

Seoul bombs are starting to explode. The Electricity Commission report has arrived, the government is taking legal opinion and the Kaleswaram Commission's inquiry is going on. The phone tapping case is not over yet. Former Minister T Harish Rao would be there in all cases of former Chief Minister KCR. The Congress Government and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy have no intention to target the KCR family

-Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister



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Will bring fugitives holed abroad, asserts
Amit Shah

FIGHT
 BEYOND KICKBOXING RING

Are Allu Arjun & Jr NTR being sidelined by their FAMILIES?

DON'T MISS...
 23 students of Gurukul School take ill
 Students affiliated to various organisations staged a protest after 23 students of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule BC Gurukul at Sharmanagar here took ill due to suspected food poisoning at midnight on Monday. The students experienced vomiting and diarrhoea after having dinner at their hostel. The hostel staff ferried the students to the hospital at midnight on Monday after they complained of stomach ache, vomiting and ...

Deadly quake jolts Tibet, kills 126 people

PNS ■ BEIJING
 A 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck near one of Tibet's holiest cities on Tuesday, killing at least 126 people and injuring 188 others with tremors also shaking buildings and forcing people to run to the streets in neighbouring Nepal. According to regional disaster relief headquarters, the quake jolted Dingri County in Xigaze in Tibet Autonomous Region in China at 9:05 am Tuesday (Beijing Time). The US Geological Service, however, put the quake's magnitude at 7.1. At least 126 people have been confirmed

Tremors felt in Nepal
 dead and 188 others injured, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Chinese President Xi Jinping has ordered all-out rescue efforts to carry out relief and rescue operations in the affected areas. Xi ordered utmost efforts to treat the injured and urged efforts to prevent secondary disasters, properly resettle affected residents, and handle the aftermath work effectively. Following the quake, China Earthquake Administration launched a level-II

emergency service response and sent a work team to the site to assist with disaster relief efforts. Xizang Autonomous Region also issued a level-II emergency response to the quake. Some 22,000 disaster relief items, including cotton tents, cotton coats, quilts and folding beds, together with special relief materials for high-altitude and frigid areas, have been dispatched by central authorities to the quake-hit area. Over 1,500 local firefighters and rescue workers have also been dispatched to the ground. Xigaze also known as Shigaste is close to the border with India. **Continued on Page 2**



'Will detoxify myself, go to Himalayas'
 Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on Tuesday revealed his intention to "detoxify" himself and spend several months in solitude in the Himalayas post his retirement next month. Responding to a question while addressing a presser to announce the Delhi Assembly elections, he shared his post-retirement plans with an introspective touch. "I will detoxify myself for the ..."

Govt ready for high-voltage legal battle

NAVEENA GHANATE
 naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD
 The Telangana Government has intensified its focus on the Formula E Race case and is gearing up to engage some of the country's reputed legal minds. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is reportedly keen on bringing former Attorney General Mukul Rohatgi, a senior advocate, on board to strengthen the government's case. Sources said that while Mukul Rohatgi is likely to defend the state, the Congress's Rajya Sabha MP from Telangana Abhishek Manu Singhvi, a prominent advocate, was considered initially. As an alternative, the possibility of roping in Harish Salve is also being explored. After the Telangana High Court dismissed KTR's quash petition in the Formula E Race case, the next expected move of KT Rama Rao, a key figure in the controversy, is to approach the Supreme Court. However, even before KTR could secure the judgement copy, the government took pre-emptive action by filing a caveat in the Supreme Court. This ensures that the court would hear

Setback to KTR in Formula E case
 HC refuses to quash FIR, KTR approaches SC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The arrest of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao seems imminent as the Telangana High Court on Tuesday refused to quash the FIR against him in connection with the Formula E Race case, removing the protection against arrest given to him. With this, KTR has knocked on the doors of the Supreme Court. "As per my rights given

by Dr BR Ambedkar's Constitution, I am approaching the Supreme Court. The hearing might be held in a day or two or a week." Anticipating that KTR will approach the Supreme Court, the Telangana Government filed a caveat in the Supreme Court stating that whenever the former approaches the court, the arguments of the state also must be heard. KTR had been summoned by the ACB to appear for questioning. However, he filed a

petition in the High Court to allow his lawyers to appear along with him. It may be mentioned here that on December 31, the HC had reserved orders on the petition filed by KTR after hearing the arguments made by the state government as well as the defence in the case registered by the ACB. The court had earlier barred ACB from arresting KTR, the son of the



KCR to stay away in KTR's issue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 In a move reminiscent of his approach to the Delhi liquor scam involving his daughter Kalvakuntla Kavitha, former Chief Minister KCR is reportedly staying away from the political battles surrounding the Formula E Race controversy involving his son, KT Rama Rao. While KCR is believed to be guiding KTR from behind the scenes, the latter has been advised to confront the issue head-on. Sources indicate that KCR, known for his strategic political moves, has conveyed to KTR the importance of handling the matter independently on his own. "Face it man to man," KCR is said to have conveyed that his approach remains the same for his children and any deviation would only expose his patriarchal prejudice and his ingrained bias between his daughter and son. However, political analysts see it as a clear strategy to shield KCR from direct involvement while projecting KTR as a leader capable of dealing with challenges on his own. KTR is already gearing up for a legal showdown and has displayed confidence in doing that. The Formula E Race controversy, which has drawn political and public attention, appears to be another test of KTR's political and administrative acumen.

e-Shram portal now in 22 languages
 Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday launched multilingual functionality on the e-Shram portal to provide seamless access to various government schemes for unorganised workers. In line with the vision of making eShram a 'One-Stop-Solution', this portal will now be available in all 22 Scheduled Languages, a labour ministry statement said. The event to launch multilingual functionality was attended by the ...

'Seoul bombs starting to explode'

- BRS must explain why electoral bonds were given to Cong: Ponguleti
- Says govt ordered probes after BRS leaders' request
- Asserts Harish will be there in all cases KCR faces

KOLISHETTY VENKATESHWARLU
 venkat.k.warlu@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD
 Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said the then ruling BRS party should explain why electoral bonds were given to the Congress. Apart from electoral bonds, there are many other things that should come out. It should be clear how much money went to foreign companies and to whose account, he said. "Seoul bombs are starting to explode. The Electricity Commission report has arrived. The government is taking legal advice. The Kaleshwaram



Commission's inquiry is going on. The case of phone tapping is not over yet. After I became a minister, I did not see the former minister of our district. Things are going on whether he is there or not," he said. He said the BRS is the richest party among regional parties and wondered how that much money had come to the BRS. He said that former BRS Minister T. Harish Rao would be there in whatever case KCR is present and made it clear that the Congress government and Chief Minister Revanth Reddy have no intention of targeting the KCR family intentionally. **Continued on Page 2**

TG CJ Alok Aradhe transferred to Bombay HC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 In a significant move, the Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the transfer of Telangana High Court Chief Justice Alok Aradhe to the Bombay High Court. The decision was taken during the Collegium's meeting held on January 7, 2025. Justice Alok Aradhe, who has served as the Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court, is among two Chief Justices proposed for transfer. Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya, the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, has been recommended for transfer to the Delhi High Court. This reshuffle is part of the Collegium's efforts to ensure efficient judicial administration and balanced representation across High Courts in India. Justice Aradhe's tenure in Telangana was marked by several key judgments and administrative reforms and his transfer to Bombay High Court signals continuity in his judicial contributions.

Baseless, politically motivated: KTR
 The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) conducted searches at Greenko's office in Madhapur and its subsidiary, Ace Next Gen, and Ace Urban Developers at Machilipatnam, on Tuesday in connection with the investigation into the Formula E Race case. The searches focused on alleged financial irregularities involving Greenko subsidiaries and electoral bonds linked to the case.

Complete DPRs by March: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has directed officials to complete the Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) of Hyderabad's proposed Metro corridors by March end. Addressing a review meeting held on Tuesday at his residence, he emphasized that the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport-Future City (40 km), JBS-Shamirpet (22 km) and Paradise-Medchal (23 km) Metro lines should secure Central approval and be ready for inviting tenders by April-end. Revanth asked officials to speed up land acquisition for these Metro routes and ensure that the alignment plans account for future needs. In particular, he highlighted the need for comprehensive field assessments during the alignment process. **Continued on Page 2**

KALESHWARAM PROBE
 Centre's lukewarm approach raises eyebrows

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The contradiction in the approach of Central agencies in probing the alleged Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project scam when compared to the Formula E Race controversy has sparked speculations. While the Justice Pinaki Chandra Ghose Commission has intensified its investigation into the alleged financial irregularities in the Kaleshwaram Project, the absence of active Central involvement has led to speculation about the political dynamics affecting the case. The Centre's perceived disinterest to raise questions about the BJP's priorities in Telangana, especially when juxtaposed with its aggressive stance on other issues like the Formula E Race case. It may be mentioned here that the BJP's top honchos like Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and BJP chief JP Nadda had said that Kaleshwaram had become the ATM



Tummala: Speed up Rythu Bharosa procedures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao directed officials to speed up procedures regarding the Rythu Bharosa scheme which the government is going to implement from January 26. As decided in the Cabinet meeting, Rythu Bharosa would be applied to arable lands from this Yasangi and technology would be used to identify uncultivable lands. Tummala spoke to the representatives of technology companies and told them about the information they have to submit regarding the classification of non-cultivable land mandal-wise and village-wise with survey numbers. The government also informed that it has decided to use the services of the Revenue and Agriculture Departments to survey villages and detect such lands.

BJP MP'S COMMENTS ON PRIYANKA
 Congress activists attack TG BJP office

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Tension gripped the State BJP office when Youth Congress activists tried to lay a siege on it and BJP activists tried to prevent the Congress activists' attempt. Youth Congress activists attacked the BJP office with stones resulting in one BJP activist suffering a head injury. **Continued on Page 2**



Attack shocking: BJP

"What is the state government doing when Congress activists take the law into their hands and attack the State BJP office with stones," Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Bandi Sanjay Kumar asked. In a statement, Sanjay said the BJP would not remain silent when 10 Congress workers attack its office. He warned that if BJP workers want not even the foundations of Gandhi Bhavan or other Congress offices will remain. Does the Congress want to encourage stone-pelting? Don't they know what would happen if the stones hit children or elders? **Continued on Page 2**

Delhi to vote on February 5, counting on 8th: CEC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 Polling for all 70 assembly seats in Delhi will be held on February 5 and the votes counted on February 8, Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar announced on Tuesday. Bypolls to two assembly constituencies -- Milkipur in Uttar Pradesh and Erode in Tamil Nadu -- will also be held according to the same schedule while that in two constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir -- Budgam and Nagrota -- will be held later due to the current snowy conditions. The last date to file nominations is January 17 and the scrutiny of nominations will be done by January 18. Candidates will be able to with- draw their nominations till January 20. "It is a single-phase election... We have deliberately kept polling on a Wednesday so more people come out to vote... like we did in Maharashtra. The entire election process will be completed by February 10," Kumar said at a press conference. Of the 70 seats in Delhi, 58 are general and 12 reserved. According to the electoral roll, Delhi has 1.55 crore voters -- 83.49 lakh men, 71.74 lakh women and 1,261 transgender persons. There are 25.89 lakh young voters, 2,08 lakh first-time voters, and 830 above the age of 100, Kumar said. More than 13,000 polling stations will be set up in Delhi, he said.

Chandrababu has to go along with his NDA partners

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu is facing a peculiar situation regarding the path he has to take to ensure his survival. He may have to go along with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) as he is facing a strong opposition although it is a bit weak at present.

Naidu is naturally capable of assessing the political situation from time to time, particularly when it turns against his party's interests. But now he is facing a peculiar situation as he has to simultaneously make his son who is a Cabinet colleague capable with leadership qualities and also take along the administration smoothly.

It may not be easy to achieve this considering the condition of the ruling alliance. Any

further development can take place in AP only as per the directions of the NDA's national leadership irrespective of the personal capabilities of Naidu.

The Chief Minister is facing challenges in implementing his Super Six welfare schemes that gave the NDA a grand victory. The partners of the TDP like the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP also felt happy over the outcome of the 2024 elections and have confidence in their combined strength for ruling the State. Although the TDP won enough seats to form a government on its own, it deliberately endorsed the alliance for securing a landslide. Initially, the TDP leadership thought that its cadres were moved by the grand victory of the

The Chief Minister is facing challenges in implementing his Super Six welfare schemes that gave the NDA a grand victory. The partners of the TDP like the Jana Sena Party (JSP) and the BJP also felt happy over the outcome of the 2024 elections and have confidence in their combined strength for ruling the State

alliance which they considered as purely their party's triumph despite the presence of other partners in the alliance. This situation can be compared with that of the post-poll scenario in 2014.

Local body polls were held a year before the general elections in 2013. The TDP swept the polls much before the alliance materialised to fight the general elections. There



was almost the same poll combination then. The TDP and the BJP had an alliance and the unconditional support of JSP president Pawan Kalyan. He decided not to contest to prevent a split in the vote bank of the alliance. Although the TDP and the BJP won with the support of the JSP, TDP cadres started saying that the success was due to their strength as there was no alliance with the

administration. The government is in such an embarrassing situation that it couldn't pay the salaries of its employees in time. The TDP leadership used to blame the admin headed by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for its inability to pay salaries to government employees on the first day of every month. But the government headed by Naidu is also facing the same situation.

After the implementation of the Super Six schemes, it may become an uphill task for the government to effectively deal with the situation.

Chief Minister Naidu appears to be a changed man compared to his 2014-19 stint. He thought that his ideas regarding the construction of the new capital Amaravati for residual Andhra Pradesh could be executed during his next term. He had drawn up plans

by holding meetings with consultants regarding the construction of Amaravati. Naidu is now focused on finishing at least 60% of the construction of the capital city in the next three years.

If Amaravati is 60 per cent complete, then the next government has to continue with it. It can't go for three capitals despite its strong aversion towards the TDP. Naidu knows that it is not easy to retain power even if he rules effectively. The political history of United AP proves the fact that mainline political parties don't have a chance to continue ruling. The Congress suffered a lot at the hands of the TDP with two consecutive defeats in 1994 and 1999. NTR headed the TDP in 1994 and CBN steered the organisation. The TDP suffered the same humiliating defeat in

2004 and 2009 at the hands of Congress's Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy. No party has won the people's mandate a second time in the residual State of AP as the TDP lost in 2019 and the YSRCP lost in 2024.

Meanwhile, the TDP couldn't focus on political matters. Although it is playing the role of big brother in the alliance, it has to survive politically. If the situation turns favourable for the YSRCP, then that would be a loss for the TDP. Although it is not recognised as the opposition in the Assembly, the YSRCP has a strong base across the State.

The TDP thinks that there is a need to keep itself politically active to ensure survival in politics. Considering all these limitations, Naidu will have to go with the NDA partners to ensure his party's future.

Govt to strengthen Nagarjuna Sagar, expand its ayacut: Uttam

Officials told to repair NSP and its canals on a war footing

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government is implementing measures to strengthen the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam and expand its ayacut, Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said.

He made the announcement during a review meeting on the Nagarjuna Sagar project held at Jala Soudha on Tuesday.

Uttam asked officials to prioritise the repair of the NSP and its canal network. He also urged the Nalgonda Collector to speed up land acquisition for irrigation projects.

Stressing the importance of timely completion, he said that land acquisition must not hin-



Minister Uttam @ Jalasoudha

der project progress and should be treated as top priority.

Uttam also stressed that there are approximately 334 lift irrigation schemes, either fully operational or partially functional, with a combined ayacut of 4,69,138 acres. He directed officials to prioritise the restoration of all these projects to their full

capacity, with focus on small lift irrigation schemes in fund allocation and implementation.

He emphasised that while major irrigation schemes require substantial capital investment and recurring costs, smaller schemes need only comparatively lower funds and maintenance costs and offer a

better cost-benefit ratio.

He stressed that small irrigation schemes are more effective in serving farmers and instructed officials to ensure they are fully functional by prioritising repairs and related works to achieve the ayacut of 4,69,138 acres. He directed officials to speed up works on the Nellikal Lift Irrigation Scheme, which sources water from the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir. The scheme, estimated to cost Rs 664.80 crore, aims to provide irrigation to approximately 24,624 acres.

Uttam asked officials to divide the project into two phases and ensure the completion of Phase-I to irrigate 7,600 acres by the Kharif season.

Mahesh condemns Youth Congress attack on BJP office

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Expressing anger at some Youth Congress activists attacking the State BJP office, TPC chief B. Mahesh Kumar Goud condemned the attitude of BJP leaders and also decided to warn Youth Congress leaders.

In a statement, he said that protests should be held in a peaceful, democratic manner. "No doubt the comments of BJP leader Ramesh Bidhuri are condemnable. But it is not proper for Youth Congress activists to attack another party's office," he said.

He said that it is not proper for BJP leaders to make offensive comments. "I am condemning the attitude of BJP leaders. Violence is not right in a democracy, BJP leaders should cooperate in maintaining law and order," he added.

KTR trying to escape cases: Adi

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the High Court verdict was a slap on the face of BRS Working President KT Rama Rao, Government Whip Adi Srinivas said that KTR is trying to escape from cases regarding his corruption and other illegal activities.

He said that the BRS is afraid that KTR may have to go to jail. Meanwhile, BRS MLA T. Harish Rao is trying to divert public attention from the BRS leaders' corruption and illegal activities.

Srinivas asked Harish, who had said that the cases against KTR were just vengeful acts, to explain the nature of the 100-plus cases filed against Revanth when the BRS was in power.

He said that KTR was afraid of ACB's interrogation and did not go as he had no guts to face the ACB's questions. "He is now gripped by the fear of jail. He should understand that the law will take its own course."

Baseless, politically motivated: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) has strongly refuted the corruption allegations levelled against him, describing them as baseless and politically motivated.

Speaking to the press, KTR expressed confidence in the judiciary and criticized opposition parties for attempting to divert public attention through "false propaganda."

"This Formula E Race case against me is politically driven and lacks substance. Despite knowing the baseless nature of the accusations, I appeared for the ACB inquiry. I will fight these cases legally and constitutionally," KTR said.

KTR confirmed his commitment to cooperate with the investigations, including appearances before the ACB and the ED. "I have nothing to hide and will answer all questions. My integrity is my strength," he asserted.

"As an Indian citizen who respects the Constitution and the law, I will use every right available to me to fight the baseless, politically motivated cases filed by Revanth," said KTR. He strongly refuted the accusations and explained his stance at a press conference.

"I had said that I would appear for the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) inquiry with my lawyer. However, despite waiting for half an hour, the ACB officials hesitated to question me," he said.

KTR criticized the Congress for celebrating a mere dismissal of a quash petition in the High Court. "The High Court only dismissed the quash petition, yet Congress leaders are rejoicing as if I've been sentenced or proven guilty of a crime. We will approach the Supreme Court, and I am confident of a fair trial there. I will continue my legal fight."

TG SUBMITS PLAN TO CENTRE

Retrofitting of high security registration plates to vehicles

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Telangana Minister for Transport and BC Welfare, Ponnampalabharathi, participated in the 42nd Transport Development Council meeting, chaired by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, in New Delhi on Tuesday. The meeting, held at Bharat Mandap, focused on advancing road safety, infrastructure, and transport innovation across the states.

Minister Prabhakar emphasised Telangana's progress in

transport modernisation, beginning with the comprehensive implementation of High-Security Registration Plates (HSRPs) for all registered vehicles.

The State has submitted an operational plan to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to retrofit HSRPs on vehicles registered before April 1, 2019, ensuring compliance with the latest safety norms. Telangana's transport department, with the support of the SIAM portal, is leading the way in bringing older vehicles into the safety net.

Centre's lukewarm...

Continued from page 1

examination on January 23 and 24, respectively. Political analysts indicate that Eatala Rajender's current status as a BJP MP appears to have tempered the Centre's interest in the probe. As Eatala was a key figure during the

Kaleshwaram's Project's execution as Finance minister in the BRS government, political observers think that the BJP may be reluctant to pursue the case as he is now aligned with the party.

The commission of inquiry, however, has shown no signs of leniency. Justice Ghose is set to arrive in Hyderabad on January 17 and will stay

for a month to oversee the inquiry. A review meeting with state officials is scheduled for January 18, followed by cross-examinations of officials on January 20 and 21. The commission is also expected to summon KCR, emphasizing its determination to uncover irregularities.

The project's flaws, including the sinking of the Medigadda Barrage,

have already led to action against the engineers involved. Executive Engineer Tirupati Rao and SE Ramana Reddy, who certified the completion of the barrage despite its construction deficiencies, are facing scrutiny. After instructions from the commission, the Irrigation Department has issued orders for disciplinary action against these officials.

Deadly quake...

Continued from page 1

Shigatse is considered one of the holiest cities of Tibet. It is the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, a key figure of Tibetan Buddhism whose spiritual authority is second only to the Dalai Lama.

The epicentre was located in Tsogo Township of Dingri County, which has a population of approximately 6,900 people within a 20-km radius. There are 27 villages within this area.

Official data show Dingri County has a population of over 61,000 people.

The epicentre is located 90 km North-East of Lobutse in the Khumbu Himalayan range of North-East Nepal. The quake struck at a depth of 10 km, according to a report issued by the China Earthquake Networks Centre, state-run Xinhua reported.

Congress activists ...

Continued from page 1

In retaliation, the BJP activists wielding sticks chased the Congress activists. The police, who were at the scene, dispersed the activists of both parties. BJP leaders condemned the attack on their office and warned that they will not remain silent if the Congress carries out such attacks again. However, ACP Vikraman Singh stated that they will take action after the probe into the attack on the BJP office. He said that they would take action after examining CCTV footage and that they had deployed the police as per rules.

Tension gripped the area once again when BJP Yuva Morcha activists rushed towards the Gandhi Bhavan after removing the barricades that had been placed near the State BJP office road. Morcha activists tore down the flexes displayed in front of the Gandhi Bhavan.

Complete DPRs...

Continued from page 1

Regarding the Medchal corridor, the CM pointed out the necessity of integrating the Metro line with the existing three flyovers along the NH route to minimize disruptions.

The CM emphasized the development of a state-of-the-art integrated

junction at the Shamirpet-Medchal Metro starting point. This junction, he said, should cater to both current demands and future expansion and should provide advanced facilities to reduce dependence on the city centre.

"Residents should not have to travel to the city for any necessity. The junction must offer all essential facilities," he said and directed officials to prepare a detailed plan.

Revanth also urged the Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL) to take up the construction of radial roads under its purview. He emphasized the swift commencement of elevated corridors to address the city's growing traffic needs, ensuring their design aligns with future infrastructure requirements.

Setback to KTR ...

Continued from page 1

BRS President and former Chief Minister K. Chandrababu Naidu until orders were given and the latest order removed that protection.

After the High Court's verdict, KTR held discussions with BRS leaders and his legal advisors.

During the arguments, Advocate General A. Sudarshan Reddy pointed out that payments were made to the Formula E Organisation without following business rules and getting necessary approvals while the defence advocates argued that there was no criminal intent in the case.

The AG also argued that the case cannot be quashed at the FIR stage when the investigation is going on.

Meanwhile, KTR posted on X, "Mark my words, our comeback will be stronger than this setback. Your lies won't shatter me, Your words won't diminish me, your actions won't obscure my vision and this cacophony won't silence me. Today's obstacles will give way to tomorrow's triumph. The truth will shine brighter with time! I

respect our judiciary, and my unwavering belief is that justice will prevail. My fight for truth continues, and soon the world will also witness it."

The ACB had last week issued a notice to KTR asking him to appear before it on January 6, but as he left the agency's office without appearing before its officials on Monday, he was issued a fresh notice asking him to appear on January 9.

The ACB on December 19 registered a case against KTR over alleged payments, some of it in forex without approvals, to hold the race in 2023 during BRS rule.

The case was registered under the Prevention of Corruption Act and IPC dealing with criminal misappropriation, criminal misconduct, criminal breach of trust and conspiracy that resulted in a loss to the exchequer of about Rs 55 crore.

The FIR named KTR as the prime accused, senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar and retired bureaucrat BLN Reddy as accused number 2 and 3 respectively.

changed. KTR's aggression seems to have increased," he said.

"The government is going to hand over land records to private firms for a forensic audit after Sankranti. The scams that took place in Bhudhaan, Endowment and Assigned lands will come out then. 2,000 acres of government land was alienated in Sircilla. The land scams in Rangareddy, Medak and Medchal districts will be exposed in the forensic audit. The Bhuvihar Bill is with the Governor. The gazette will be released as soon as permission is received from the Governor. It takes two months to frame rules," Ponguleti said.

Govt ready for...

Continued from page 1

KTR has already demonstrated his resolve by enlisting the services of top advocates like Aryaman Sundaram and Siddharth Dave in earlier proceedings. Sources indicate that the BRS is determined to fight this case with all its available resources signalling a no-holds-barred legal strategy.

In fact, from the very beginning, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is learnt to have given clear indications that the government should not make any procedural lapses. He could have directly arrested KTR by seeking the Speaker's permission but took the prosecution sanction route via the Raj Bhavan. Governor Jishnu Dev Varma took legal advice before approving it.

Even in the case of court hearings, the government submitted strong arguments against KTR who was supposed to be the custodian of public funds.

ACB raids ...

Continued from page 1

Searches were conducted in offices in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The employees and officials of Ace Next Gen did not cooperate with the ACB during the raids. The agency had to summon Greenko promoter Anil Kumar Chalamalasetty. In his

presence, raids are going on. The investigation centres around a Rs 41 crore payment made to the BRS through electoral bonds before the Formula E Race deal was finalised. A tripartite agreement concerning the race's organisation was signed on October 25, 2022, involving the Telangana Government, Greenko, and its subsidiary Ace Next Gen.

BJP activists as sons of tigers, he said that they will not sleep till they kick the Congress out of Telangana. Medak MP M. Raghunandan Rao said that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi should take responsibility for the attack on the BJP office. Law and order has totally collapsed in Telangana, he said.

The BJP's Mahabubnagar MP, DK Aruna, said the attack on the BJP office was due to police failure. Despite an Intelligence report, Congress workers who had planned the attack were allowed to reach the gate of the BJP office, she said.

ED: Appear...

Continued from page 1

Sources said that KTR was asked to depose on January 7. However, he sought two weeks to depose and so he was given a fresh date to appear on January 16.

The ED had filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) or FIR recently as per the Prevention of Money Laundering Act taking cognisance of a Telangana Police Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) complaint.

In a setback to KTR, the High Court on Tuesday refused to quash the ACB FIR against him in connection with the Formula E Race issue, removing the protection against arrest given to him.

Senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar and retired bureaucrat and former Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) chief engineer BLN Reddy have been issued a fresh summons to appear on January 9 and January 8 respectively, sources said.

The probe against KTR pertains to payments of around Rs 55 crore, some of it in foreign currency without approvals, to hold a Formula-E Race in Hyderabad during BRS rule in February 2023.

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03



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By Global Events

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
January 8,
(1:30 pm to 10 pm)

Shyam Benegal Tribute Festival

Nishant: Hindi Movie with English subtitles

Venue

Lamakaan
January 8, (7 pm)

Live Musical Orchestra

By Raagamadhuri Music Academy

Venue

Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha
January 8, (2:30 pm)

Live Performance

By Nitha (Band)

Venue

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

Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

Venue

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

Pani puri vendor dies of electric shock

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A pani puri vendor near Malkajgiri police station died of an electric shock. The incident occurred near Malkajgiri police station, where a street pani puri vendor, Anjaneyulu (40) lost his life due to an electric shock. Malkajgiri Inspector B Satyanarayana explained that Anjaneyulu runs a pani puri stall beside the police station. He had closed his stall at around 9:30 pm and returned home. Later, he realised that he had forgotten his mobile phone at the stall and went back to retrieve it. While attempting to pick up his phone, he accidentally came in contact with an exposed electric wire, receiving a fatal electric shock. His son Thatthari Bharath Kumar rushed to the spot after being informed by nearby people. With the help of locals he shifted his father to a private hospital in Malkajgiri, where doctors declared him dead. Malkajgiri Police have registered a case under Section 194 BNSS.

2BHK families seek extension of move-in date due to kids' exams

SAMUEL JOSHUA
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■ HYDERABAD

Family members of those allotted 2BHK houses requested an extension of the move-in date due to the distance from schools and ongoing exams for their children. A total of 450 grievance applications were submitted at Prajavani on Tuesday at the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan.

When asked, Mohammad Shafi from Bazar Ghat shared that he and his family were allotted double-bedroom houses in Kullur, with instructions from municipal authorities to move in by December 31. However, Shafi explained that relocating now would disturb his children's studies, as they are currently attending school in the city and have upcoming exams. He added that shifting to Kullur would force them to travel long distances daily, affecting their exam preparation.

In response to this issue, Shafi filed a grievance at the



Prajavani, requesting an extension until the exams are over. Along with 10 other families facing the same problem, he appealed for more time to move into their new homes. He stated that they are expecting a positive response from the officials.

Meanwhile, Yasmeen Begum from Nampally came for updates on her application for the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) housing scheme. She noted that despite

following all procedures and submitting the required documents, municipal officials informed her there was no record of her application. Yasmeen had filed a written complaint and was asked to resubmit her application, but received no positive response.

As a 60-year-old daily wage worker relying on her handcart for income, Yasmeen said that the repeated application process is causing financial strain. She

also pointed out that she has not received any pension benefits, relief on electricity or gas bills, or any housing assistance despite being eligible. Yasmeen urged the authorities to speed up the process of her PMAY application for sanction of welfare schemes.

According to the officials, 150 applications were received for Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, 119 for Power, 68 for Revenue, 2 for Pravasi and 113 for other departments.

NANDAGIRI HILLS

HYDRAA inspects govt land encroachments

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath conducted a field inspection of Nandagiri Hills, HUDA Enclave and Gurubrahmanagar slum on Tuesday to address alleged complaints of encroachments in the government area for the construction of double bedroom houses.

Residents of Nandagiri Hills and HUDA Enclave reported the illegal occupation of park spaces by encroachers, while residents of Gurubrahmanagar slum raised concerns about land allocated for the construction of 2-bedroom houses being occupied by certain individuals.

Commissioner Ranganath inspected these sites to assess the situation. Speaking to the media, the Commissioner assured that a detailed survey using Differential Global



HYDRAA Commissioner AV Ranganath inspecting the sites in Gurubrahmanagar slum

Positioning System (DGPS) technology would be conducted to determine the boundaries and verify encroachments.

He also promised a thorough investigation after examining evidence provided by the parties concerned.

The Commissioner, along with other officials, spent nearly two hours touring the affected areas, including govern-

ment land and parks. The inspection was also attended by local MLA Danam Nagender and other local leaders, who provided inputs on the situation.

The Commissioner emphasised that all complaints would be addressed, and those responsible for the encroachments would face action based on the findings of the survey and investigation.

Allu Arjun meets child at KIMS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Tollywood actor Allu Arjun on Tuesday went to KIMS hospital and met the child who fell unconscious in Pushpa-2 premiere release incident.

He was accompanied by Telangana State Film Development Corporation (FDC) Chairman Dil Raju. The security was beefed up at the hospital ahead of the actor's visit. He was seen entering the KIMS hospital visiting the boy and coming out within less time.

Actor Allu Arjun was scheduled to visit the hospital on January 5 but the plan was cancelled after Ramgopalpet Police asked to revise his plan.

"The child is maintaining his vital parameters well without any extraneous support. He has remained febrile for the last few days, his antibiotics have been stopped. He continues to tolerate nasogastric feeds well. He is receiving supportive therapies."

His agitated episodes and dystonia have reduced but still present.

SCR announces additional Sankranti special trains

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The South Central Railway (SCR) has announced partial train cancellations and additional Sankranti special trains to manage the extra rush during the festival.

The Four Sankranti Special Trains to clear the additional rush are: Train No. 07205 (Kakinada Town - Vikarabad) on 9 January 2025. Train No. 07207 (Vikarabad - Srikakulam Rd) on 10 January 2025. Train No. 07208 (Srikakulam Rd - Charlapalli) on 11 January 2025.

Train No. 07206 (Charlapalli - Kakinada Town) on 12 January 2025.

SCR stated that these special trains will stop at various stations and offer services in IAC, 2AC, 3AC, Sleeper, and General Second Class coaches.

Cancellations include: Train No. 77601 (Kacheguda - Nizamabad) from 08.01.2025 to 31.01.2025. Train No. 77602 (Nizamabad - Kacheguda)

Partial cancellations include: Train No. 17023 (Secunderabad - Kurnool City) on specific dates (8,11,15,18,22, 29 Jan 2025) between Gadwal and Kurnool City.

Train No. 17024 (Kurnool City - Secunderabad) between Kurnool City and Gadwal.

Other trains including Train No. 77603, 77641, 77642, 77210, 77204, 07777, 07778, 12788, 17232, and 17688 have partial cancellations on specified dates.

Granules India, AIG Hospitals extend breast cancer screening

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Granules India Ltd and Hyderabad AIG Hospitals have expanded their 'Breast Health Express', a mobile breast cancer screening and awareness unit to serve rural areas in the Medchal-Malkajgiri district. This initiative, in collaboration with the Asian Medical Foundation and UC Breast Foundation, aims to make breast cancer prevention accessible to all women, regardless of their socio-economic status.

The announcement was made at a press conference in Gagilapur village on Tuesday, where the mobile unit's advanced facilities for early breast cancer detection and awareness were presented.

Dr T Raghunath Swamy, District Medical & Health Officer, Medchal-Malkajgiri, and Shambipur Krishna, Chairperson of Dundigal Municipal Council, highlighted the programme's goal to bring screening services to women across the district.



Dr T Raghunath Swamy, District Medical & Health Officer, Medchal-Malkajgiri, along with Executive Director of Granules India Ltd Uma Chigurupati at a mobile breast cancer screening unit on Tuesday

Executive Director of Granules India Ltd, Uma Chigurupati emphasised the programme's importance stating, "By bringing screening to rural areas, we are breaking down healthcare barriers and raising awareness about breast health."

Meanwhile, Consultant Breast Oncologist at AIG and Founder of UC Breast Foundation, Dr Pragnya Chigurupati noted the rising number of breast cancer cases, especially among younger

women. She emphasised the programme's role in offering education on early detection, self-examination and regular check-ups.

Dr Swamy welcomed the initiative, stressing the impact of public-private collaboration on rural healthcare. The mobile unit, equipped with mammography and ultrasound technology, will conduct screening camps across the district. Local leaders showed strong support for the initiative.

Water Board MD stresses solutions to consumer complaints

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB) Managing Director Ashok Reddy unveiled the 2025 diaries and table calendars of the Engineers' Association (JEA), TNGOs, TGOs, and the Finance Wing at a ceremony held at the Board's headquarters in Khairatabad on Tuesday. Extending New Year greetings

to employees and consumers, Ashok Reddy commended the resilience of Water Board staff in tackling challenges over the past year, especially in managing the summer drinking water demand. "Daily problem-solving consumes much of our efforts, leaving little scope to address the root causes. Hence, we initiated a 90-day special drive to focus on permanent solutions," he said. He highlighted that the spe-

cial drive has already shown results, with daily complaints dropping by 30%. "This initiative has garnered positive feedback from the public and received commendation from Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, who directed us to extend the drive by another 90 days," Ashok Reddy added.

Looking ahead to the summer, Ashok Reddy announced a 120-day action plan from

February 15 to June 15 to address the season's water demands.

"We will ensure all necessary resources and arrangements are in place well before summer begins," he assured. Executive Director Mayank Mittal praised the employees for their effective work during last year's summer and encouraged them to deliver uninterrupted services this year as well.

HYDRAA gets dedicated police station

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government issued orders for the establishment of a new police station exclusively for the Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) at B-Block, Buddha Bhavan, Secunderabad. This move aims to enhance the agency's efficiency in addressing asset protection issues within its jurisdiction, particularly for critical areas such as lakes, parks, open spaces and public properties.

As per the Government Order (GO Ms No. 03), issued on January 7, the HYDRAA police station will operate under the jurisdiction of the agency, ensuring swift action against land encroachments, damage to public property and other violations concerning asset protection. The station will be manned by officers of the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), dedicated to cases specific to HYDRAA's mandate.

The agency's jurisdiction extends up to the Outer Ring Road, covering areas under three police commissionerates, making monitoring a complex task.

The new police station will streamline processes and enable faster responses to reported issues.

Call to create awareness about welfare schemes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana State Revenue, Information, Civil Relations and Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy held a programme at the State Secretariat on Tuesday, directing officials to increase public awareness about the state's development and welfare programmes. During the event, the Minister presented advanced photo cameras to field-level employees of the Information department.

Meanwhile, Commissioner Dr Harish explained that the new cameras would help district and field staff to easily share photo news with the media about various programmes. He added that the cameras are being distributed



Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy presenting advanced photo cameras to field-level staff, along with State Information Commissioner Dr Harish and Additional Director DS Jagan on Tuesday

to all district offices and division-level staff.

Dr Harish emphasised that the new cameras would benefit the staff and improve the coverage of government initiatives. He also highlighted the active role of the Information

department staff in promoting government schemes at events attended by State ministers, MPs, MLAs and other public representatives.

Additional Director DS Jagan and other officers participated in the meeting.

Mayor Vijayalakshmi conducts surprise inspection in Miyapur

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, accompanied by MLA Arekapudi Gandhi, conducted a surprise inspection in Chanda Nagar Circle, Miyapur Division on Tuesday morning.

During the visit, Corporator Uppalapati Srikanth brought several local issues to the Mayor's attention. Inspecting the beautification works near Mameri Garden, the Mayor directed officials to expedite the work and make the area accessible to the public at the earliest.

Mayor Vijayalakshmi expressed serious concern

about the failure to clear waste from Maktha Cheruvu. She reprimanded the contractor from the Ramky organisation responsible for the task and emphasised the need for immediate action.

The Mayor also expressed dissatisfaction with the sanitation conditions in the area and instructed the Zonal Commissioner to take necessary measures to improve sanitation services promptly.

The inspection highlighted the administration's commitment to addressing civic issues and ensuring better living conditions for residents in Miyapur Division.

INTER-CASTE TRAGEDY Blackmail, allegations emerge in suicide case

DEEPIKA PASHAM
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■ HYDERABAD

The accidental fire which consumed two persons in Ghatkesar on Monday is said to be a suicide case.

The allegations remain intact in regard to inter-castes and reportedly the minor girl being asked to agree for marriage. On Tuesday, the situation at Gandhi Hospital's mortuary threw up the ongoing disputes between two families of the deceased.

The man Sriram, who has written the suicide letter, belongs to the SC community and he claims to be in relationship with the girl who is from the Yadav community. The officials were seen waiting until 12 noon as the family members of Sriram had not come to receive his body.

However, the girl's father, along with relatives, had completed panchama and was waiting to take the body after post-mortem.

"The father is a milk vendor. Our girl is studying Intermediate first year and we believe it was nothing about relationships. Sriram

had recently opened a shop near the girl's house and how can he claim to have known our girl for five years," questioned the girl's relative.

"In regard to the marriage of our daughter, don't we know the law and will any educated girl let the family get married by 16 years," questioned the relative.

However, the questions on how the couple met on the day of committing suicide as the girl had no phone but went to college and who wrote the suicide letter are being investigated.

The Ghatkesar police have arrested Chintu Yadav alias Chintu, the suspect.

Chintu, a resident of Maktha of Korremulla had been allegedly blackmailing and threatening the young couple and extorting money from them.

Unable to face further harassment from him, they died by suicide by dousing fuel and setting themselves on fire in a car.

He was being questioned by the police in the police station. They are verifying if anybody else is involved. The section has been altered to case of abetment to suicide on Tuesday.

SUSPECTED FOOD POISONING

23 students of Gurukul School take ill

Hostel staff ferry students to a hospital at midnight on Monday after they complained of vomiting and diarrhoea

PNS ■ KARIMNAGAR

Students affiliated to various organisations staged a protest after 23 students of the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule BC Gurukul at Sharmanagar here took ill due to suspected food poisoning at midnight on Monday. The students experienced vomiting and diarrhoea after having dinner at their hostel.

The hostel staff ferried the students to the hospital at midnight on Monday after they complained of stomach ache, vomiting and diarrhoea. It is suspected that the cabbage curry served at the dinner could have led to the students falling ill.

Upon learning of the incident, Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar contacted District Collector Pamela Satpathy to inquire about the student's health. He also directed the Collector to take necessary precautions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents in future.

Bandi Sanjay emphasised the need for greater caution regarding food in Gurukula schools and hostels. He stressed the importance of cleanliness and food quality. Following his instructions, BJP district leaders visited the students.

The doctors treating the students said the condition of the children was stable.

Food poisoning incidents are rising in Gurukula and Ashram schools across the state. Students' parents are accusing the authorities of negligence that led to the recurrence of such incidents. They are



Students staging a protest at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule BC Gurukul in Karimnagar after some students took ill due to suspected food poisoning at midnight on Monday

questioning why, despite the increase in mess charges and better food quality, students are still ending up in hospitals. They are demanding that the government explain why no corrective measures were taken.

The Collector explained that the students suffered mild discomfort after consuming cabbage curry. She also said the condition of the students is stable.

Students, who converged at the school,

staged a protest. They accused the officials of not doing enough to protect the health of the students in the hostels.

Karimnagar Revenue Divisional Officer Mahesh visited the hospital to inquire about the students' health conditions. Various student organisations and political parties gathered at the hostel and began protests. The police arrived at the scene and removed SFI and SFI leaders who staged a protest.

Student of Gurukul School goes missing

PNS ■ VIKARABAD

A student of the Mahatma Gandhi Jyotirao Phule Boys Gurukul School on the outskirts of Kodangal town in Vikarabad district went missing on Monday. The missing youth, Shivanand Goll, a 17-year-old Class 10 student from Gundlakunta village in Kodangal mandal, is the son of Balraj. According to reports, on January 5, Shivanand sent a photo to his uncle's phone via Telegram. When the principal asked the student how he managed to send the photo from his phone while at school, Shivanand was unable to provide an answer. Despite asking him repeatedly, the principal and class teacher could not get a satisfactory explanation from him. As a result, they admonished Shivanand and prevented him from attending the internal examinations.

Distressed by this, Shivanand left the Gurukul School on the night of January 6. Upon informing his parents, they reported the matter to the police. Following this, the police and the school management began a search operation. CCTV footage later revealed that the boy stayed overnight at a lodge in Pargi and checked out at 8 am the next morning.

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

In a heartfelt initiative, Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar arranged free midday meals for 840 students at the Government Junior College at Shadnagar in Rangareddy district on Tuesday. This three-month programme, funded entirely by the MLA, is aimed at alleviating the struggles faced by students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and motivating them to focus on their education.

At the programme launch, Veerlapalli Shankar shared his own journey, recounting how he overcame hardships to pursue higher education.

"I walked six kilometers every day to study and depended on midday meals when I was the Intermediate student. With diligence and determination that I reached this level today," he said.

He emphasised that his initiative was designed to ensure that no student has to endure the difficulties he once faced.

The MLA further advised students to study with passion, score top ranks, and bring pride to their families, lecturers, and college. He stressed the importance of building

a better future for themselves and for society, reminding them that "today's students are tomorrow's citizens."

Quoting APJ Abdul Kalam as an inspiration, he highlighted how even those from humble beginnings could achieve great heights through perseverance and education. Veerlapalli Shankar also urged students to see beyond caste and religion, focusing instead on the lessons of unity and excellence.

The event was attended by lecturers, former students, journalists, and local leaders, who praised the MLA's efforts to support education. Former students and senior journalists shared their experiences, motivating the students to work hard and achieve their goals. Lecturers also encouraged students to study diligently and aim for top ranks.

Residents of the constituency expressed their gratitude for the initiative, acknowledging the MLA's commitment to the welfare and bright future of the students. Veerlapalli Shankar's gesture underscores his dedication to fostering education and his vision for a "Bangaru Telangana," where no student is left behind.



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar interacting with students at a government school in Shadnagar on Tuesday

MLA Shankar sponsors free midday meal for students

Minister Sridhar Babu distributes 20 E-scooters to Anganwadi supervisors

PNS ■ PEDDAPALLI

In a significant step towards improving rural healthcare and welfare services, Telangana's Information Technology and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu, along with District Collector Rahul Sharma, inaugurated a new ambulance in Koyyur village under Malhar Mandal in Manthani constituency on Tuesday.

The ambulance, provided under the Aspirational Block Programme (ABP), an initiative led by the Women and Child Welfare Department. The Minister highlighted that these scooters would enable Anganwadi staff to deliver better services, ensuring improved child and maternal welfare.

Minister Sridhar Babu announced that Anganwadi supervisors in two key project areas of the district are being equipped with scooters. Malhar Mandal is receiving five scooters, while Bhupalpally is being allocated fifteen. He directed officials to ensure that all 227 Anganwadi centers in Malhar Mandal are adequately supported and covered under this initiative.

Later, the Minister distributed uniforms to children at the Anganwadi centres and interacted with them. He emphasised the vital role of Anganwadi centers in protecting the health and well-being of children, urging Anganwadi staff to continue their dedicated efforts.

The event witnessed participation from several dignitaries, including Welfare Officer Chinnayya, District Medical and Health Officer Dr Madhusudan, and others. This initiative reflects the government's resolve to strengthen grassroots healthcare and welfare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas.



Minister for Information Technology D Sridhar Babu distributing E-scooters to Anganwadi supervisors at Koyyur village on Tuesday

Preparations underway for Nagoba festival

PNS ■ ADILABAD

The much-awaited Nagoba Jatara, the second-largest tribal festival in Telangana, is set to begin on January 28 at Keslapur. This 10-day festival will feature the tribals present their concerns to the authorities. The festivities will start with members of the Mesram clan worshipping the deity using Godavari river water, which will be sourced from 110 km away. Elaborate arrangements are being made by district authorities to ensure the smooth conduct of the festival, which attracts not only tribals from Telangana but also from neighboring states. In response to the large crowd expected, the police have heightened security measures. The Nagoba festival, considered the second most significant tribal fair after the Sammakka-Saralamma festival, has been officially designated a state festival by the Telangana government.

During the celebrations, Mesram clan members from across the country will visit Keslapur to honour their vows to the deity.

Coordination efforts are being led by the Integrated Tribal Development Authority (ITDA) of Utnoor, in collaboration with various government departments. District Collector Rajarshi Shah and ITDA Project Director Khushbu Gupta recently reviewed the preparations at the Darbar Hall in Keslapur.

Cong cadre asked to strive for party's victory in local body polls

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

Congress party workers should be prepared for the upcoming MLC and local body elections. Congress workers must work together to ensure the victory of party candidates, said Minister for Tourism Juppally Krishna



Krishna Rao, who is the district in-charge Minister, said every worker has the responsibility to explain to the people at the grassroots about the developmental activities and welfare programmes being carried out by the Congress government under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

Former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao ran an autocratic government. The previous BRS government ignored the welfare of the

Telangana people and the state's development.

Under the BRS regime, the state accumulated debts of over Rs 7 lakh crore.

There was no development in KCR's rule, only corruption.

The goal of the Congress government is to make welfare schemes a reality and deliver them to the poor, he observed.

The promises made are being implemented step by step. "We need to go door-to-door to explain these schemes to the people.

Along with taking government programmes to the people, a plan should be devised to expand party activities at the village, mandal, and municipal levels," he advised the party cadre.

He stressed the need to ensure that the party wins highest number of seats in local body elections. He advised the Congress leaders and workers to strive to strengthen the party.

The party will thrive when the workers are strong. The party workers should not fall into despair or disillusionment.

Those who have worked hard for the party will be rewarded with positions, he said.

21 stray dogs thrown to death in Sangareddy district

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

A heart-wrenching incident that reflects the lack of humanity occurred in Sangareddy district. In an act of extreme cruelty, 40 dogs were and dumped on the roadside. This tragic event shocked the village. The question of where these dogs came from and why they were dumped here has become an enigma for both the villagers and the police.

On January 4, villagers on the outskirts of Yeddumailaram village in Sangareddy district noticed carcasses of 21 dogs lying near a bridge along the road. Upon receiving information from the village secretary, the incident came to light. The dogs

were tied by their legs with wire and thrown off the bridge. Out of the 40 dogs, 21 were found dead, 11 of them seriously. The injured dogs were then transferred to an animal care organisation by an NGO.

The mystery of where these dogs came from and why they were dumped here remained unsolved. The screams of the severely injured dogs horrified the vehicle drivers passing by. The villagers, showing their humanity, collected the dead dogs and buried them in the village cemetery.

The villagers demanded that the perpetrators, who took the lives of these innocent animals, be found and punished severely.

Swatantra channel 2025 calendar unveiled

PNS ■ NIRMAL

In the district headquarters of Nirmal, the District Superintendent of Police Dr Janaki Sharmila unveiled the Swatantra channel 2025 calendar. Appreciating the channel's commitment to social responsibility and its direction towards solving public issues, the Superintendent of Police lauded Swatantra channel. She expressed hope that the channel would gain wide popularity in the new year, with new aspirations and goals. On this occasion, she extended her New Year and Sankranti greetings to the viewers of Swatantra TV.

The unveiling ceremony was attended by staff reporter Ganesh, Cameraman Mahender, and Reporters Shashi Kumar, Kaiser, and Srinivas.

'Identify eligible for Indiramma housing scheme'

PNS ■ SANGAREDDY

District Collector Kranti Valluru instructed the revenue officials to personally verify the applications and select the beneficiaries through discussions at village meetings for the Indiramma houses.

On Tuesday, at a meeting at the Sangareddy Collectorate with RDOs, Tahsildars, Special Officers, MPDOs, and others, the Collector emphasised that complaints should not arise regarding the distribution of houses in the district. The Collector advised the revenue officials to act in transparent manner, ensuring that only those eligible for Indiramma houses are selected in the villages.



Sangareddy Collector Kranti Valluru holding a review meeting in Sangareddy on Tuesday

Meanwhile, the Collector directed the District Medical Officer, District Education Officer, and other authorities concerned to take necessary measures for establishing Anganwadi centres, Amma

Adarsha Schools, and other facilities in the double bedroom houses constructed in Kollur and Telapur. The officials should ensure that houses are handed over to the beneficiaries once construction is completed.

Furthermore, the Collector emphasised that the officials should work with the Cooperative Department to establish societies for the double bedroom houses in Kollur and Telapur and take action to complete any unfinished construction as soon as possible.

This meeting was attended by Additional Collectors Madhuri, Chandrashekar, Housing PD Chalpati, Mandal Special Officers, Tahsildars, Mandal Parishad Development Officers, contractors, and others.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA REVENUE (LA) DEPARTMENT									
OR District Collector Mulugu. DECLARATION									
District Collector File No. GE/299/2024.		Dated: 04-01-2025.		LA/ORD. Mulugu File No. GE/LA/263/2024.		Dated: 30-12-2024.			
Whereas it appears to the government of Telangana that a total extent of Acres 3-20 ¹ / ₄ gts land is required in the Patilpally Village of Mulugu Mandal of Mulugu District for public purpose. The Executive Engineer & CAD, Irrigation Division -4, Mulugu has filed request for acquisition of land to an extent of Ac. 3-20 ¹ / ₄ gts for excavation of Link Main Canal to Right Main Canal of JCR-DUS Phase-II, Package-V (Rangash Chenu & Erash Chenu) in the limits of Patilpally M of Mulugu Mandal the following Declaration is made under section 19 (1) of the Act 30 of 2013.									
Therefore, it is notified that for the above said project in Patilpally Village of Mulugu Mandal of Mulugu District for public purpose namely for excavation of Link Main Canal to Right Main Canal of JCR-DUS Phase-II, Package-V (Rangash Chenu & Erash Chenu) land measuring more or less 3-20 ¹ / ₄ gts acres of standard measurements whose details description is as following is proposed for acquisition.									
Village: Patilpally	Mandal: Mulugu	District: Mulugu							
Sl. No.	Type of land	Type of acquisition	Area under acquisition in	Name of the Patta	Name of the Arable/irrigated land	Name of the Employer/interested person	Tr. No.	Stru. No.	St. No.
1	Govt Land	Dry	0.12	Stra. Ranaku	Banash Aganvala	Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
2	Govt Land	Dry	0.13	Param boku	Param boku	Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.01			Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku			
			0.20			Bhuyya Dashorath Sra Laku			
3	Govt Land	Dry	0.14	Thoti Narsana (Sammakka)	Banash Jayaram	Bhuyya Dashorath Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.03			Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku			
			0.15			Bhuyya Laxma W/Mangya			
4	Govt Land	Dry	0.06	Mani Saranama	Hakir Lakshma Bhuyya Laku	Bhuyya Laxma W/M Mangya	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.14			Bhuyya Kanala Sra Mangtha (Mangya)			
			0.05			Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku			
5	Govt Land	Dry	0.02	Param boku	Param boku	Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.11			Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku			
			0.01			Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku			
			0.01			Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku			
6	Govt Land	Dry	0.01	Param boku	Param boku	Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.05			Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku			
			0.05			Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku			
			0.01			Road			
7	Govt Land	Dry	0.02	Param boku	Param boku	Bhuyya Kanan Sra Laku	Ni	Ni	Ni
			0.02			Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku			
			0.02			Bhuyya Jagan Sra Laku			
			0.04			Road			
						Bare Buchan			
TOTAL:			3-20¹/₄						
The declaration is made after hearing of objections of persons interested and due enquiry as provided in section 19 (5) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Act No. 30/2013), to all whose it may concern.									
Mines of Coal, Iron-stone, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land, except such parts of the mines and minerals which may be required to be dug or removed or used during the construction phase of the project for the purpose of which the land is being acquired, are not needed.									
A plan of the land may be inspected in the office of the District Collector Mulugu and Land Acquisition Officer/Revenue Divisional Officer, Mulugu on any working day during the working hours.									
Sd/- Land Acquisition Officer/Revenue Divisional Officer, Mulugu	Sd/- Addl. Collector (Rev), Mulugu	Sd/- District Collector, Mulugu							
DIPR. RO.NO: 548/LA/PP/Adv/1/2024-25									

Students in MG varsity hostel served chilli powder rice

PNS ■ NALGONDA

On Tuesday, a startling scene unfolded at the Krishnaveni Girls Hostel of Mahatma Gandhi University in Nalgonda. Hostel students were reportedly served a breakfast consist-

ing of rice, salt and chilli powder. The unusual meal being prepared quickly went viral on social media platforms, sparking a wave of reactions. In response to the uproar, university authorities clarified that the students had specifically requested

this "special breakfast." However, they assured that an inquiry would be conducted, and those responsible for the incident would face appropriate action.

Director of Hostels Domala Ramesh and Deputy Director Sambaru

Kalyani, along with wardens Rajeshwari and Jyothi, visited the hostel and examined the situation.

They explained that the breakfast consisted of bondas, and some students' parents, due to their observance of the Ayyappa vows, voluntarily

avoided garlic and similar items, and as per their request, curry was made available. Regarding the B'Tech students who had exams, they clarified that the rice was prepared for them, and some students had taken it with curry as per their choice.

ACROSS THE STATES



Sons kill father over property dispute

A 65-year-old man was allegedly killed by his three sons over a property dispute in Hanif Nagar here on Tuesday, police said. According to the police, when Abdul Hameed returned from his morning walk, three of his sons - Munna, Dabbal and Babu - attacked him outside his home with sharp edged objects. Neighbours and passersby gathered at the spot and rushed Hameed to a hospital where he was declared dead, they said. Mohammad Khurshid, the cousin of the accused men, alleged that Munna, Dabbal and Babu killed their father, the police said. Khurshid told police there was a dispute between the father and sons regarding the partition of land. Hameed had recently sold some land and the three brothers wanted their share. Hameed used to live with his other son Pappu, the police said. Circle Officer Prashant Kumar Singh said a case has been registered and a probe is underway. The body has been sent for post-mortem.



Gold concealed as metal buttons seized

Gold worth Rs 29 lakh, concealed as metal buttons of apparel, has been seized from the possession of an Indian male passenger at the international airport here, the customs department said on Tuesday. The accused was intercepted after his arrival from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Monday. "Through spot profiling techniques, customs officers flagged the passenger at the Green Channel exit. Upon X-ray scanning of the baggage, suspicious images were noticed. While the passenger cleared the DFMD (door frame metal detector) without triggering any alarms, a detailed manual inspection of the baggage revealed 201 silver-coated rings appearing to be made of gold, ingeniously concealed as metal buttons of apparel," the customs department said in a post on X. The concealed metal rings, confirmed to be 24 carat gold, weighed a total of 379 grams valued about Rs 29 lakh, it said.



Couple ends life days before son's wedding

A couple in their 50s allegedly committed suicide in Tilakwadi area of the city, police said on Tuesday. Jayesh Rasiklal Shah (58) and Raksha Jayesh Shah (55) died early Monday morning, a few days before their younger son's wedding, said an official. The couple lived their two sons and the elder son's wife. After a dinner with relatives on Sunday evening, Jayesh and Raksha apparently consumed some poisonous substance. While the elder son and his wife were out of town, the younger son, when he returned, found them in unconscious state, the official said. The couple were rushed to hospital where they were declared dead around 2 am on Monday. No suicide note has been found and Sarkarwada Police are conducting further probe, the official said.

Will bring fugitives holed abroad, asserts Shah

LAUNCHES 'BHARATPOL' FOR INTL POLICE ASSISTANCE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said modern systems introduced under the three new criminal laws and technological interventions like Bharatpol will enable law enforcement agencies to bring fugitives who have escaped abroad after committing crimes in India to justice.

Speaking at the launch of a new portal Bharatpol developed by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to make swift coordination with Indian agencies on Interpol-related issues, Shah said the Modi government has introduced the provision of 'Trial in Absentia' in the three new criminal laws, enabling the prosecution of fugitive criminals even in their absence through court orders while ensuring a fair judicial process.

He said this provision would simplify the process of extraditing convicted criminals from foreign countries to India. "Combined with the capabilities of the Bharatpol portal, this new measure will empower the Indian law enforcement agencies to bring fugitives to justice, no matter where they



hide," Shah said.

Bharatpol will bring all central and state law enforcement agencies on a common portal, streamlining the processing of all requests for international assistance through Interpol, including the issuance of Red Notices and other colour-coded Interpol notices.

"In the past, criminals based abroad have committed crimes in India and remained out of reach of our laws. Some criminals have committed crimes in India and escaped. "Time has come for us to use modern systems to bring under our legal net the criminals committing a crime from abroad and fugitives who have escaped

from the country after committing a crime here," Shah said.

The home minister urged the CBI to take the lead in ensuring its widespread training at the grassroots level which will strengthen the judicial system, enhance transparency and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement efforts.

Noting that the Bharatpol will assist state police forces by facilitating collaboration with law enforcement agencies (LEAs) in 195 countries through real-time information sharing on such crimes, Shah asked the CBI to raise awareness among law enforcement agencies about Interpol notices and institu-

tionalising this system rather than leaving it on an individual officer.

He said the new system has the transformative potential to address crimes such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking and cross-border terrorism.

Shah pointed out that one of the key benefits will be access to 19 types of Interpol databases to state LEA, enabling young officers to analyse data, develop crime prevention strategies and apprehend criminals more effectively.

The home minister also distributed Police Medals to 35 CBI officers and officials who have been awarded the President's Police Medals for Distinguished Service and the Union Home Minister's Medal for Excellence in Investigation.

Among the recipients was former CBI joint director Amit Kumar, now posted as Chhattisgarh Police ADG, who led the probe into the coal scam that resulted in convictions in a number of cases. Kumar was selected for the coveted President's Police Medal for the occasion of Republic Day last year.

GANGASAGAR MELA

Mamata calls for all-round surveillance to thwart any trouble

PNS ■ SAGAR ISLAND

In the wake of the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday called for all-round surveillance on land, air and water to thwart any attempt from across the border to cause trouble during the ensuing Gangasagar Mela.

She said adequate police forces led by senior IPS officers have been deployed in Sagar Island and approaching roads from Kolkata.

Speaking at a programme from where she inaugurated several state-run programmes, Banerjee said, "We must ensure there is no trouble during the annual fair. Tight vigil has to be ensured. I have told the navy about it. The coast guard should also be informed. We have to ensure there is no trou-



ble from that side (Bangladesh). There should be all-round surveillance on land, air and water."

"A total of 10 ministers will be deployed. Of them, four to five ministers will be in Sagar Island, while others will be at important locations such as Kachuberia and Lot number 8. IG and DIG-rank officers will be deployed. West Bengal and Kolkata police forces have

been asked to ensure good coordination to maintain strict surveillance," she said. Banerjee said that although the Centre has been bearing the expenses of Kumbh Mela, it has not given anything for Gangasagar Mela, demanding it should be declared as a "national fair".

"We are hopeful that like Kumbh Mela, one day Gangasagar Mela will be declared a national fair. After approaching the Centre several times and not getting any response, we have decided to construct a bridge over Muriganga River to connect Sagar Island with the mainland," she added. "The entire expense of Kumbh Mela is borne by the central government but they do not give a single penny for Gangasagar Mela," she said.

Cities in India reduce PM2.5 pollution by 27 pc in six years: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian cities achieved an average 27 per cent reduction in PM2.5 pollution levels from 2019 to 2024, with those under NCAP alone recording a 24 per cent decline, a new report has found.

According to the report by climate tech firm Respirer Living Sciences, Varanasi and Moradabad reduced PM2.5 levels by 76 per cent and 58 per cent, respectively. Other top performers include Kalaburagi (57.2 per cent), Meerut (57.1



per cent), Katni (56.3 per cent), Agra (54.1 per cent), Baghpat (53.3 per cent), Kanpur (51.2 per cent) and Jodhpur (50.5 per cent). Air quality has improved consid-

erably, with a 27 per cent decline in PM2.5 levels across all monitored cities since 2019. NCAP (National Clean Air Programme) cities alone achieved a 24 per cent reduction, showing progress in combating air pollution," according to the report.

Despite the improvements, several cities remain highly polluted. In 2024, Delhi recorded PM2.5 levels of 107 microgrammes per cubic metre while Bymnat in Assam reported 127.3 microgrammes per cubic metre.

'Rise above politics, make India developed country'



PNS ■ DHARMASTHALA

Vice President Jagdeep Thakkar on Tuesday called upon the people to rise above the politics of disruption and help the country reach its objective of a developed India by 2047.

"It is not a dream anymore, but it is our objective," he added. Thakkar was launching the country's largest 'queue complex' at Sri Manjunatha Temple here. The facility is known as 'Shri Saandhya'.

While delivering his speech at the launch event, Thakkar said: "We must neutralise the anti-India forces that are trying to make us weak by divisions and misinformation. We must stop them from tarnishing the great name of our country and all that it has gained towards achieving inclusivity, welfare and strengthening our democracy."

Thakkar, accompanied by his wife Sudesh, took a darshan of the presiding deity of the temple town Lord Manjunatha Swamy (a roopa of Shiva) along with D Veerendra Heggada, Dharmadhikari of Shri Kshetra Dharmasthala before the event. He also took a tour of the 'Shri Saandhya', the new queue complex, and appreciated the commitment of the temple trust in providing the devotees with state-of-the-art infrastructure.

Can AAP score a hat-trick in Delhi?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The AAP faces anti-incumbency, corruption allegations and an aggressive BJP in its bid to assume power for a third successive term. Here is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of AAP as it heads to the polls.

STRENGTHS

- AAP's schemes and programmes like revamped government schools, mohalla clinics, and free electricity remains its USP as also women's free bus rides and senior citizen pilgrimage grants.
- Announcement of Rs 2,100 monthly honorarium for women, free healthcare for elderly, and Rs 10 lakh



insurance for auto drivers will add to its welfare-driven campaign.

- Campaigns like 'Revdi Par Charcha' ensure these benefits remain in public focus,

showcasing AAP's consistent voter outreach.

WEAKNESSES

- Anti-incumbency looms large, with AAP completing

more than a decade in power. Many voters might feel the need for change, which could affect the party's chances.

- Corruption allegations and arrests of key leaders, including Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, have tarnished the party's clean image. Leadership transitions and internal rifts, including departure of key figures like Kailash Gahlot, signal instability that could weaken its campaign.
 - The 'Sheesh Mahal' controversy has dented Kejriwal's image, with the BJP using it to fuel its campaign against AAP.
- OPPORTUNITIES**
- The elections give AAP a chance to rebuild its con-

nection with voters. Highlighting its achievements in governance and introducing fresh faces by replacing 20 sitting MLAs show its willingness to adapt.

- Focusing on its local governance model and distancing itself from unsuccessful national-level alliances could help the party regain voter trust and reaffirm itself as a political force of its own in the national capital.
- Ability to address internal weaknesses and counter external threats will determine its future in Delhi politics as well as in national politics.
- The elections will be sort of a referendum on the party's governance model and its

promises of providing an alternative approach centred on free welfare schemes to the common man.

THREATS

- The BJP remains AAP's biggest threat with its strong campaign machinery, star campaigners like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and slogans like 'Aapda(AAP) Nahi Sahenge Badal Kar Rahenge' (won't tolerate the disaster (AAP), will bring change').
- Ongoing corruption investigations and frequent clashes with the LG's office, including disputes over policy decisions like reinstating former bus marshals, could further damage AAP's credibility and governance narrative.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA REVENUE (LAND ACQUISITION) DEPARTMENT									
FORM-VII DECLARATION									
Under Section 19 (1) of The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (Central Act 30/2013) and as per the state rule 25 (1)									
Collector's File No. G1/292/2023					Date: 31-12-2024				
Special Deputy Collector's File No. B/17/2023					Date: 20-12-2024				
Gazette No. 163/2024					Date: 31-12-2024				
As per the directions of the Government of Telangana District Collector, Siddipet, the below mentioned Acres 2.04guntas of land is needed in the village of Jakkapur Narayanarajpetmandal of Siddipet district for public purpose i.e. for reclamation of RMB - LMC minor of LMC of Sri RangarajwadaSagar reservoir under Kaleswaram Project. Therefore, the declaration has been issued under Section 19 (1) of the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013.									
Therefore, Acres 2.04 guntas of land in Jakkapur village of Narayanarajpetmandal of Siddipet district is needed as mentioned in the following schedule. Therefore, the declaration has been issued.									
SCHEDULE									
Village: Jakkapur Mandal: Narayanarajpet District: Siddipet									
Sr No.	Plot No.	Area	Land Use	Land Occupant	Boundary	Structure	Remarks	Other	Notes
1.	462	Govt Land	0.1850	Kolepuram Thupathi S/o. Podda Babiah Anubhakar	806 459 798 453	6 Feet 3 Inches	1.Narenga 4.Custard apple 1.Chilli, 1Ban		
2.	462	Govt Land	0.0750	Endipalli Narayana S/o. Lachh Reddy (Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	10 Narenga	10 Narenga		
3.	462	Govt Land	0.2025	Shudhupalli Karayala S/o. Chandrayya (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	11 Feet 11 Inches	1.Peanut 1.Lemon 1.Peach 1.Custard apple 1.Ban		
4.	462	Govt Land	0.06	Lakka Bussavoni Manika W/o. Kahan (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	1.500	30 Karbu 1. Peas 1. Pigeon		
5.	462	Govt Land	0.0875	Nalivani Kuntah S/o. Balarama (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	20 Karbu	1. Mango		
6.	462	Govt Land	0.0875	Nalivani Deyya S/o. Balarama (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	1. 100	2. Pipe line		
7.	462	Govt Land	0.1875	Chelika Karayala W/o. Sughunath (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453				
8.	462	Govt Land	0.3220	Battala Sivraya S/o. Chandrayya (Patidar & Anubhakar)	806 459 798 453	1.300	4.Custard apple 1. Peas		
Total					2.04				
9.	806	Patla	0.05	Paru Deyya S/o. Narayana (Patidar & Anubhakar)	807 462 805 462	1.500	1.500		
Total					2.04				
The declaration has been issued for the acquisition of the land upon resolving the objections, if any, to the acquisition of the land under Section 15 within the stipulated deadline. Since the land acquisition is for the purpose of excavation of LMC's RMB-RM2 minor canal, the question of villagers getting displaced by the project does not arise.									
Mines of coal, iron-ore, slate or other minerals lying under the said land or any particular portion of the said land are not needed.									
The plan of the above said land to be acquired may be inspected in the office of the Revenue Divisional Officer, Siddipet during working hours on any working day.									
Sd/- Tahsilkar, Narayanarajpet Mandal		Sd/- Special Deputy Collector (Land Acquisition), Kaleswaram Project, Unit-1, Siddipet			Sd/- Additional Collector, Siddipet			Sd/- District Collector, Siddipet	
DIPR RO.NO: 5471/LA/PP/Avt/Plub/2024-25									



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Trudeau steps down

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau resigns ahead of the upcoming elections

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's announcement of his resignation on January 6, 2025, marks a significant turning point in Canadian politics. Trudeau, who has served as Prime Minister since October 2015, made the decision amidst mounting pressure from his own party and growing challenges to his leadership. Trudeau's decision to step down comes against a backdrop of increasing discontent within the ruling Liberal Party. During his announcement outside Rideau Cottage in Ottawa, Trudeau acknowledged the internal discord that had hindered his leadership. In a strategic move, Trudeau met with Governor General Mary Simon to secure the prorogation of Parliament until March 24, effectively delaying the possibility of a no-confidence vote that was anticipated in the session scheduled to begin on January 27. This decision provides the Liberal Party with a window to elect a new leader and stabilise its position ahead of potential political upheaval. Trudeau's resignation reflects a culmination of political and personal challenges. The Liberal Party's diminishing unity became a significant obstacle for Trudeau's leadership. Discontent among MPs and party members had been growing, fueled by concerns over policy decisions, governance style, and declining public support.



After nearly a decade in office, Trudeau's administration faced criticism over issues such as economic management, healthcare and Canada's climate policy. These challenges eroded his public approval, making him a less viable candidate for the next election. By stepping down before the next election, Trudeau's resignation allows the Liberal Party to rejuvenate its leadership and present a fresh face to voters, potentially mitigating electoral risks. Trudeau's departure will have significant political and national implications. The resignation sets the stage for a competitive leadership race within the Liberal Party. The choice of the next leader will be critical in determining the party's future direction and its ability to retain power. Trudeau's resignation reshapes Canada's political dynamics. The opposition, particularly the Conservative Party, is likely to leverage this transition period to challenge the Liberals' governance record and push for early elections. Trudeau's tenure, marked by landmark achievements such as legalising cannabis, advancing gender equality, and climate initiatives, will now be evaluated in the context of his departure. His legacy will hinge on whether the Liberal Party can sustain these accomplishments under new leadership. Justin Trudeau's resignation underscores the complexities of long-term political leadership in a rapidly evolving landscape. While his decision to step down reflects personal and political pragmatism, it also signals a pivotal moment for Canadian democracy. The coming months will determine how effectively the Liberal Party navigates this transition and whether Canada's political institutions can maintain stability amid change. Trudeau's departure opens the door to new opportunities and challenges for Canada's political future.

Trudeau's departure will have significant political and national implications. The resignation sets the stage for a competitive leadership race within the Liberal Party. The choice of the next leader will be critical in determining the party's future direction and its ability to retain power. Trudeau's resignation reshapes Canada's political dynamics. The opposition, particularly the Conservative Party, is likely to leverage this transition period to challenge the Liberals' governance record and push for early elections. Trudeau's tenure, marked by landmark achievements such as legalising cannabis, advancing gender equality, and climate initiatives, will now be evaluated in the context of his departure. His legacy will hinge on whether the Liberal Party can sustain these accomplishments under new leadership. Justin Trudeau's resignation underscores the complexities of long-term political leadership in a rapidly evolving landscape. While his decision to step down reflects personal and political pragmatism, it also signals a pivotal moment for Canadian democracy. The coming months will determine how effectively the Liberal Party navigates this transition and whether Canada's political institutions can maintain stability amid change. Trudeau's departure opens the door to new opportunities and challenges for Canada's political future.

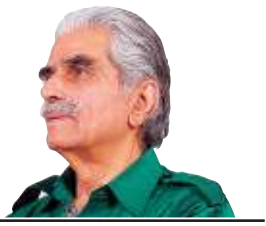
PICTALK



Farmers plant paddy saplings in a field, in Nadia

India's Gorkha Brigade: A legacy at crossroads

The iconic Gorkha Brigade faces an uncertain future with the freeze on Nepal domiciled Gorkha recruitment under the Agnipath scheme



ASHOK K MEHTA

The press and media are flooded with stories about Nepal Domiciled Gorkha soldiers and their imperiled future in the Indian Army under the Agnipath scheme. With the last NDG in India's Gorkha Brigade likely to retire around 2045-50, it is possible two Gorkha soldiers could confront each other in Doklam, or elsewhere along the LAC should NDGs start joining the PLA. Traditionally, they have joined the British Army since the early 19th century, later the Singapore Police and Brunei Army and still later, the French Foreign Legion and the Russian Army (around 15,000 according to Al Jazeera news). Soldiering is in their blood with the first choice always and every time, the British Army has pampered as well as exploited them. On 10 November 2024, Kathmandu Post carried a front-page picture of impeccably smart Gorkhas at an attestation parade in the UK.

Three brothers in a Nepali family could still be in British, Indian and Nepalese armies in that order of preference. But Britain does not recruit Indian Domiciled Gorkhas. NDGs ceased joining the Indian Army for 5 years rendering hopelessly bleak the future of the Gorkha Brigade and a strategic glue that binds India and Nepal. Last year, in November and December, Indian and Nepalese Army Chiefs who became honorary Generals in each other's army spent a week in the other's country and were made much of. Last week, 1/11 Gorkha Rifles commanded by Col JP Singh went for joint training with the Sri Sri Jung battalion of the Nepal Army at Saljhandi near the border town of Butawal. (With PLA Nepal Army does only platoon-level joint training restricted to Kathmandu Valley).

No weapons are carried by either contingent as the host country provides them. No two sovereign armies and their Chiefs have such unique rapport. Despite the shared history, geography and historic links between the two countries and their armies, recruitment of NDGs has been frozen since India took the unilateral decision in June 2022 to change



the terms of engagement that Kathmandu says violated Treaty arrangements. Curiously both countries have remained silent at the political and military levels. India's senior-most officer, Chief of Defence Staff, Gen Anil Chauhan from 11 Gorkha Rifles has been approached by several Gorkha veterans to try to break the stalemate but he is loath to approach PM/RM/NSA saying that the government 'has taken a political decision'. QED

It is his responsibility to raise the decision-making process to the next level as other Army Chiefs in the past have done in the national interest. During the economic blockade in 2015, Gen Dalbir Singh was able to persuade PM Narendra Modi and FM Sushma Swaraj that prolonging the blockade would adversely affect the livelihood of Indian Army Gorkha ex-servicemen and families of serving soldiers in Nepal which in turn would impact bilateral relations. The blockade was ended but bilateral ties were seriously disturbed. After King Gyanendra conducted the Palace coup in 2004, India decided to stop the supply of lethal armaments to the Nepal Army which was fighting the Maoists. Then Army Chief, Gen JJ Singh, recommended against it. In a slanging match between MoD and EAM, Prime



DESPITE THE SHARED HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORIC LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND THEIR ARMIES, RECRUITMENT OF NDGS HAS BEEN FROZEN SINCE INDIA TOOK THE UNILATERAL DECISION IN JUNE 2022 TO CHANGE THE TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT THAT KATHMANDU SAYS VIOLATED TREATY ARRANGEMENTS

Minister Manmohan Singh upheld the embargo. On the other hand, Siachen, Army Chiefs had prevailed in convincing Singh not to budge over any withdrawal from or concessions on Siachen.

In 1986, during the Gorkhaland movement in North Bengal, as a senior Gorkha officer who had been deployed there, I was invited to a meeting by Principal Secretary to PM, Sarla Grewal along with Deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Rawat for discussion on the violence and our response.

In the higher direction of war in 1971, PM Indira Gandhi consulted Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw at every stage for planning and conduct of battle. In 1975, then Army Chief, Gen Gopal Bewoor, 11 Gorkha Rifles convinced Mrs Gandhi of the negative impact of stopping the recruitment of NDGs. So this is not the first time that the absurd idea of ending NDG recruitment has come up. But this time government decided on NDGs that CDS accepted. Lt Gen Sanjeev Chauhan is the senior officer and President Gorkha Brigade which meets annually in February in a unique assembly of seven Gorkha regiments to discuss professional matters. On recruitment of NDGs, they too are stuck at the Army Chief/CDS level. Two years ago, I wrote a letter

on strategic loss accruing from altered rules of NDG recruitment to the PM, PK Mishra. No acknowledgement nor reply was received. Service Chiefs in the past have been willing and able to advise political authority on military matters. The consultative process has stopped with this government. On December 15, 2024, while inaugurating India's World magazine, Foreign Minister Jaishankar conspicuously omitted to mention national security or the military component of international relations as part of India's foreign policy vision. Answering a question last year on why no NDG recruitment he said foreign policy is determined by India's national interest and not that of any other country, implying Nepal. India's national interests in terms of defence and security are entwined with those of Nepal with whom New Delhi claims a special relationship which Kathmandu mildly reaffirms. It was Modi who said in Nepal's Parliament in 2014 that India has fought no war where Nepalese blood was not shed. India-Nepal relations are written in blood.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. The views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUSTRALIA WINS B-G TROPHY

Madam — Australia deserves to be the winner of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy by their immaculate performance under the brilliance of Pat Cummins. While India was beaten thoroughly 3-1, the little hope in the Sydney test was vanquished when the ace Jasprit Bumrah got injured at the inappropriate time. All the credit goes to Bumrah and the world-class bowler claimed the man of the series despite India losing heavily, indicating that he's the supreme bowler from both sides. World stalwarts rated him high with huge respect for him and he has been shortlisted for the ICC men's cricketer of the year award for the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, which has seen him walking tall among geniuses among world cricketers.

It's unfortunate that Captain Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli were the great disappointment and the ultimate reasons for Team India losing the rhythm for the Titanic sink at the end. Though the young Jaiswal has been spectacular and K L Rahul did some good work, Pant played a cameo in a few innings that wasn't good enough for the team to pull back when the rest of the batters failed miserably at the end. Aussies Scott Boland's splendid variation and bounce would make Kohli remember Scott Boland more than Anushka in his dreams in this series by dismissing Virat 4 times out of Boland's 5 innings by having faced 68 balls for a mere 28 runs. Boland came into the side during the middle of the series and was the only breather for the Indian team. Anyhow, the series has not only the test for players but also for the head coach too. Gambhir needs to study a few management lessons. Hope the team India would make a comeback in the upcoming fixtures of T20 against England and in the following months to prove their worth to serve a few Badusa to ICC Chief Jay Shah to bring back sweeter moments for the fans too in the future.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

Create safe online environment for kids



The digital age has revolutionised childhood, with social media becoming an integral part of how young people connect and communicate. Yet, this evolution brings significant risks that demand urgent action. In this backdrop, India's draft rules under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act mandating consent of parents/guardians for minors to open social media accounts are a commendable step in safeguard-

ing children. The proposed rules make social media companies accountable for verifying parental consent through robust measures, empowering the guardians to guide their wards' online interactions.

To refine these rules, additional measures like AI-driven age verification, digital literacy workshops and transparent complaint mechanisms are essential. Regular audits, stakeholder feedback and alignment with global standards will further enhance the framework. By adopting these rules, India contributes to a global effort to create a safer online environment for children. In a world where digital engagement is unavoidable, prioritising the safety and wellbeing of the youngest users is not merely a responsibility but also an ethical imperative. Building collaboration among parents, educators and social media platforms is crucial for lasting change.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

EDUCATION SYSTEM NEEDS REFORM

Madam—This refers to the article on turning Canada's crisis into India's opportunity. This looks to be an incongruent aspiration. Because Indian industries are already expressing their difficulties in getting recruitable skilled workers. This crisis is further confirmed by the latest programme to train 10 lakh youth as apprentices. 500 industries are listed out to engage in this programme in which both the trainees and the engaged industries are incentivised. The fact is the participants are already educated diploma or degree holders. The education system is yet to be tuned in such a manner as to make those completing education employable with appropriate skills and enough knowledge. It would be more appropriate to correct our systems before aiming at utilising others' crises into our opportunities. Having put education in the hands of the private players, the quality of education suffers the most. Except producing degree holders, simply by utilising the talent of byhearing and reproducing no

scope for creativity is offered. In the name of introducing new educational system subjects like astrology is being introduced. The education system urgently needs a total revamping to make it meaningful.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

BIDHURI SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam —BJP candidate Ramesh Bidhuri's statement, "We will make all the roads in Kalkaji like Priyanka Gandhi's cheeks," is not just an insult but also a reflection of his mentality. If such remarks can be made by a prominent senior party candidate, what can we expect from an ordinary citizen? The BJP should take strict action against Ramesh Bidhuri, as such a derogatory statement by a party member not only tarnishes his reputation but also damages the party's image. He should issue a public apology for this remark.

Priya Thakur | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Digital shield: Safeguarding children from the digital trap

The Indian government has proposed the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025 to fortify children's online safety through robust data protection measures

The digital revolution has profoundly transformed how we live, learn, and connect. While this transformation offers immense opportunities for growth and development, it also poses significant risks, especially for vulnerable populations such as children. The digital world is fraught with challenges, from exposure to inappropriate content to exploitation through targeted advertising. Recognising the urgent need for robust protections, the Indian government has introduced the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.



These rules, still in draft form, have the potential to safeguard children from falling into digital traps by establishing a comprehensive framework for responsible data handling. A cornerstone of the draft rules is the requirement for verifiable parental consent before processing children's data. This mandate ensures that entities cannot collect or use data about minors without explicit authorisation from their parents or legal guardians. For example, creating an account on a social media platform or an online gaming service requires parents to verify their identity and approve the data processing activities. This provision is vital in reducing the risks posed by predatory targeting, identity theft, and unauthorised data collection. By putting parents in control, the rules prevent businesses from exploiting children's data for financial gain. This safeguard is particularly important in protecting children from behavioural profiling, which can have long-term implications on their psychological development and privacy. Educational institutions play a critical role in a child's growth, but they, too, rely heavily on data collection. The draft rules explicitly

address this by restricting data processing in schools and allied institutions to activities that are essential for educational purposes or the safety of students. For instance, tracking attendance, monitoring behaviour, and ensuring the security of transportation services are permissible, but excessive or irrelevant data collection is prohibited. These safeguards ensure that children's data is not misused or repurposed without clear justification. The digital world can be a double-edged sword. While it offers educational resources and entertainment, it also exposes children to inappropriate or harmful content. The draft rules mandate that data fiduciaries implement measures to ensure that children cannot access content that negatively affects their well-being. This includes filtering out materials related to violence, explicit content, and other age-inappropriate material.

Such provisions are critical in protecting the mental and emotional health of children, who are particularly susceptible to the influence of harmful digital stimuli. Moreover, they underscore the importance of collaboration between regulators and technology companies to create a safer online environment. Consent managers play a pivotal role in the new framework. As intermediaries, they enable data principals—in this case, parents or guardians—to give, manage, review, and withdraw consent for data processing activities. These managers must ensure that the process is transparent and user-friendly, empowering parents to monitor how their children's data is being utilised. The draft rules also require consent managers to maintain detailed records of consent given, denied, or withdrawn, enhancing accountability across the board. While the draft rules represent a significant leap forward, their successful implementation hinges on overcoming several challenges. This calls for innovative solutions, such as integrating verified digital IDs like Aadhaar with consent management systems.

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



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN TEN MEANINGFUL RESOLUTIONS FOR 2025

It is time to focus on resolutions that align with our aspirations



SHAINY SHARMA

The dawn of a new year provides a blank canvas to rewrite your story, redefine your priorities, and reimagine the future. In 2025, seize this opportunity by setting resolutions that not only align with your aspirations but also enhance your quality of life. This year calls for more than just ambitious declarations – it demands realistic, sustainable changes that can truly transform our lives. Here are ten meaningful resolutions worth keeping making 2025 your best year yet.

1. **Digital Wellness Revolution:** The first and foremost is to break free from screen addiction by implementing a "sunset hour" for devices. Keeping aside one hour before bedtime for offline activities like reading or meditation will definitely help in improving both sleep quality as well as mental health.

2. **Financial Intelligence Upgrade:** Financial stability is a key component of a stress-free life. Start by evaluating your spending habits and creating a realistic budget by dedicating at least 30 minutes weekly to learning about investments and financial planning. By aiming to save consistently and work towards reducing debt, setting financial goals can provide clarity and motivation.



3. **Sustainable Living Practices:** As global awareness of environmental challenges grows, adopting sustainable habits is more important than ever. By transforming your environmental impact through practical steps such as switching to reusable products, adopting a plant-based meal day, and calculating your monthly carbon footprint to identify areas for improvement.

4. **De-clutter your space:** A cluttered environment often mirrors a cluttered mind. Take time in 2025 to organize and declutter your living and working spaces. Try working towards donating or recycling items that are no longer in need and creating systems to maintain the same.

5. **Relationship Enrichment:** Human connections are the bedrock of happiness and fulfilment. This year, try making a conscious effort to nurture your relationships with family, friends, and colleagues.

6. **Physical Health Revolution:** Developing regular physical activity is the cornerstone of good health. In 2025, move a daily habit. Whether it's strength training, yoga, swimming, or brisk walking, find an activity you enjoy and stick to it. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week to improve cardiovascular health, strengthen muscles, and boost mental well-being.

7. **Mental Fitness Focus:** A positive mindset can transform your experiences. In 2025, focus on the good in every situation, practice self-compassion, and surround yourself with uplifting individuals. Integrate daily mental health practices such as five minutes of mindfulness, gratitude journaling, or therapeutic creativity. Positivity fuels resilience and empowers you to overcome challenges with grace.

8. **Knowledge Expansion:** Read one book monthly on subjects outside your comfort zone. This broadens perspectives and keeps your mind agile in our rapidly changing world.

9. **Community Engagement:** Helping others fosters a sense of purpose and connection. Find a cause you care about and dedicate time or resources to it. Community service not only helps others but also provides networking opportunities and personal fulfilment. Volunteering not only benefits those in need but also enriches your own life with meaning and fulfilment.

10. **Creative Expression:** Dedicate time weekly to any form of creativity – writing, painting, music, or crafts. Creative outlets reduce stress and enhance problem-solving skills. As we embrace 2025, let's move beyond traditional resolution-setting and focus on creating meaningful, lasting changes that enhance both our personal growth and our impact on the world around us.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Farmers shunning use of nano-urea despite promotion



UTTAM GUPTA

Despite a strong push from the government and ambitious targets for production and adoption, the fiscal year 2023-24 witnessed a sharp 43 per cent drop in nano-urea sales

Last year, around this time, the Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers Mansukh Mandaviya had said "Consumption of urea this fiscal (read: FY 2023-24) is likely to be 8 percent less than in FY 2022-23 due to the use of its liquid nano variant. Because of this and higher domestic production, import of urea, the soil nutrient that accounts for 70 percent of the fertilizer subsidy bill, declined more than a fifth on year in 2023. Further spread of nano urea consumption and the start of a new large urea plant (Talcher in Odisha) by September 2023 would lead to elimination of imports in two-three years". Nano-urea is urea in the form of a nanoparticle containing nitrogen particles of 20-50 nanometres (nm) in size. It provides nitrogen or 'N' to plants in liquid form as an alternative to conventional urea which is mostly supplied as prill (it is a small diameter, spherical white solid). The minister's statement pointed towards the commitment of the government to promote the use of nano-urea so that imports of conventional urea are brought down to eliminating it.

However, according to data from the Fertiliser Association of India (FAI) – an umbrella body of the fertilizer industry – the sales of Nano urea plummeted by nearly 43 per cent during FY 2023-24 (this happened after growing by a significant 62 per cent during FY 2022-23). Meanwhile, the total production of Nano urea during FY 2023-24 was 81 per cent less than in the previous FY.

The manufacturers knew that there wouldn't be much demand for it; so they reduced the output even as its production capacity rose by 59 per cent. Why did the sales of Nano-urea decrease? But, before that, we need to understand why the government is so keen to promote its use.

The beauty of nano-urea lies in its ultra-small size and high surface area (10,000 times over 1 mm urea prill), which enables easy absorption by plant leaves. These particles enter the plant through cuticular pores, or stomata, and then penetrate the cell membranes through endocytosis. Once inside the cell, these release nutrients slowly and ensure full absorption by eliminating waste that normally happens with conventional means. The innovator namely Nano Biotechnology Research Centre (NBRC) of the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) claims its efficiency (a measure of how much of the 'N' supplied from it is absorbed by the plant) is over 80 per cent against around 40 per cent for the conventional stuff.

The use of nano-urea also results in higher crop yield by 3-16 per cent when compared to traditional urea. Moreover, unlike the latter which raises environmental concerns including nitrate leaching, global warming, ozone layer depletion, and groundwater pollution, the former causes less soil, water and air pollution. According to a study, two foliar sprays of nano-urea curtailed nitrogen load by 25 per cent, besides reducing the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission from 164.2 to 416.5 kg CO₂-eq ha⁻¹ under different crops.



FOR A COUNTRY THAT DEPENDS HEAVILY ON IMPORTS AND EVEN INCURS HUGE SUBSIDIES, WHY WOULD THE GOVERNMENT ALLOW EXPORTS? THE INDUSTRY, HOWEVER, CONCEDES THAT THERE WAS UNSOLD INVENTORY WITH DEALERS AND THAT MIGHT HAVE IMPACTED SALES DURING 2023-24

A more startling claim made by IFFCO/NBRC is that a 500-ml bottle of nano-urea is equivalent to a 45-kg bag of conventional urea.

The latter contains 46 percent N nutrient, or 20 kg (45x0.46). In contrast, the former contains 4 per cent N, or 20 grams (500x0.04). The equivalence between the two means that urea in nano-form with a mere 20 grams can achieve what conventional urea does with 20 kg - a gap of 1000 times in efficiency. It is this monumental difference in efficiency that also enables the manufacturer to deliver a 500-ml bottle of nano-urea to farmers for Rs 240 without any subsidy support.

In contrast, the cost of supplying equivalent conventional urea in a 45 kg bag, is over eleven times at around Rs 2650 (while, this figure is for imported urea, even for urea produced domestically, the cost is substantially higher and varies from unit to unit), the Government has to give a subsidy of Rs 2410 to make available to the farmer at the same price of Rs 240. There being 22.22 bags in a ton of urea (1000/45), the subsidy on the import of a ton of conventional urea comes to Rs 53,550 (2410x22.22).

If we were to replace one million tons of imported urea with nano-urea which doesn't require any subsidy support, the government would save Rs 53,550 million or Rs 5355 crore. Mandaviya had kept a target of producing about 55 million bottles of nano-urea during FY 2023-24 which replaces 2.5 million tons of conventional urea. This would yield savings of around Rs 13,400 crore

in subsidy.

Around 600 cubic metres of natural gas (NG) is needed to produce a ton of conventional urea. For generating the same effect through the nano-urea - given the efficiency difference of 1000 times, the requirement of NG would be a mere 0.6 cubic meters (600/1000). This would lead to huge savings in the import of gas (currently, India imports one-third of its requirement for domestic urea production). Drastic reduction in load on infrastructure will be a bonus. Imagine the impact of handling, moving, storing and delivering a 500 - ml bottle of nano-urea vis-à-vis a bag of conventional urea containing 45,000 grams of the material.

The use of nano-urea thus offers unprecedented possibilities in terms of not just a substantial reduction in fertilizer subsidy but also trimming excess consumption of urea thereby reducing the imbalance in fertilizer use improving soil health, and helping achieve the environment-related goals. Additional benefits will accrue by way of savings in foreign exchange outgo, and a reduction in the current account deficit.

What explains the setback during FY 2023-24? Reportedly, the industry's argument that the fall in production and sales was due to 'the launch of new products such as Nano urea plus, with a higher concentration of nitrogen and reduction in sales of earlier variants of Nano urea that had lower nitrogen concentration' is untenable. This is because whatever the level of 'N' concentration, fundamentally the product

remains

'Nano-urea'. Another explanation is that 'the drop in sales could be because fact that farmers had bought large quantities of Nano urea in the previous years' doesn't cut ice. Farmers generally are not prone to stocking fertilizer material as the majority of them just don't have the wherewithal to hold stocks.

A third possibility that lower domestic sales could be due to the export of nano-urea doesn't make sense. For a country that depends heavily on imports and even incurs huge subsidies, why would the government allow exports? The industry, however, concedes that there was unsold inventory with dealers and that might have impacted sales during 2023-24. This shows that even during 2022-23, farmers didn't lift nano-urea to the extent revealed by the sales figures of that year. One can't escape inferring that nano-urea could be losing charm amongst farmers.

If it is due to factors like their being unable to cope with the rigours of the new technology (spraying it on leaves is more challenging than prill urea) or shortage of skilled labour etc, those can be overcome. But, if it is due to tall claims regarding efficiency or yield going haywire, it is a matter of concern. For instance, a study released by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) in January 2024 says that the 'use of nano-urea led to decrease in the yield of wheat and rice by 21.6 per cent 13 per cent respectively'.

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

Prashant Kishor's Jansuraj: A new political force or BJP's strategic move in Bihar?

As the 2025 assembly elections approach, the big question remains: Can Kishor truly reshape Bihar's political future, or is his role simply to disrupt opposition unity?

Prashant Kishor, a name synonymous with political strategy, has made his debut in Bihar politics with the launch of his party, Jansuraj. Drawing an analogy to a potter, Kishor likens his work to shaping the best clay into something meaningful, declaring, "We are bringing forward the best people of society. My role is to make this party win. I am in the role of a sutradhar (narrator); I have announced after the formation of the party that I will not run it. The party people will run the party." This declaration, however, has done little to quell speculations about his aspirations. Rumors abound that Kishor is vying for the post of Chief Minister, a claim he repeatedly denies. "I am not contest-



RAJESH KUMAR SINGH

ing the elections," he insists. "I do not feel like contesting, but if the party decides that only I can secure a seat, then it will be a collective decision. I am not bigger than the party." Despite his assertions, Kishor's entry into Bihar politics has stirred discussions about the impact of Jansuraj on the state's political landscape, particularly in the context of the 2025 assembly elections. Questions loom: will his party

weaken the NDA or the INDIA alliance? Political analysts suggest that Kishor, with his background as a strategist for both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, could be a disruptive force. Some even speculate that he might be a BJP-backed "pawn," designed to fragment opposition votes, a claim fueled by his apparent inability to align with the Congress or RJD leadership.

Kishor's criticisms of Nitish Kumar's governance have been particularly sharp. He has lambasted Kumar's leadership style, though his past affiliations with the BJP have also fueled skepticism. Adding to the intrigue, JDU leaders have dismissed Kishor's efforts as insignifi-

cant.

JDU, meanwhile, continues to champion causes like the nationwide caste census and the "One Nation, One Election" policy. It also plans to hold a workers' meeting in Nalanda on January 20, 2025, to gauge its position before the elections. JDU's reliance on caste-based politics, particularly its focus on Mahadalits, underscores its strategy for retaining relevance. Recognizing the centrality of caste and community dynamics in Bihar politics, Kishor has crafted his approach accordingly. His first major move was targeting the Muslim and backward caste vote banks, which collectively account for 53.8 per cent of the electorate. To solidify his position, he announced plans



to field more candidates from Muslim and extremely backward communities in the upcoming elections. The appointment of a Dalit as Jansuraj's first working president further underscored this strategy. This decision, however, drew criticism, with some perceiving it as an overt counter to JDU's Mahadalit card. Kishor's

emphasis on Dalit representation, though a significant gesture, was met with resistance from sections of the political spectrum. Before launching Jansuraj, Kishor spent two years traveling across Bihar, conducting a padayatra and engaging in public dialogues in villages and towns. His campaign drew heavily from the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, echoing a narrative of grassroots empowerment. However, his advocacy for ending Bihar's liquor prohibition—a policy closely associated with Nitish Kumar's governance—has sparked controversy. Critics argue that this stance contradicts Gandhian principles and exposes Kishor to allegations of opportunism.

Despite the criticisms, Kishor's efforts signal a genuine attempt to address Bihar's long-standing issues. Bihar has long grappled with challenges like unemployment, poor infrastructure, and rising crime. Kishor positions Jansuraj as a platform to tackle these problems, but whether he can deliver remains to be seen.

Kishor's focus on marginalised communities, grassroots dialogue, and inclusive leadership sets a distinct tone. However, his political credibility and ability to translate ideas into action will be closely scrutinized. As the assembly elections approach, the political battlefield in Bihar is becoming increasingly dynamic. JDU's focus on its traditional voter

base and initiatives like the caste census may clash directly with Jansuraj's appeal to similar demographics. Meanwhile, speculation about Kishor's BJP connections and his critique of Nitish Kumar suggest that his presence will influence alliances and electoral strategies across the board. Prashant Kishor's entry into Bihar politics marks a significant shift. By forming Jansuraj, he has sought to disrupt the status quo and present a new alternative. However, whether he can truly emerge as a transformative leader or will merely fragment votes remains the critical question.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Tata Digital forays into retail investment

Tata Digital on Tuesday announced its foray into the retail investment space with the launch of its fixed deposits marketplace on the superapp Tata Neu. Customers can invest in fixed deposits through the marketplace with leading financial institutions at interest rates of up to 9.1 per cent without the need for a savings bank account, the company said in a statement. "With our fixed deposit marketplace, we aim to democratise access to high-yield, fixed-return instruments from multiple trusted providers. This simple and secure platform is designed to offer competitive interest rates, empowering both seasoned investors and newcomers to grow their wealth confidently and effortlessly," Tata Digital Chief Business Officer, Financial Services, Gaurav Hazrati said. The company said customers invest as little as Rs 1,000. With bank investments insured up to Rs 5 lakh by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC), they get safety and complete peace of mind. Customers can choose from both banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) like Suryoday Small Finance Bank, Shriram Finance, Bajaj Finance, for a wide range of investment options, it added.



Exim Bank India raises \$1 billion from overseas

Exim Bank of India has raised USD 1 billion (about Rs 8,570 crore) from overseas at lowest ever spread to fund business growth, the Department of Financial Services said on Tuesday. "Fantastic start to the year by Indian issuers in global capital markets, with state-owned @IndiaEximBank raising \$1 bn 10-year USD-denominated bonds at lowest ever spread (100bps) for USD-denominated public bond by a BBB-rated issuer in Asia," the Department of Financial Services (DFS) said in a post on X. This demonstrates the confidence of overseas investors in the India story, it said, adding, this landmark transaction marks a strong start to the year for Indian issuers in the international debt markets, supporting Exim Bank's mandate and contributing to the vision of Viksit Bharat. Exim Bank provides financial assistance to exporters and importers, and functions as the principal financial institution for coordinating the working of institutions engaged in financing export and import of goods and services with a view to promoting the country's international trade.



Indo Farm shares climb over 27 pc in market debut

Shares of Indo Farm Equipment Ltd on Tuesday ended with a premium of over 27 per cent against the issue price of Rs 215. The stock started the trade at Rs 258.40, reflecting a premium of 20.18 per cent on the BSE. During the day, it jumped 33.44 per cent to Rs 286.90. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 272.70, up 26.83 per cent. At the NSE, it listed at Rs 256, up 19 per cent. The stock ended at Rs 273.69, a gain of 27.29 per cent. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 1,310.37 crore. In traded volume terms, 24.07 lakh shares of the firm were traded at the BSE and 242.73 lakh shares at the NSE during the day. The initial public offering (IPO) of Indo Farm Equipment garnered a whopping 227.57 times subscription on the closing day of bidding on Thursday. The Rs 260-crore initial share sale had a price band of Rs 204-215 per share. The IPO had a fresh issue of 86 lakh equity shares and an offer for sale (OFS) of 35 lakh shares by promoter Ranbir Singh Khadwalia.

GDP growth likely to slip to 4-yr low of 6.4%: Govt

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economic growth rate is estimated to slip to a four-year low of 6.4 per cent in 2024-25, mainly on account of poor showing by the manufacturing and services sector, according to government data released on Tuesday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) rate of 6.4 per cent will be the lowest since the Covid year (2020-21) when the country witnessed a negative growth of 5.8 per cent. It was 9.7 per cent in 2021-22; 7 per cent in 2022-23; and 8.2 per cent in the last fiscal ended March 2024.

The first advance estimates of National Income for 2024-25 released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) is lower than the 6.6 per cent projected by the Reserve Bank in December 2024. It is also a tad lower than the finance ministry's initial projection of 6.5-7 per cent.

The advance estimates will be used in preparation for the Union Budget to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the



Lok Sabha on February 1.

The economic growth slowed to a seven-quarter low of 5.4 per cent during the July-September period. It was 6.7 per cent in the first quarter (April-June).

The manufacturing sector output is expected to decelerate to 5.3 per cent from a high of 9.9 per cent recorded in the previous fiscal, NSO said.

The services sector, comprising trade, hotels, transport and communications, is estimated to expand at 5.8 per cent against 6.4 per cent in 2023-24.

lakh crore in 2024-25 compared to Rs 295.36 lakh crore in 2023-24, showing a growth rate of 9.7 per cent.

The size of the economy, as per the current estimates, is USD 3.8 trillion (@Rs 85.7/USD) during 2024-25.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, Iera opined that while the NSO's implicit H2 FY2025 projections seem reasonable, some of the sectoral numbers could report higher growth prints.

"In our view, the GDP growth in FY2026 will be crucially influenced by global uncertainties as well as domestic uncertainties, amidst considerable base effects. Benefitting from an anticipated capex push in the upcoming Budget, we project the GDP growth at 6.5 per cent in FY2026," she said. Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil, said the decline in government capital expenditure, a key driver of post-pandemic recovery, during the second quarter is unlikely to be compensated for in the rest of the fiscal.

Finmin to hold talks with MFI players amid rising bad loans

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Ministry will hold a meeting with microfinance institutions (MFIs) on Wednesday amid rising bad loans and delinquencies across all types of lenders in the sector.

According to sources, the Department of Financial Services Secretary is likely to chair the meeting with senior officials of MFIs here.

The meeting assumes significance as it comes with the sector showing signs of stress and rising delinquencies.

Credit to the microfinance sector by banks (including SFBs), NBFC-MFIs and other NBFCs has decelerated during the current financial year so far after witnessing rapid growth during the last three years, according to a latest report of the Reserve Bank.

"The microfinance sector is showing signs of stress, with rising delinquencies across all types of lenders and ticket

sizes. During H1:2024-25, share of stressed assets increased, with 31-180 days past due (dpd) rising from 2.15 per cent in March 2024 to 4.30 per cent in September 2024," said the RBI's Financial Stability Report, December 2024.

Importantly, among borrowers who had availed loans from multiple lenders and those with



higher credit exposure, impairment remained high.

RBI report said that alongside rising delinquencies, borrower indebtedness has risen notably: the share of borrowers availing loans from four or more lenders has increased from 3.6 per cent to 5.8 per cent during the last three years (September 2024 over September 2021).

Banks' profits set to moderate as bad assets inch up: Ind-Ra

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Increase in bad assets will impact banks' profitability in FY26, a domestic rating agency said on Tuesday.

Indian banks' profitability is at an "inflection point" in FY25 and is likely to moderate further in the fiscal afterwards, India Ratings and Research said, adding that FY24 was the peak for profits.

"Profitability (is)... expected to moderate further in FY26 with an expectation of rising slippages and higher credit costs over the FY24 levels which was at decadal lows," the agency's head and director financial institutions Karan Gupta told reporters here.

A bulk of the asset quality stress will emanate from the unsecured retail exposure, Gupta said, stressing that the same is "manageable" and will not have any systemic ramifications.

The under Rs 50,000 retail unsecured portion accounts for around 0.4 per cent of the banking credit, while only 3.6

per cent of the advances are the ones having a lending rate of over 11 per cent, the agency said.

The agency further said that credit growth has "lost steam", and sharply revised down its FY25 system credit growth estimate to 13-13.5 per cent as against 15 per cent ear-



lier, and also added that the core interest income is likely to be hit in the next fiscal.

Banks' net interest margin (NIM) will narrow by 0.10 per cent in the new fiscal due to a transmission of past hikes, higher slippages and a change in accounting policies, the agency said.

The gap between credit and deposit growth, which has moderated lately, is likely to narrow in FY26, the agency believes.

'Reduce GST to 1% in Budget'

Gems, jewellery sector urges govt

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The gems and jewellery sector has urged the government for a reduction in goods and services tax (GST) to 1 per cent on revenue equivalence ratio to ease the cost burden on the industry in the upcoming Budget.

"We seek rationalisation of taxes and availability of finance to support business," the All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) Chairman Rajesh Rokde said in a statement on Tuesday. With the continuously increasing gold rates, the current rate of GST is increasingly becoming a burden for the industry and end customers, he said.

Therefore, GJC is urging for a reduction in GST from the current 3 per cent to 1 per cent in the upcoming Budget, which will encourage compliance, Rokde said. The tax reduction will enhance affordability for consumers, especially in rural areas, and most importantly, improve revenue collection by increasing the size of the formal economy, he added.

Gold climbs Rs 700 to Rs 79,700 per 10 gm

Silver jumps Rs 1,300

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 700 to Rs 79,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday due to fresh buying by jewellers and retailers and depreciation in rupee, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

On Monday, the precious metal ended at Rs 79,000 per 10 grams.

Silver rose sharply by Rs 1,300 to hit a three-week high of Rs 92,000 per kg on Tuesday. The white metal had closed at Rs 90,700 per kg in the previous session.

The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity rallied Rs 700 to Rs 79,300 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,600 per 10 grams on Monday.

Traders said gold prices increased due to strong trends in the overseas markets and rise in domestic demand that aided in bullion prices. On Tuesday, the rupee fell 5 paise to settle at 85.73 (provisional) against the US dollar, as higher crude oil prices and outflow of foreign funds continued to weigh on the local



President Trump's policy attracts some haven flows and provides support for precious metals," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Comex silver futures in the Asian trading hours traded 0.73 per cent higher at USD 30.81 per ounce.

"Market participants are closely watching the US ISM Services PMI and JOLTS job openings data to be released later on Tuesday, alongside non-farm employment change and unemployment claims reports," Abans Holdings' Chief Executive Officer Chintan Mehta said.

Investors will also focus on upcoming Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) member speeches scheduled for later this week, which will gauge the Federal Reserve's next policy move, Mehta added.

According to Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at August, this week is critical for gold traders, as they will closely monitor key economic data.

Indices rebound after two-day decline

Intense buying in blue-chip stocks like Reliance, ICICI Bank

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Tuesday after sliding for the past two sessions, driven by intense buying in blue-chip stocks like Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank and L&T amid a firm trend in global markets.

However, a decline in IT stocks ahead of the earnings season and depreciating rupee against the greenback restricted the market rally, traders said.

In a range-bound trade, the 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 234.12 points or 0.30 per cent to settle at 78,199.11. During the day, it jumped 487.75 points or 0.62

per cent to 78,452.74.

The NSE Nifty gained 91.85 points or 0.39 per cent to 23,707.90.

"Amid positive global cues indicating no major concerns regarding HMPV, the domestic market partially recovered from yesterday's sharp sell-off but traded within a range ahead of the critical first advance estimates for India's FY25 GDP. This comes in the context of moderated growth expectations, as the RBI recently revised its growth projection



downwards. "In the near term, the market is expected to remain cautious, awaiting signs of earnings recovery during the upcoming result season, while also

dealing with ongoing FII selling, which is driven by the strengthening dollar, rising US bond yields, and reduced expectations of further rate cuts," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

From the 30-share blue-chip pack, Tata Motors,

Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints, Nestle India, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.

In contrast, Zomato, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Infosys were among the losers. "Despite the respite, markets continue to face significant selling pressure during recovery attempts, indicating that bears remain in control," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge jumped 1.74 per cent, and the midcap index climbed 0.77 per cent.

e-Shram portal now available in all 22 scheduled languages

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday launched multilingual functionality on the e-Shram portal to provide seamless access to various government schemes for unorganised workers. In line with the vision of making eShram a 'One-Stop-Solution', this portal will now be available in all 22 Scheduled Languages, a labour ministry statement said.

The event to launch multilingual functionality was attended by the Secretary, Ministry of Labour & Employment and several senior officials. It also

marked the achievement of another milestone in the government's efforts to provide comprehensive social protection to unorganised workers in the country.

Meity's Bhashini project has been leveraged to upgrade the eShram portal with 22 languages. The previous version was available only in English, Hindi, Kannada and Marathi.

In his address, Minister of Labour & Employment Mandaviya highlighted the growing trust in the e-Shram platform, saying the portal records an average of over 30,000 registrations per day by unorganised workers.

Over 40 new product launches expected at Auto Expo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

More than 40 new product launches are expected at the upcoming Auto Expo which will be held under the umbrella of Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025 from January 17-22, a government official said on Tuesday.

With visas continuing to be an issue, large scale participation of Chinese companies are unlikely although some of them are participating at the expo, Joint Secretary at Ministry of Commerce and Industry Vimal Anand said here at the sidelines of cur-

tain raiser of 'Bharat Battery Show' which will also be a part of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025.

"Last year the mobility show was only held at Bharat Mandapam, but this year, we have multiplied it by three times and we are going to organise it at not only Bharat Mandapam, but also at Yashobhoomi (India International Convention Centre, Dwarka) and India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida," he said.

The auto show will be the main attraction, and along with automobiles other seg-



ments related to the sector, including battery show and tyre show, besides the electronics show will be held at Bharat Mandapam, he added.

"There are more than 40

plus launches which are going to happen during the auto show," Anand said, these will be across vehicle segments ranging from two-wheelers to passenger vehi-

cles to buses. The auto show will be a B2B as well as a B2C show and a "huge footfall" is expected, he added.

When asked about the visa issues of Chinese participants, Anand said, "China is still a work in progress.

You know the concerns of the various Indian ministries, who are involved in screening of the visitors. We are still working on it. I can't tell you with certainty."

For large scale participation of Chinese companies in the expo, he said, "Visa may be a problem because it is not in one person's hand.

In India so many systems are in place about checking the visitors from China."

However, Anand said, "At least some are participating. BYD is going to be there."

Anand said, while the components show will be held at Yashobhoomi, at Greater Noida there will be the construction equipment which will showcase urban mobility infrastructure, comprising not only land mobility and surface transport mobility but also air transport such as drone show, as well as water transport infrastructure.

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 NIT No.: 21/EES/RR/HC/2024-25. Dated: 07-01-2025
 Name of work: For (1) No.s of Work "Laying of Nylon Carpet" Estimate Amount: Rs. 2.60 Lakhs, Last Date & Time for Receipt of Bids: 09-01-2025 @ 3.01 P.M. Name & Address Officer Cell No.: Sri K. Srinivas, Executive Engineer, Saroornagar Circle-5, GHMC. (M) : 9898930602. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ <http://www.eprocurement.telangana.gov.in/> Sd/- Executive Engineer Saroornagar Circle-5, GHMC

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"ELECTRICITY SAVED IS ELECTRICITY PRODUCED"
 Tender Notice No. 19/24-25
 Sealed Tenders are invited from registered eligible Contractors for (A) Spec-T-79 (G): Enhancement of PTR- 1 at 33/ 11 KV Police Command Control Centre SS & (B) Spec-T-81 (G): Enhancement of PTR- 2 at 33/ 11KV Police Command Control Centre SS (For further details please visit website <https://tgsouthernpower.org> Phone: 040-23431333/1112/1125. Sd/- Superintending Engineer/ SCANDTA TGSDFCL/ Hyderabad R.O. No. 8732/PCL/AD/110204-25, Dt. 07-01-2025

Fight beyond kickboxing ring

VAISHNAVI TIKKA
 vaishnavi.tikka@gmail.com

Naisha Bajaj's journey in martial arts is a story of passion, perseverance and purpose. What started as an after-school activity in 2014 has grown into an illustrious career, earning her gold medals on national and international stages. A trailblazer in kickboxing, Naisha has not only defied the odds but also paved the way for women in this male-dominated sport. Her dedication, resilience and vision to elevate the sport of kickboxing in Telangana and India make her an inspiring figure for aspiring athletes.

"Kickboxing started as a way to stay active, but today, it defines who I am," says Naisha. From winning championships to advocating for government recognition and better support for athletes, her journey is a testament to the power of hard work and unrelenting determination.

"I started kickboxing when my mother enrolled me in Taekwondo at the age of four. By seven, I switched to kickboxing, and it has since become a big part of my life."

Naisha comes from a supportive family. Her father is a software engineer, and her mother, from a business background, has been her biggest cheerleader. "My parents have always valued physical fitness," she explains. "My mother, in particular, has been especially supportive. She paid for my training and accompanied me to classes, waiting patiently during every session. Her support has been crucial to my journey."

Naisha has competed in numerous international and national championships, earning gold medals at every level. Her first significant victory came at the Telangana State Kickboxing Championship in Mahbubnagar in 2022. She went on to dominate other state-level championships in Jadcherla, Wanaparthy and Warangal.

Her achievements extend to the global stage as well. She clinched gold medals at the Indian International Kickboxing Championships in New Delhi (2022 and 2024), the Khelo India Women's Kickboxing League in Hyderabad (2023) and the National Kickboxing Championship in Goa (2024).

Currently in her second year of intermediate studies, Naisha competes in the senior Full-Contact Kickboxing category. "Balancing school and training is challenging, but kickboxing has taught me discipline and resilience," she says. Training under the guidance of coach Suresh Patil at Iskimos Academy, Naisha continues to refine her skills.

What began as an after-school activity has evolved into a way of life. "Martial arts started as something to keep me active after school but now, it's more than a hobby—it's a way of life. Kickboxing has made me resilient and disciplined."

She attributes her mental and physical strength to the rigorous training and challenges she has faced over the years. Even an injury didn't deter her spirit. "The injury wasn't because of kickboxing; it was an accident. The recovery was painful in the first month, but I kept going to training. Kickboxing made the process easier, as it helped me stay focused and in the flow."

Naisha's ambitions go beyond personal accolades. She dreams of representing Telangana and India on larger platforms, but she also recognises the systemic challenges athletes like her face. One significant hurdle is the lack of government recognition for kickboxing in Telangana.

Naisha Bajaj, a decorated kickboxer from Telangana, is not just a champion in the ring but also a passionate advocate for the recognition and growth of kickboxing in her state. With multiple gold medals in national and international competitions, her ambition stretches beyond personal accolades—she wants to inspire young athletes and bring systemic change to the sport.

"I would like to represent Telangana and India," Naisha declares with determination. Her advice to aspiring athletes reflects her resilient mindset: "Be mentally prepared for setbacks, challenges, and financial constraints. Never give up."

For Naisha, the journey to the top has not been

In an exclusive conversation with The Pioneer, Naisha Bajaj, Telangana's rising kickboxing star, opens up about her journey from a curious four-year-old in martial arts to a decorated champion on international and national stages.



without its struggles. She openly acknowledges the financial hurdles that many athletes like her face. "Not everyone comes from a wealthy background," she says. "For me, it has always been a challenge, but I managed to cope with that."

Despite these constraints, she has continued to excel, proving that passion and perseverance can overcome even the toughest obstacles.

One of the most significant challenges for kickboxers in Telangana is the lack of government recognition for the sport. This, she explains, has far-reaching consequences.

"The Telangana government does not recognize kickboxing as a sport," she laments. "Because of this, all the kickboxers in Telangana are denied government jobs under sports quotas."

The lack of official acknowledgment not only deprives athletes of career opportunities but also limits the growth of kickboxing as a sport in the state.

Despite these setbacks, kickboxing enjoys a strong following in Telangana. "The state has 10,000 kickboxers. Out of these, 700 to 1,000 are actively competing," she reveals.

This vibrant community demonstrates the potential for the sport to flourish if given the right support. Naisha strongly believes that increased recognition and resources could unlock this potential.

Going ahead, she points to the latest developments in Andhra Pradesh as an example of what Telangana could achieve with better policies. "The Andhra Pradesh government recently increased their sports budget and revised their sports policy to include more disciplines," she notes. "Telangana should follow similar steps. We need better policies, training facilities, and financial support to attract more talent and encourage participation."

Naisha sees a brighter future for kickboxing if systemic changes are implemented. "More funds for kickboxing will drive more people toward the sport," she asserts.

Her journey, marked by resilience and an unyielding spirit, serves as an inspiration to aspiring athletes. At the same time, her advocacy highlights the need for greater government support for non-mainstream sports like kickboxing.

Through her achievements and efforts, Naisha Bajaj is not only making her mark as a champion but also paving the way for a better future for kickboxing in Telangana and India.

Shaping the future of learning

At a time when global citizenship is becoming normative, the approach to education also demands a fresh perspective. Unlike traditional models where the focus remains fixated on rote learning, modern pedagogies underscore whole-person education to develop transdisciplinary skills and a comprehensive worldview in a dynamic learning environment. As educators enter a new academic year, Abhishek Mohan Gupta, Founder and President of the Board of Management at Shrewsbury International School India, explores the key trends likely to shape education in 2025.

SOFT SKILLS TO GET PROMINENCE

Much has been discussed about the role of technology in redefining education, particularly in data analytics, teaching techniques and classroom dynamics. This shift toward technology however cannot diminish the importance of soft skills like critical thinking, communication and emotional intelligence. Stronger emphasis on multiculturalism and multilingualism affords students a chance to cultivate respect for diversity, empathy as well as humanism essential for global citizenship. Modern pedagogies will also continue to be defined by experiential learning that teaches pupils to be independent as well as collaborative.

FOCUS ON 'WHOLE-PERSON' EDUCATION

The future belongs to a holistic approach, not fragmented learning. This is where 'whole-person' education plays a crucial role. It promotes an approach that addresses the regional, cultural, social, spiritual and ethical development of students. Whole-person education nurtures character, ethics and values, essential for personal fulfillment and service to others. This focus will also enable educational institutions to cultivate ethical professionals and responsible citizens. In the coming years, emphasis will shift towards new value-based education models that also prioritise students' mental health.

SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATION

Green initiatives will be integrated into curricular, extending beyond operational and research aspects. Sustainability-focused efforts will become a core part of academia, with an emphasis on providing environmental literacy across subjects.

Eco-friendly practices will be instilled in students, guiding them toward sustainability projects and preparing them to address climate challenges in the future. As more schools in India embrace these values, they will also shape the next generation of citizens who will strive to create a harmonious balance between the planet's well-being and the prosperity of all communities.

AI-RELATED TECHNOLOGIES

Introducing students to the vast potential of tools like generative AI is crucial, but it is equally important to teach them how to harness it effectively. Excessive reliance on technology can hinder brain development and stifle creativity. Therefore, modern education must strike a balance between fostering creative thinking and embracing technological advancements. Students should be guided on how to use AI safely while also being empowered with the discretion to determine when to trust human intelligence over artificial intelligence.

INCLUSIVITY IN EDUCATION

Inclusive education ensures that every child is provided with the opportunity for quality education and learning. The shift toward inclusive education is shaping school environments that celebrate diversity, by embracing gender equality and cross-cultural interactions. By promoting a broader vision and open-mindedness, educators empower students to view the world through a wider lens. This approach enriches learning and equips young minds to navigate and appreciate a diverse global society.



Teen robotics whiz combines tech and vision to combat parking woes

PNS | HYDERABAD

At just 13 years old, Keerthan Bhaskaran, a class 9 student from Chirec International School, has turned his passion for robotics into a practical solution for a common yet pressing issue—unauthorised parking. His invention, 'ParkPatrol', combines cutting-edge technology with a cost-effective approach to address parking conflicts in communities and cities. With a clear vision, remarkable technical skills and the guidance of a supportive mentor, Keerthan has not only developed a functional prototype but also taken significant steps toward commercialising his idea.

Driven by a desire to create meaningful change, his interest in robotics started when he was just 10 years old during the pandemic. "I started robotics in late 2020. During COVID, I had nothing to do, so my mom sent me to a robotics class. I started with basic coding and gradually developed a flair for robotics," he said.

Unauthorised parking has long been a nuisance affecting residential communities, businesses, and urban areas. Keerthan's 'ParkPatrol' is a

KEERTHAN BHASKARAN, A CLASS 9 STUDENT FROM CHIREC INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL, HAS DEVELOPED 'PARKPATROL,' AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO TACKLE UNAUTHORIZED PARKING. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH THE PIONEER, HE DISCUSSES MORE IN DETAIL



cost-effective system that uses sensors and cameras to detect unauthorised cars parked in reserved spots. "I was inspired to create this after noticing frequent parking issues in our community," he explained. He highlighted how 'ParkPatrol' stands out from other similar solutions. "All other

products in the market are very expensive and complex. This is different because it's a simpler and more cost-effective version," he stated.

Creating a functional invention at the age of 13 came with its own set of challenges, particularly regarding resources. However, Keerthan was fortunate to receive guidance from his mentor, Ajay Singh.

"There are not many resources available online for projects like this, but my mentor, Ajay Singh, helped me resolve a lot of technical issues. He also connected us with the ex-president of Sensen AI, an Australian computer-based company, who gave us valuable advice on improving and scaling the product for the market."

Talking about the technologies behind, he elaborated: "There are two major technologies in this project. One is motion detection. When motion is detected, it wakes up the camera, which takes 4-5 pictures of the car in front and detects the number plate. To extract the number plate, we use algorithms under a library called OpenCV. Techniques like masking and edge detection eliminate distractions, allowing us to focus on the digits of the number plate."

He revealed that his experience with similar projects and familiarity

with Python programming helped him complete the invention in just four months. "We conducted a test 2-3 months ago in our community using two cars parked over 4-5 days. The results were accurate. We successfully detected the number plates and notified the car owners. During these tests, we identified several areas for improvement."

The success of 'ParkPatrol' encouraged Keerthan and his mentor to commercialise the product. "We are planning to release this commercially. I've been invited to various events to represent my project and I've taken a lot of feedback from judges, which will help us make further improvements," he said.

Unauthorised parking often disrupts peace and harmony in communities and he believes his invention can address this issue effectively. "A community's peace and harmony are really important. Unauthorised parking is a common problem in every community. This invention can help reduce conflicts and create a positive impact on society," he added.

In conclusion, this young inventor shared that he is currently working on new robotics projects and plans to present 'ParkPatrol' at an upcoming business carnival in February.

what's brewing?



The Meraki Exhibition, curated by Poonam Daga at the Istana Villas Clubhouse, was a resounding success, celebrating the spirit of Pongal with a vibrant pop-up event. The exhibition showcased an impressive array of exquisite diamonds and silver jewelry, elegant silver artifacts and home decor items, premium bedsheets and handlooms, captivating Mandala paintings and more. The inauguration was attended by Usha Agarwal, founder of the Manthan Ladies Club.



Uma Agarwal



Sanchi



Uma Dalmia



Ritu



Krishna



Tanushi



Chandra Jain



Sriya



Lakshmi

PARTY

Photos by - SV Chary



A grand Sundarakanda Parayanam was held at the residence of prominent businessman Mega Krishna Reddy in Jubilee Hills on the occasion of Dhanurmasam. The event featured a special puja ceremony, where Sudha Reddy, Mega Krishna Reddy's wife, offered 1.8 lakh vadas to Lord Anjaneya.



The Rotary Club of Lake District (RCLD) Moinabad demonstrated solidarity and care for underprivileged communities by organizing a large-scale blanket distribution drive. This impactful initiative provided over 4,000 blankets to tribal families in Adilabad, offering essential warmth and comfort during the harsh winter season. The drive was inaugurated in Hyderabad, with the first phase successfully conducted in the Adilabad hamlets to ensure support reaches more families in need.

CELEBRATING WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO PERFORMING ARTS

Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation is starting a new series *Remembering Razia Baig* which will present works of women in theatre, cinema, music, literature, cuisine and fashion. Beginning January 18, the series presents renowned singer, stage and screen actress Ila Arun's book *Parde ke Peechhey* at the Taj Deccan. Reading and Release of the book will feature actresses Ila Arun, Anjula Bedi and Noor Baig. Next in the impressive line-up is Himani Shivpuri's solo performance *Akeli* from Mumbai, Delhi's Sohaila Kapur will showcase *Anand hi Anand*, a bio-sketch of cousins Chetan Anand, Dev Anand and Vijay Anand's work in Bollywood, Hyderabad's veterans Rashmi Seth, thumri and khayal singer Mala Bararia, dancer Daksha Seth from Kerala, film maker Payal Kapadia. The series is conceived and designed by Padmasri Mohammad Ali Baig as a tribute to his mother and co-founder of Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Foundation. Begum Razia Baig passed away in March last year after co-curating the prestigious Qadir Ali Baig Theatre Festival's eighteen editions. She won the 'Woman of the Decade in Theatre' award from the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and several international honors for her work in theatre promotion. The spectacular plays she produced *Quli : Dilon ka Shahzaada*, *Sawanneh Hayat, 1857 : Turrebaz Khan, Spaces, Under an Oak Tree* and others had the distinction of overseas stagings in prominent arts festival around the world including Edinburgh Festival and Oxford University. "This new series would present works of women professionals in performing arts from across the country as a salutation to Begum Razia Baig whose quiet and understated visions shaped the city's cultural scape for half a century, first with late Qadir sahab's plays like *Barf ki Minar, Aadhey Adhure, Lehron ke Rajhans* and forty others since 1970 and then with the Foundation since its formation," says Mohammad Ali Baig.



The 2nd edition of Hybiz Awards was held at HICC in Hyderabad. The event was attended by Shanta Biotech MD, Dr. Varaprasad Reddy. A highlight of the ceremony was the Lifetime Achievement Award conferred upon Dr. Lavu Rathaiah, Chairman of Vignan Group of Institutions, for his remarkable contributions to the field of education.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



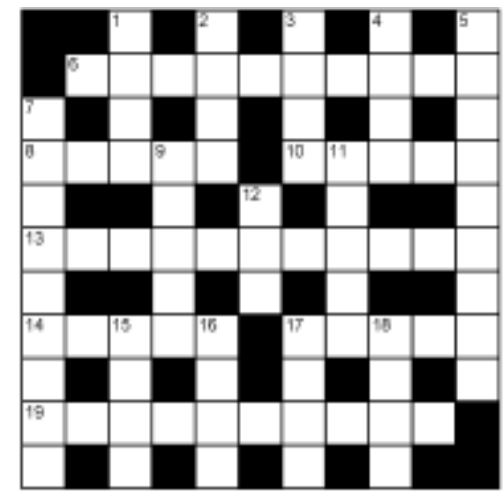
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU

	5		9	1	7			
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Yesterday's solution

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

GINGER MEGGS



ACROSS

- San Francisco is in this American state
- Precise
- A kind of play where all the words are sung
- At once
- Articles
- Push roughly
- Having no paid work

DOWN

- Very tasty to eat
- Make butter with this
- A piece of material to cover a hole
- Baby goal
- The organs of sight
- Drinks little by little
- Black stuff in chimneys
- Unlock

SOLUTION

S	A	F	E	S	T	C	R	O
O	I	A	U	A				
N	I	L	E	S	P	A	C	E
C	H	A	N	C	H	E	S	
A	W	A	R	E	D			
A	D	C	A	R	E	T		
S	O	K	S	A				
T	A	R	G	E	T	D	R	A
E	U	O	G	A				
R	O	V	E					

Are Allu Arjun & Jr NTR being sidelined by their families?



The Telugu Film Industry is abuzz with discussions about two top actors, Allu Arjun and Jr NTR and their strained relationships with their families.

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
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The Telugu film industry is currently witnessing intense chatter about two of its biggest stars, Allu Arjun and Jr NTR, who appear to be sidelined by their respective families. Both actors hail from prestigious film dynasties—Allu Arjun from the Mega Family and Jr NTR from the Nandamuri Clan. Despite their towering successes, their recent treatment within their circles has sparked debate and controversy.

ALLU ARJUN'S STRAINED RELATIONS WITH THE MEGA FAMILY

Mega Star Chiranjeevi had a few days back attended the American Progressive Telugu Association's (APTA) Global Business Conference Catalyst in Hyderabad, where he shared anecdotes about his early struggles and career. While he praised Pawan Kalyan and Ram Charan, he made no mention of Allu

Arjun, despite the latter delivering massive hits like *Pushpa: The Rise and Pushpa: The Rule* (in Hindi).

Speculation suggests that the Mega Family's distance from Allu Arjun began after his visit to Nandyal. Even when Allu Arjun returned from jail recently, no Mega Family members visited him and the actor himself has refrained from mentioning Chiranjeevi or Pawan Kalyan in public events for months.

Chiranjeevi's comment at the event—"Behaviour is a very important trait for every person. If you are a talented actor, it comes secondary, but your behavior comes first. If you feel that you are on the top, your fall down starts"—is widely believed to be an indirect remark aimed at Allu Arjun, allegedly referring to the actor's demeanor following the success of *Pushpa*.

JR NTR'S FALLOUT WITH THE NANDAMURI CLAN

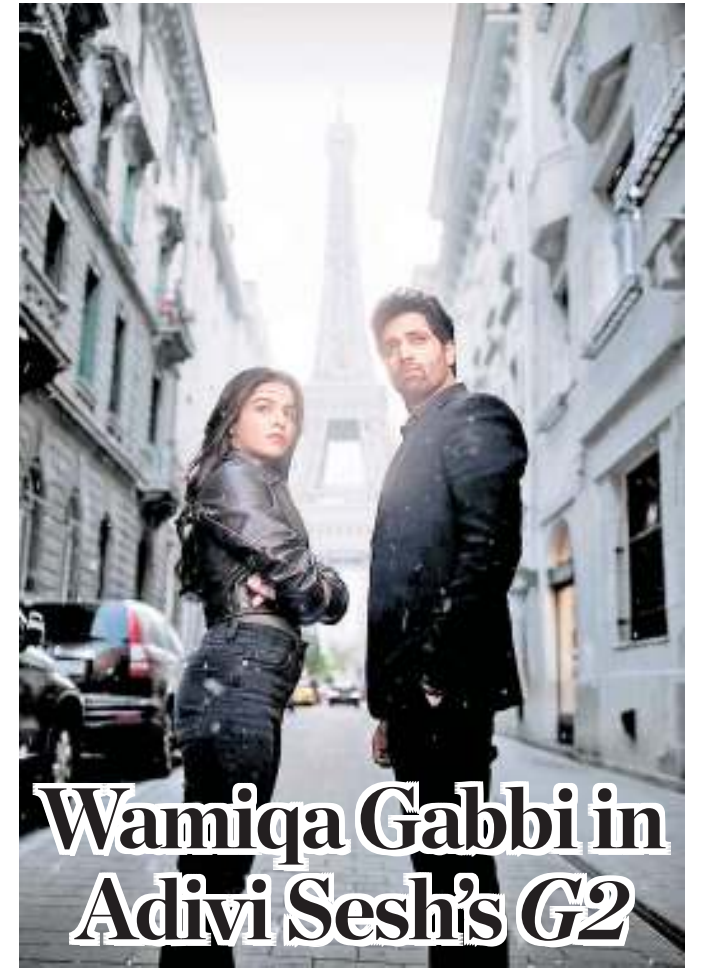
Jr NTR, too, finds himself in a similar predicament within the Nandamuri family. In a recent episode of Nandamuri Balakrishna's talk show *Unstoppable*, director Bobby Kolli—who directed *Jai Lava Kusa*—spoke about all his films except the Jr NTR-starrer. According to sources, the omission was intentional, as the Nandamuri family has ongoing differences with Jr NTR. *Jai Lava Kusa* was a major hit for Bobby Kolli, marking a successful comeback for the director after the failure of *Sardar Gabbar Singh*. Fans have criticised the omission, speculating that it reflects the growing rift between Jr NTR and Balakrishna. The backlash escalated, with Jr NTR fans even calling for a boycott of Balakrishna's upcoming film *Daaku Maharaja*.



Producer Naga Vamsi urged fans to stay calm, stating on social media, "This is our film, and I need everyone's support. Let's make it a blockbuster success." Director Bobby clarified that the omission of *Jai Lava Kusa* was due to the event organisers not including the film in the presentation slides.

The apparent sidelining of Allu Arjun and Jr NTR has ignited heated debates on social media. Fans have taken sides, with many calling out the alleged unfair treatment of the two actors who have contributed significantly to Telugu cinema. Both incidents have brought internal family dynamics to the forefront, with questions being raised about professional jealousy, egos and strained relationships in Tollywood's biggest dynasties.

While Allu Arjun and Jr NTR remain silent on the controversies, their fans continue to passionately defend them online, making this one of the biggest talking points.



Wamiqa Gabbi in Adivi Sesh's G2

Adivi Sesh has firmly established himself as a talented actor, earning recognition as a Pan-Indian star with films like *Major*. However, the actor has been taking his time to complete his projects, leading to no releases in the past two years. Sesh has been fully immersed in shooting his upcoming films, with the most anticipated being *G2*, the sequel to his earlier hit *Goodachari*.

Much like its predecessor, *G2* is an action-packed spy drama. While *Goodachari* was directed by Sashi Kiran Tikka, with Adivi Sesh contributing the story, *G2* is helmed by Vinay Kumar Sirigineedi, with Sesh providing the screenplay. Not only is *G2* Sesh's most ambitious and high-budget film to date, but it is also poised to be a landmark project in the Indian spy thriller genre.

The makers of *G2* announced that Wamiqa Gabbi will play the female lead, starring opposite Adivi Sesh. Wamiqa, who is already a familiar face in Telugu

cinema thanks to her debut film *Bhale Manchi Roju* opposite Sudheer Babu, has also been making waves in Bollywood. However, her recent Hindi film *Baby John* didn't perform well at the box office.

Wamiqa has wrapped up a European shooting schedule with Adivi Sesh and expressed her enthusiasm about being part of the project. "I'm beyond excited to be part of the incredible journey of *G2*. Working with such a talented cast and crew inspires me to push boundaries and bring fresh energy to my character," she shared. The film also stars Emraan Hashmi, with several key scenes already shot featuring the actor. With its gripping narrative and powerful performances, *G2* promises to elevate the *Goodachari* franchise to new heights.

Produced by T.G. Vishwa Prasad and Abhishek Agarwal, *G2* is shaping up to be a cinematic spectacle that fans of Adivi Sesh and action thrillers won't want to miss.

Abhishek Nama's magnum opus Nagabandham introduces 'Rudhra'

Lakshmi Ira and Devansh, in collaboration with Abhishek Nama and Thunder Studios, are gearing up to introduce the pivotal character 'Rudhra' from the much-anticipated *Nagabandham*. The special reveal is set to take place in an exciting video slated for release on January 13, 2025.

Billed as one of the grandest cinematic spectacles of 2025, *Nagabandham* is poised to take audiences on a mesmerising journey that seamlessly blends mystery, mythology and adventure. The film's latest poster offers a tantalising glimpse into its narrative. It depicts a lone figure standing before an enormous, intricately designed doorway illuminated by a golden glow. This striking visual hints at ancient secrets and treasures hidden within, setting the tone for what promises to be an enthralling tale.

Marking the beginning of an epic saga, the upcoming video will introduce audiences to 'Rudhra', a character described as being central to the story. Speaking about the introduction, the creators shared that the unveiling of Rudhra will not only be a defining moment for the film but will also leave an indelible mark on the cinematic landscape.

Abhishek Nama, who has taken on the roles of writer, director and screenplay creator for the project, has crafted a narrative steeped in ancient lore and rich mythological elements. Produced by Kishore Annappureddy, *Nagabandham* is co-produced by Tarak Cinemas, ensuring a high-quality production that will resonate with audiences across the nation.

To reach a wider audience, *Nagabandham* will be released in multiple languages, including Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. This multilingual approach reflects the creators' ambition to present the story as a pan-Indian cinematic experience.



Ajith Kumar escapes unscathed after car crash in Dubai

Tamil superstar Ajith Kumar, known for his acting prowess, is also a skilled racing driver. Apart from his successful film career, Ajith has been actively participating in international racing events. He has competed in the MRF Racing series in Mumbai, Chennai, and Delhi, as well as in Formula championships. As one of the few racers in India, Ajith

continues to pursue his passion for motorsports alongside his film career.

On Tuesday, the actor was practicing in Dubai for the upcoming 24H Dubai 2025 endurance race, scheduled to take place from January 11 to 12. However, on Tuesday around 12:45 pm, Ajith's car crashed into the fence during a practice session. The car spun around three

to four times before coming to a stop.

Fortunately, Ajith was unharmed in the incident as he was wearing all necessary safety gear. After the crash, he received immediate assistance and was quickly moved to another car. The actor walked away from the scene without any visible injuries, and it appears he is perfectly fine.



Renu Desai talks high about 1000 Words

Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan's ex-wife, Renu Desai, attended the promotion of the film *1000 Words* as a special guest. The film stars Arvind Krishna, *Bigg Boss* fame Divi Vadthya, Meghana Srinivas and Vinay in lead roles, with Ramana Villart serving as both producer and director. The story, dialogues and screenplay were crafted by Dr. Sankalp.

The film had a special screening for select viewers, including Renu Desai. After watching the movie, Renu shared her heartfelt impressions, saying, "I knew Ramana as a photographer. He once told me a story, and while I thought it was good, I wondered how it would turn out on screen. It's a film everyone should watch and learn from. To take such a beautiful story from just one photo is extra-

ordinary," Renu further added, "Watching the movie brought tears to my eyes. This is just the beginning for Ramana. I hope to see more such wonderful films from him in the future."

Director and producer Ramana Villart revealed that the movie was entirely shot in the scenic locales of Araku. He explained, "We wanted to convey and show the pain a mother goes through while giving birth to a child." Praising the entire cast, he particularly lauded the performance of child artist Noori.

Speaking about Renu Desai's involvement, Ramana said, "Renu is like a sister to me. She became emotional when I narrated the story and offered her full support."

1000 Words promises to be a heartfelt cinematic experience, with a unique storyline that captures raw human emotions.

'Don't reveal anything about your past to your wives,' jokes Venky

Venkatesh stars as the lead actor in the upcoming film *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam*, which is set to release on January 14, coinciding with the Sankranthi festival. The film features Aishwarya Rajesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary as the female leads. The pre-release event for the film took place in Nizamabad, the native town of producer Dil Raju.

Speaking at the event, Venkatesh expressed his joy about the film's function being held in Nizamabad. "You (the audience) have given me many hits throughout my career and I am truly thankful for that. Now, I'm coming with *Sankranthiki Vasthunnam* for this Sankranthi, and I appeal to everyone to come and watch this film. The film is packed with entertainment, good songs, and plenty of hilarious scenes. All the right ingredients are there in

this film, and director Anil has crafted a wholesome entertainer."

Aishwarya Rajesh plays his wife, while Meenakshi Chaudhary portrays a cop and his ex-girlfriend. In a light-hearted moment, Venkatesh jokingly advised, "Don't reveal anything about your flashback to your wives."

The actor showered praise on the two leading ladies and thanked director Anil for bringing such a project to life. "I've worked with producer Dil Raju on four films, and I look forward to doing many more with him in the future," Venkatesh concluded.

Meanwhile, producer Dil Raju speaking at the event humorously said, "People of Andhra give a vibe with movie but people of Telangana give a vibe with *Thella Kallu* (Palm Wine) and Mutton."



Rohit and Kohli's Test future depends on selectors: Gavaskar

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's Test future is now in the hands of selectors, said former India captain Sunil Gavaskar while advocating an honest deep-dive into the team's downward spiral in the last six months.

In an interview to PTI, Gavaskar spoke about India's recent debacles, including the home whitewash by New Zealand, the way forward and the responsibility on the Ajit Agarkar-led national selection committee to give a fair chance to those waiting in the wings.

Asked about the raging debate surrounding the future of struggling stars Rohit and Kohli, Gavaskar said, "How long they continue, is really up to the selectors."

"Now that India has failed to qualify for the WTC (World Test Championship) final, it would be pertinent to reflect on the reasons that (why it) happened," he added.

This is the first time since the WTC's inception that India could not make the finals following a 1-3 loss to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar series that concluded on Sunday.

That defeat also meant that the coveted BGT was surrendered to Australia for the first time in a decade. The primary reason for the debacle was the batting unit's failure to fire with Rohit and Kohli proving to be the weakest link.

Kohli scored 190 runs in nine innings including an unbeaten century, while Rohit's tally was a dismal 31 from five completed knocks.

Gavaskar didn't mince words while pointing out the repeated failures of the team's batters, who failed to cross the 200 mark six out of nine times during the series.

"It is clear that in the last six months, the batting failed and that was the main reason that we lost matches that we should have won," the former captain stated.

"So, if changes are required for the new cycle of the WTC which



starts in mid-June in England, then hopefully the selectors will take into account who would still be there for the final in 2027 and choose accordingly," Gavaskar put things perspective.

Time for next crop to step up. The 75-year-old former India captain did not take names but said there are some good performers coming up in the domestic circuit and the onus is now on the selectors to give them a fair chance.

"Unless they are given a chance how will we know if those doing well in Ranji Trophy will do well at the international level? Here's where good selections come in," he said.

Gavaskar also complimented the selection committee for unearthing a talent like Nitish Kumar Reddy, who was one of India's three centurions in the just-concluded tour, others being Yashasvi Jaiswal and Kohli.

"Compliments to Ajit Agarkar and his team for seeing the potential in Nitish Kumar Reddy and picking

him for the Test squad too," he said of the player, who also enjoys strong backing of head coach Gautam Gambhir.

On the bowling front, Gavaskar said India has enough talent that needs to be given the requisite opportunities to ensure that a generational star like Jasprit Bumrah is not overburdened.

Once again, he refrained from taking names of the potential candidates, who would shape the bowling attack going forward.

"India has got loads of promising pacers who are waiting for an opportunity. Yes, Bumrah should not be overburdened and if others step up then we can have an attack that can win matches in any conditions," he said.

"Be honest"

The culture of putting stars at a pedestal has been an oft-stated problem in Indian cricket. But Gavaskar said it is not very difficult to stay grounded even with that if one is capable of taking an honest look at performances.



Whitewash at home bigger failure than BGT loss: Yuvraj

PTI ■ DUBAI

World Cup-winning former all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has said that being whitewashed at home by New Zealand was a bigger low for Team India than the loss of Border-Gavaskar Trophy but refused to join the chorus of criticism against embattled veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

India have endured a difficult last few months in the five-day format, going down 0-3 to an under-strength New Zealand at home, which was a first in the team's Test history. This was followed by a 1-3 drubbing by Australia in the away edition of the Border-Gavaskar series.

Both the debacles have been largely attributed to the team's batting frailties, especially those of Rohit and Kohli.

"According to me, losing (to) New Zealand is more hurting (sic). Because they are losing 3-0 at home. You know, that is not acceptable. This (losing BGT) is still acceptable because you have won two times in Australia. And this time you lost," Yuvraj told 'PTI Videos' in an interview here.

"Australia has been a dominant side for the last so many years, that is my thought," the 43-year-old hero of India's 2011 World Cup triumph said. While Kohli managed at least a hundred during the series despite continuing to be dismissed whenever he was

baited outside the off stump, Rohit was worse with a tally of just 31 runs and had to drop himself from the final Test.

But Yuvraj said it is unfair to lambast the duo given their past achievements.

"We are talking about our greats, Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma, we are saying very bad things about them," he said.

"...People forget what they have achieved in the past. They are one of the greatest cricketers of this time. Okay, they lost, they did not play good cricket. They are getting hurt more than us," he added. Hopeful that India would bounce back strongly, Yuvraj said he has full faith in not just Rohit and Kohli but also new head coach Gautam Gambhir, who was his former teammate as well.

"I feel that Gautam Gambhir as a coach, Ajit Agarkar as a selector, Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Jasprit Bumrah, they are the best minds in cricket right now," he asserted.

"And they have to decide what's the way for Indian cricket in future," he said.

The big-hitting former batter also lauded Rohit for dropping himself from the Sydney Test, saying it was a selfless act.

"I think it is a big thing. I have never seen in the past that the captain's form is not going well and he himself has gone out. And this is Rohit Sharma's greatness that he has kept the team ahead of himself," Yuvraj said.

We know how to beat Aussies: Rabada

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Fiery South African pacer Kagiso Rabada, no stranger to beating Australia, believes the prospect of facing them in the World Test Championship final at Lord's in June has already sparked anticipation and motivation in his side.

Reigning champions Australia secured their spot in the WTC final with a six-wicket victory over India in the fifth and final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Sydney, clinching the series 3-1.

South Africa were the first team to qualify after defeating Pakistan by 10 wickets in the Boxing Day Test.

"It's actually quite some distance away, but a big occasion like the World Test Championship final gets you up for it," Rabada said on SuperSport after taking a six-wicket haul in his side's 10-wicket, second-Test demolition of Pakistan that completed a 2-0 sweep.

Up against defending champions Australia, the Proteas will start as underdogs but Rabada,



who twice played a big part in winning series against Australia in 2016-17 and 2017-18, is confident of pulling off an upset.

"South Africa versus Australia has always been an intense rivalry, because we play cricket quite similar. We play hard -- and they're going to come hard at us, and we know that. But we also know how to beat them," he said.

About the significance of Test cricket, Rabada said: "One hundred per cent, Test cricket is still alive. It's our best format that we've been playing right now.

"When you look at South African cricket and all our legends, they've all been great Test cricketers. The world's best players are Test cricketers, and this series against Pakistan has been a wonderful advertisement for Test cricket, especially in South Africa."

The Proteas don't have any Test assignment in the build-up to the WTC Final at Lord's from June 11-16 and coach Shukri Conrad has said they're looking at the possibility of a one-off match against either Ireland or Afghanistan.

"We're going to try and get a

Test match, possibly in the UK, against Ireland or Afghanistan, whoever is free. And if unsuccessful, we'll obviously go out a couple of days earlier, and make sure we camp there really well, probably in Canterbury," said Conrad. The coach was also all praise for his skipper Temba Bavuma for playing a key role in South Africa's resurgence.

"He's played unbelievably well this summer, and full marks to him," Conrad said.

"I think any captain who wants to lead from the front, they want to lead through performance as well, and that's what Temba's done exceptionally well.

"He's not lost a game as captain of South Africa (winning eight out of nine Tests). Leading from the front, turning out the performances he's had, he's probably in the form of his life.

"I haven't seen him play any better, and that obviously gives you a lot of confidence when you're captaining as well. I wouldn't want anyone else to be captaining us."



England urged to boycott Champions Trophy game against Afghanistan by UK politicians

AP ■ LONDON

England should refuse to play the Champions Trophy cricket match against Afghanistan next month according to a letter signed by more than 160 U.K. Politicians.

The politicians want the England and Wales Cricket Board to take a stand against the Taliban regime's assault on women's rights and boycott the men's one-day international against Afghanistan in Lahore, Pakistan, on Feb. 26.

Female participation in sport has effectively been outlawed since the Taliban's return to power in 2021, a move that puts the Afghanistan Cricket Board in contravention of International Cricket Council rules.

Because Afghanistan's men are still allowed to compete by the ICC, a strongly worded letter has emerged from the U.K. Parliament pleading for the ECB to make its own moral objection.

Penned by Labour MP Tonia Antoniazzi and signed by a cross-party group from the House of Commons and House of Lords including Nigel Farage and Jeremy Corbyn, it raises the "insidious dystopia" unfolding in Afghanistan.

The statement, addressed to ECB chief executive Richard Gould, concludes: "We strongly urge the England men's team players and officials to speak out against the horrific treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan under the

Taliban.

"We also urge the ECB to consider a boycott of the upcoming match against Afghanistan... To send a clear signal that such grotesque abuses will not be tolerated.

"We must stand against sex apartheid and we implore the ECB to deliver a firm message of solidarity and hope to Afghan women and girls that their suffering has not been overlooked."

Gould issued a swift response, reaffirming ECB principles while suggesting it favoured a uniform approach from all member nations rather than acting alone.

"The ECB strongly condemns the treatment of women and girls in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime," he said.

"The ICC constitution mandates that all member nations are committed to the growth and development of women's cricket. In line with this commitment, the ECB has maintained its position of not scheduling any bilateral cricket matches against Afghanistan.

"A coordinated, ICC-wide approach would be significantly more impactful than unilateral actions by individual members.

"We understand the concerns raised by those who believe that a boycott of men's cricket could inadvertently support the Taliban's efforts to suppress freedoms and isolate Afghan society. It's crucial to recognise the importance of cricket as a source of hope and positivity for many Afghans, including those displaced from the country."

Don't feel I was in race for opener's slot in Border-Gavaskar Tests: Renshaw

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian Test batter Matt Renshaw said on Tuesday that he had no idea if he was in the race to replace retired opener David Warner in the recently-concluded Border-Gavaskar series against India, which the hosts won 3-1.

Several names, including Cameron Bancroft, Marcus Harris, Nathan McSweeney, Sam Konstas and Renshaw, were discussed by Cricket Australia as potential options for opening the innings.

McSweeney and Konstas made it to the playing XI, with the former playing the first three Tests and the latter getting included in the last two.

Renshaw felt he figured way down in the Australian selection pecking order for the opener's slot. "I probably wouldn't say that



I got caught up in the opener race. I don't think I was in it at all," Renshaw told SEN Radio.

"I'm probably further away than a few of the boys (to be selected) but most of my Tests have been in Asia so I've got a fair bit of experience there if called upon," added Renshaw, who

would be fancying his chances as Australia select the squad for the Test series against Sri Lanka later this month.

Renshaw said he just wants to enjoy his cricket without bothering too much about selection issues.

"It's been me trying to play my cricket the way I want to

and I've really enjoyed it. (I'm) feeling really good about my cricket and how my batting is going and obviously there's aspirations there but I'm really enjoying my cricket right now."

Renshaw, 28, who has played 14 Tests, said opening the batting was a specialist's job and not everyone is cut out for the role.

"Opening is a specialist position, it's one of the toughest jobs in world sport," said Renshaw who last played a Test in February 2023 in the tour of India.

"If Steve Smith goes up the top and doesn't have the experience he would like, you can tell it's pretty difficult. I feel like I could bat anywhere if that opportunity came but I'll keep opening for Queensland because it brings me the most satisfaction when you succeed."

Shastri, Ponting question Shami's injury management, say his inclusion could have boosted India

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Questioning Mohammed Shami's injury management, former greats Ravi Shastri and Ricky Ponting said the veteran pacer could have tilted the series in India's favour had he been added to the squad in the second half of the five-match Border-Gavaskar series. India's decade-long stranglehold on the Border-Gavaskar Trophy ended after they went down by six wickets in Sydney to lose the series 1-3.

The pacer, after recovering from an ankle injury, returned to action for his home state Bengal and impressed in all the three formats -- Ranji Trophy, Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 and Vijay Hazare one-dayers --, raising hopes of a late inclusion. But he was officially ruled out before the fourth Test in

Melbourne with the BCCI medical team citing a knee swelling, though both Ponting and Shastri believe a trip to Australia and a return late in the series could have been pushed.

"To be honest, I was very surprised with the communication going on in the media as to what exactly happened to Mohammed Shami," the former Indian head coach stated in The ICC Review.

"Where is he when it comes to recovery? He's been sitting in the NCA for I don't know how long. Why can't proper communication come out on where he stands? A player of his ability, I would have brought him to Australia.

"Absolutely, there's no question about that (Shami could have tilted the series in Melbourne or Sydney)," Shastri added. The 62-year-old further said

it would have been beneficial if Shami had, at least, travelled with the group in Australia.

"I would have kept him part of the team and made sure that his rehabilitation was done with the team," said Shastri.

"And then if we thought by the third Test match that no, this guy can't play the rest of the series, I would let him go. But I would have brought him with the team, kept him, monitored him with the best of the physios and best of the advice even from international physios who are in Australia and seeing how he went. But I would have kept him in the mix."

Shastri believes the fast bowler could have provided adequate help to Jasprit Bumrah, who too struggled with fitness at the end of the series and could not bowl in the second innings of the

Sydney Test. "It got so tight at 1-1 going into Melbourne," he said.

"You just needed that experience and support. For all you know, he might have raised the bar as well. And it would have been the two guys there (Bumrah and Shami).

"Pat Cummins couldn't have done it on his own, Scotty Boland had to step in. So you needed a bowler of his experience. You know, as hard as Mohammed Siraj tried, you needed Shami's experience there."

Echoing Shastri's views, Australian World Cup-winning captain Ponting said: "I was really surprised when he wasn't flown out even halfway through the series, two Test matches in."

"India's make-up obviously had Nitish Reddy there. So you had another seam bowling all-rounder anyway.

"So, if Shami, even if he wasn't fully fit, if he had to bowl fewer overs in a day, you had a backup seam bowling option to help him out and I think he could have been the difference. "When you asked me (in an earlier ICC Review) at the start about what I thought the result would be, I said 3-1 Australia because Shami wasn't there. That was the first thing I said. That's how important I felt he was to India.

"If Shami, Bumrah and Siraj were in their starting team, I think things could have been completely different here in Australia."

Shami is currently playing in the domestic one-dayers for the Vijay Hazare Trophy and it remains to be seen if he's included for the England home series ahead of the ICC Champions Trophy in February.

