, to the extent that he withdrew from the final Test," O'Keeffe told Fox Sports. "So that's a tactic they seem to want to do if they can, if they can break the skipper and make him anonymous, it empowers them," he added. It may be recalled that former



Australian pacer Glenn McGrath used to make pre-series predictions as how many times he will dismiss the opposition captain and it often worked against the likes of England skipper Michael Atherton. Bumrah led India in the first Test at Perth in the absence of Rohit, who stayed back in India for the birth of his second child. India won the match by 295

runs. The 37-year-old Rohit took over from Bumrah in the second Test in Adelaide, but his personal form and the team's fortunes went south from that point. Eventually, Rohit "opted out" of the fifth and final Test Sydney with Bumrah returning to guide the side. The 75-year-old further validated his point saying the Aussies could not dominate

India's bench strength: Plenty of batting options; bowling talent sparse

PTI ■ SYDNEY

The nightmarish batting performance is deservedly under the scanner after India's meek surrender in the Border-Gavaskar series but a closer look at the team's bench strength would reveal that bowling resources are a bigger concern for the side as it navigates a difficult transition. Skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli's Test future hangs in balance after their poor returns with the bat but the national selection committee has the reserves to ensure that the order remains a solid one even if the two giants were to be phased out. However, bowling, especially pace, is a different story. The cupboard in the fast bowling department is bare and it will take some time to prepare another crack line-up that can match up to the aura of Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Ishant Sharma. The available names are doing their best but is that enough for the team or for Bumrah, whose workload became a massive concern during the just-

concluded series? The spearhead was forced to watch from the dressing room during the last innings of the decisive fifth and final Test that India lost by six wickets as back spasms prevented him from bowling. Mohammed Siraj, after 36 Tests, hasn't developed into a game-changer yet and Prasidh Krishna bowls too many loose balls. There is the duo of Akash Deep and Mukesh Kumar, who are skilful, but they are not really tested at the highest level. In the Ranji circuit, there aren't too many exciting fast bowling options that the selectors can explore as of now. The main problem seems to be a dearth of left-arm seamers as Arshdeep Singh hasn't actually set the stage on fire and Yash Dayal doesn't look a finished product. But when it comes to batting there is some real talent available although the Ajit Agarkar-led selection committee will not decide anything till the end of the Ranji Trophy season. If the panel decides to move away from Rohit and Kohli or the two



announce retirements, there are at least half a dozen name ready to stake a claim for the two slots that will open up. One of the prime contenders could be B Sai Sudharsan of Tamil Nadu.

The elegant left-hander impressed in his appearance for India A against Australia A in Mackay but then he had a sports hernia operation and is undergoing rehabilitation. As and when Sudharsan is ready

and if there are at least a couple of slots, he should be in contention provided he is in form and has the requisite fitness levels. In the current set-up, there is Devdutt Padikkal, another stylish and sinewy left-hander, who has

played a couple of Tests. Abhimanyu Easwaran has been around the side for three years now but there is a belief in the Indian cricketing circle that he is not cut out for bigger challenges in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia). A proof of it the recent series, where he travelled with the squad but wasn't even remotely in contention for a playing XI slot in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. For Sarfaraz Khan, his technique against real quick bowling was always doubtful but the manner in which he got out in Pune and Mumbai in the home Tests against New Zealand has made the current team management wary. In most of the venues, Sarfaraz didn't even come out to bat during the customary net sessions, an indication that he is quite low in the pecking order. There is every chance that he might not make it to squad for the upcoming limited-overs series against England. There are also three seasoned players who might get a second wind if the second half of Ranji Trophy goes well for them.

They are Chennai Super Kings skipper Rituraj Gaikwad, who is yet to make his debut, three-Test-old Rajat Patidar and Mumbai's very own Shreyas Iyer. Iyer's problem has been the short ball, while Patidar flattered to deceive against England at home last year. Gaikwad failed in two India A games Down Under but his pedigree is unquestionable. It is understood that the selection committee won't be looking at just the volume of runs or wickets but would also focus on impactful performances. A century on a Lahli green top or a five-wicket haul on a Rajkot better would carry more weight than performances in favourable conditions. How a young bowler is coming back with the old ball for his third or fourth spell or how a batter is dealing with spinners on rank turners will also hold more credence. But any decision on who would be elevated to the next level will be taken only after the end of the domestic season in February. India's next red-ball assignment is the tour of England in June.