

India's spiritual culture guided by spirit of service: **Modi**



WILL ACHIEVE
 ETHANOL BLENDING TARGET IN 2 MONTHS: GADKARI



Venkatesh, Anil Ravipudi combo once again back with **A BANG**



QUOTE OF THE DAY
 On the one hand, KTR faces a legal setback, and on the other, the public's confidence in him is declining. Although he claims that there was no corruption in the Formula E Race the misuse of public funds is evident. What will KTR tell the people now? Former Chief Minister KCR owes an apology to the public for his son's actions

- Adi Srinivas, Government Whip



DON'T MISS...

Kite & Sweet Fest has 15 lakh visitors

The International Kite & Sweet Festival 2025, organised by the Government of Telangana from January 13 to 15, concluded on Wednesday evening at Parade Grounds, drawing 15 lakh floating visitors. The three-day festival featured participants from 19 countries and 50 national kite flyers from 13 Indian states. Cultural performances such as Perini, Oggu Dolu and Dappu showcased Telangana's rich ...

-PAGE: 3

Food safety on wheels at Kumbh

The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday announced the deployment of mobile laboratories to carry out food inspections at eateries in the Maha Kumbh Mela area here, aiming to monitor hygiene and safety standards. Assistant Food Commissioner (Grade 2) Sushil Kumar Singh emphasised the use of 'Food Safety on Wheels' to prevent the distribution of spoiled or adulterated food to the ...

-PAGE: 5

India, UK looking to resume talks

India and the UK are exploring convenient dates to resume the talks for the proposed free trade agreement in early February, according to the commerce ministry. The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. "Mutually convenient date is being explored for the next round of negotiations for early February," the ministry informed on ...

-PAGE: 8

Rohit Sharma will be Champions Trophy

The opening ceremony of the Champions Trophy will be held either on February 16 or 17 and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is confident that India captain Rohit Sharma will be in attendance at the event. The PCB source also said that it is awaiting communication from the ICC on the schedule of the customary captains' photo-shoot and the pre-event press conference. The eight-team tournament will get underway on February 19 in ...

-SPORTS

'INADVERTENT ERROR'

Meta India apologises for Zuckerberg's remarks on LS poll

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Meta India on Wednesday apologised for CEO Mark Zuckerberg's remarks that the incumbent government in India lost power in the 2024 elections due to its handling of the Covid-19 pandemic and termed it an "inadvertent error". The apology came within days of Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw slamming remarks made by Zuckerberg as "misinformation", and asserting that Meta must uphold facts and credibility. On Tuesday, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, who heads the Parliament's Standing Committee on Communications and Information Technology, made it clear that the



panel will summon Meta over Zuckerberg's comments. Meta India's Vice President Shivnath Thukral took to X on Wednesday to tender an apology on behalf of the company.

"Dear Honourable Minister @AshwiniVaishnaw, Mark's observation that many incumbent parties were not re-elected in 2024 elections holds true for several countries, BUT not India." "We would like to apologise for this inadvertent error. India remains an incredibly important country for @Meta and we look forward to being at the heart of its innovative future," he wrote. Vaishnaw, earlier this week, had called out the remarks made by Zuckerberg on the Joe Rogan podcast. "Mr Zuckerberg's claim that most incumbent governments, including India, in 2024 elections, lost post-COVID is factually incorrect," Vaishnaw had said in a post on X (formerly Twitter) on January 13.

SC collegium clears appointments of 4 Telangana HC Judges

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court Collegium, at its meeting held on January 11 approved the appointment of four judicial officers as judges of the Telangana High Court. The judicial officers who have been cleared for appointment are Renuka Yara, Narsing Rao Nandikonda, Tirumala Devi Eada @ Thirupathamma K. and Madhusudhan Rao Bobbili Ramaiah. This decision comes as part of moves to increase the number of judges in the High Court which has seen a growing caseload in recent years.

FORMULA-E RACE CASE

KTR withdraws quash petition in SC, to appear before ED today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) is all set to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Thursday in connection with the Formula-E Race case. The Supreme Court heard the petition filed by KTR regarding the Formula E car race case. The bench, comprising Justice Bela M. Trivedi and Justice Prasanna Varale, heard arguments on KTR's quash petition. Senior advocates Aryama Sundaram and Siddharth Dave represented KTR in the case. KTR's legal counsel, Mohit Rao, clarified that the petition was not dismissed but withdrawn after evaluating legal options. "Based on our legal opinion, we decided to withdraw the petition. However, we still have the opportunity to appeal in



any court regarding this matter," Mohit Rao stated. During the hearing, KTR's legal team argued that Section 13(1)(A) of the Prevention of Corruption Act does not apply in this case. They highlighted procedural irregularities mentioned in the ACB FIR, asserting that the issues raised pertain to procedural lapses rather than substantial violations. The decision to withdraw the petition allows the legal team to explore further avenues in the judicial process. KTR's advocates emphasized their readiness to continue defending the case in higher courts, if necessary. As part of the investigation, KTR will leave his Nandi Nagar residence at 10 a.m. and is expected to reach the ED office, located opposite LB Stadium, by 10:30 a.m.

Lapses galore in Formula E!

Govt, HMDA paid money even before signing Formula E Car Race deal

NAVEENA GHANATE naveena.ghanate@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

The handling of the Formula E Car Race events in Hyderabad has come under scrutiny with glaring procedural lapses and financial irregularities coming to light. As per documents accessed by 'The Pioneer', the Telangana Government and the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) made substantial payments for the Season 10 race even before signing the hosting agreement. Compounding the issue, the promoter Ace Nxt Gen Private Limited had already defaulted on payments for Season 9, raising questions about alleged undue favouritism. Sources indicate that the Congress Government clearly sees an issue with Ace Nxt Gen's defaulting payments while the government is paying in advance. The official agreement for hosting Season 10 of the Formula E Race was signed between the Municipal Administration and Urban

Development Department transferred Rs 45 crore (GBP 4,500,000) to FEO in two instalments - on October 5, 2023, and October 11, 2023 - well before the

agreement was formalized as per the oral instructions of the then Minister KT Rama Rao. Payments were made in anticipation of an agreement, bypassing the standard requirement for prior approval from the Finance Department and legal authorization. Ace Nxt Gen, the original promoter of the Formula E Car Race in Hyderabad, defaulted on its financial obligations for Season 9, despite being contractually bound to pay GBP 9 million (approximately Rs 90 crore) to FEO. According to internal records, the promoter reportedly failed to pay the second and third instalments for Season 9. For Season 9, Ace Nxt Gen was required to pay 35% of the fee (GBP 3,150,000) by October 13, 2022, and 30% of the fee (GBP 3,000,000) by December 13, 2022. Despite these obligations, the promoter allegedly failed to pay the second and third instalments for Season 9. Formula E Operations (FEO) issued multiple reminders to Ace Nxt Gen to clear the outstanding dues and provide enforceable bank guarantees, parent company undertakings, and written confirmation of required permits. Continued on Page 2

Oct 3, 2023: GBP 2,250,000 paid to FEO by HMDA

Oct 11, 2023: GBP 2,250,000 paid to FEO by HMDA

Oct 27, 2023: FEO terminates agreement with Ace Nxt Gen

Oct 30, 2023: FEO and HMDA signs agreement

Ace Nxt Gen defaulted to FEO, and yet the race was held



Revanth is 'Chumma Minister' not CM: Kaushik

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has called for robust representations before the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) to ensure fair water allocations to the state as per the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (Section 3). The emphasized that water-sharing must adhere to project-wise allocations under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act (APRA), 2014. During a review meeting on irrigation at his official residence in New Delhi on Wednesday, the Chief Minister directed officials to highlight the absence of any stay order by the Supreme Court regarding AP's approach to KWDT-II. He also urged them to counter Andhra Pradesh's unilateral actions on projects like the Godavari-Banakacharla link.



CM Revanth Reddy holding a review meeting on irrigation at his official residence in Delhi on Wednesday

Revanth asked officials to raise objections with Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, and the river management boards, viz. the Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) and the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). He stressed that as per APRA, any project on inter-state rivers must be communicated to neighbouring states and

Revanth: Represent TG's water needs effectively

'Objections regarding Godavari-Banaka Charla Project to be communicated to Union Jal Shakti Minister, AP CM'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has called for robust representations before the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II (KWDT-II) to ensure fair water allocations to the state as per the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (Section 3). The emphasized that water-sharing must adhere to project-wise allocations under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act (APRA), 2014. During a review meeting on irrigation at his official residence in New Delhi on Wednesday, the Chief Minister directed officials to highlight the absence of any stay order by the Supreme Court regarding AP's approach to KWDT-II. He also urged them to counter Andhra Pradesh's unilateral actions on projects like the Godavari-Banakacharla link.



CM Revanth Reddy holding a review meeting on irrigation at his official residence in Delhi on Wednesday

Revanth asked officials to raise objections with Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, and the river management boards, viz. the Godavari River Management Board (GRMB) and the Krishna River Management Board (KRMB). He stressed that as per APRA, any project on inter-state rivers must be communicated to neighbouring states and

CM to leave for Singapore today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is embarking on an extensive international tour, with visits to Singapore, Zurich and Dubai. The tour is aimed at fostering global collaborations, attracting investments and exploring innovative practices in governance and urban development. The Chief Minister's schedule begins on January 16, with his departure from Delhi IGI Airport at 9:50 pm. He is scheduled to arrive at Singapore's Changi Airport on January 17 at 6 am. After spending three days in Singapore, he will depart on January 20 at 12:05 am, reaching Zurich at 6:10 am the same day.



Congress brass at a crucial meeting held in Delhi on Wednesday. Many key issues were discussed

Rahul to address rally in TG

Venue to be decided soon, says Mahesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is all set to hold a public rally in Telangana during the first or second week of February. The rally is expected to take place in either Suryapet or Khammam, according to TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud. This announcement followed a meeting between Telangana Congress leaders and AICC General Secretary KC Venugopal in New

Delhi. The meeting, attended by Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chief Minister Bharti Vikramarka, TPCC President Mahesh Kumar Goud and other senior leaders focused on various state-related issues. During the hour-and-a-half-long discussion, the leaders reviewed several pressing matters, including Cabinet expansion and appointments to nominated posts and corporation chairperson posts. Continued on Page 2

FIRST OF 2025
Telangana notifies Bhubharathi Gazette

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has officially notified the Bhubharathi Gazette, aimed at transforming land management and administration in the State. Published as Gazette No. 1 of 2025, the document introduces reforms to address issues surrounding land ownership, records and disputes while incorporating advanced technology for improved governance. Key features of the Bhubharathi Gazette include the digitisation of land records, unique identification numbers for land parcels and the implementation of tamper-proof

digital mapping systems. These measures are expected to provide clarity on land ownership, prevent fraudulent transactions and make land-related processes more efficient and transparent. Additionally, the Gazette emphasises the integration of real-time land records with revenue and registration departments, ensuring a seamless flow of information and reducing delays in administrative procedures. Clear guidelines have also been outlined for the resolution of land disputes, with a focus on minimising litigation through proactive verification and updates of land records.

India emerging as major maritime power, says Modi

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said India is emerging as a major maritime power, and being recognised as a reliable and responsible partner globally. He was speaking after three new naval platforms -- a destroyer, a frigate and a submarine -- were commissioned at a ceremony in his presence at the Naval Dockyard here. Pointing out that three warships were being commissioned together for the first time in the country's history, the prime minister underlined the nation's progress in defence production, maritime security and economic growth under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative. "We should become a global partner in securing the sea from drugs, weapons, and terrorism, and make it safe and prosperous," he said, adding that India's growing naval

Three warships commissioned together for the first time

strength is enhancing global confidence in the country. The prime minister reassured the country's commitment to becoming a global maritime leader. "India is on its way to becoming a leading maritime power and a global economic force. With modernised defence capabilities and a robust shipbuild-



Pointing out that three warships were being commissioned together for the first time in the country's history, the prime minister underlined the nation's progress in defence production, maritime security and economic growth under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative

ing ecosystem, we are opening new doors to economic growth and self-reliance," he said. Noting the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region, he emphasised the need to protect territorial waters, ensure freedom of navigation, and secure trade supply lines. The prime minister also drew attention to India's significant contributions as a maritime nation. "In the Indian Ocean region, India has emerged as the 'first responder,' saving hundreds of lives and securing thousands of crores worth of national and international cargo," he said. India's vision of a secure and inclusive Indo-Pacific region aligns with its broader global responsibilities, Modi said. India has always supported an open, secure, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, he said. The country's defence production has crossed Rs 1.25 lakh crore, with exports reaching Continued on Page 2

Only Chandrababu can decide when to reshuffle his team

Is Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu strongly considering a Cabinet reshuffle? The Chief Minister is believed to have concluded that the image of his government is getting spoiled due to some unexpected developments. Chandrababu has plans to take his coalition government with the NDA forward in the spirit of all three constituents of the ruling front, but circumstances are forcing him to change his plans to continue the same combination even after the 2029 elections. Although it looks premature to take up the task of gaining full control over the administration as well as the political situation in the State, it's natural on the part of a person who has vast experience of ruling the State for four terms to get an 'extension' for his rule by

impressing the electorate with populist policies. The image of the BJP and that of Prime Minister Modi and Jana Sena Party (JSP) chief Pawan Kalyan's strong influence at the ground level made Chandrababu's attempts to grab power easy. After the announcement of the decision to fight elections together against the then chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy by Pawan Kalyan outside the Rajahmundry Central Prison where Chandrababu was remained in the case dealing with the alleged misappropriation of skill development programme funds, Chandrababu has been expecting the combination of TDP, JSP and BJP to succeed. As a token of gratitude towards Pawan Kalyan for his efforts to weld together the alliance through seat adjust-

Coming back to the issue of Chandrababu's idea of a Cabinet reshuffle, the fact is that it is not getting a final shape. For that, Chandrababu needs experienced hands in the Cabinet. But that is not the case now.

ments by giving up his party's seats to his partners, Chandrababu offered him the post of Deputy Chief Minister. Pawan's JSP contested only 21 seats as he had relinquished seats to protect the interests of his alliance partners. With his excellent teamwork, his JSP could win all the seats it contested and register a 100% strike rate in the elections. Coming back to the issue of Chandrababu's idea of a

Cabinet reshuffle, the fact is that it is not getting a final shape. For that, Chandrababu needs experienced hands in the Cabinet. But that is not the case now. This is making the CM uncomfortable as warnings issued to Cabinet colleagues about their performance are not having effect. Key portfolios are not getting the required attention probably due to the absence of experienced hands. What exactly can an expe-



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist
ratnakumarmd@gmail.com

do such things then they can be punished by the people. This fear may make them change their ways. Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu wants the same thing in his Cabinet colleagues. As he has given a free hand to ministers their functioning is not properly monitored. This is causing discomfort to the CM and has made him think that there is an urgent need to reshuffle the Cabinet. Some incidents have spoiled the government's image and have also hurt TDP cadres. The Home portfolio has been given to Dalit legislator V Anitha. But her PA spoiled the image of not only the Home Minister but that of the government too. The Minister had to remove her PA after his corruption damaged the government's image. Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy started this convention in

United AP by picking P Sabita Reddy for the Home Minister post. Jagan followed his father's policy by appointing Dalit M Sucharita as the Home Minister. Chandrababu didn't follow YSR's convention during his first stint in residual AP, but he did it now by appointing V Anitha as the Home Minister. Home should have gone to Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan due to its importance. He didn't opt for it but he expressed displeasure over the poor performance of the Home department. It will not be surprising if Pawan becomes the Home Minister in the next Cabinet reshuffle. Another Minister K Pardha Saradhi got into a controversy over a political function. He shared the dais with former minister Jogi Ramesh while unveiling the statue of BC leader Sardar Gouthu Lachanna in Srikakulam dis-

trict. Jogi Ramesh is considered hostile due to his criticism of Chandrababu during YSRCP rule. Sharing the dais with a person like Jogi Ramesh by Pardha Saradhi made both Chandrababu and Lokesh furious and he earned the wrath of the TDP brass despite apologising. Another Minister, K Sreenivas of Vizianagaram, showed due respect towards senior YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana whom he considers as his political guru. This incident embarrassed the TDP leadership as Botsa has been a strong critic of Chandrababu from the days of YSR. Chandrababu may take quick steps to reshuffle the Cabinet. As the performance of his Cabinet is already facing public scrutiny, Chandrababu may not wait for a reshuffle. Otherwise, his government will lose its image.

Revanth labels BRS as 'BRSS'

Urges action against those who speak against Independence
CM dares Modi to take action against Bhagwat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that the BRS is pursuing the RSS ideology and branded the party as 'BRSS'. He criticized the BRS for levelling the same allegations made by the BJP against the state government.

The CM was attending the inauguration of the new AICC office building in New Delhi on Wednesday. Addressing the media, the CM rallied behind Rahul Gandhi who said that the Congress has ideological differences with the RSS and that the RSS 'never fought for freedom' as no one from the RSS sacrificed their lives during the freedom struggle.

The CM said that the RSS is not ready to talk about the freedom struggle. "It is their real ideology. Mohan Bhagwat (RSS Sarsanghachalak) also said that they have nothing to do with the freedom struggle."



The CM also supported Rahul Gandhi's comments that Congress leaders sacrificed their lives to attain freedom from British colonial rule and that it has been striving to take the country forward. The Chief Minister said that Rahul demanded legal proceedings against anyone who spoke against the freedom struggle and Mohan Bhagwat is also liable for action. The CM accused the BJP of

being an expert in peddling lies and making false allegations and that the party should be labelled the Bharatiya Jhota Party (BJP). There is no need to pay much attention to what the BJP is saying, the Chief Minister said, and demanded that Prime Minister Modi should reveal whether he is with Mohan Bhagwat or support the millions who died for the cause of the country's freedom. The CM said that BJP lead-

ers are trying to suppress Mohan Bhagwat's speech on India's freedom by making wild allegations against the Congress. The CM asked Prime Minister Modi to take action against Mohan Bhagwat or clarify it to the people of the country. Referring to the BRS's violent movies, the CM said that there is nothing to learn from the BRS and clarified that the Congress government is ensuring that the law takes its course in Telangana.

The CM made it clear that the police will take action and register criminal cases if there is an attack on anyone or anywhere by creating a law and order problem.

During BRS rule, BRS leaders and the police attacked Congress offices. The Congress is not resorting to such violent acts, the CM said and added that the government is ready to correct any mistake.

BJP blasts Rahul, accuses him of ignorance & malice

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP has strongly criticized Rahul Gandhi's speech delivered during the inauguration of the new Congress headquarters, calling it "insipid and confusing."

In a media statement released by K. Krishna Sagar Rao, the BJP's chief spokesperson in Telangana, the party accused the Congress leader of revealing his "ignorance and malice" in his remarks about RSS Sarsanghachalak Mohan Bhagwat.

"Rahul must truly understand the essence of real independence, which is not merely contesting elections and governing. True independence lies in reclaiming and preserving a nation's cultural, dharmic and spiritual identity, as articulated by Dr Mohan Bhagwat," the statement read.

The BJP alleged that the Congress, which governed India for over five decades, failed to prioritize nation-building in its truest sense. The statement criticized the Congress for its "selective ignorance" and lack of focus on the cultural and spiritual essence of India's indigenous civilization. "It is unfortunate that the world's largest democracy lacks an opposition party capable of comprehending the depth of India's civilizational heritage. This shortcoming has contributed to the Congress's inability to lead the nation towards true progress," Krishna Sagar Rao said.

The BJP concluded its statement by asserting that the Congress's legacy of governance left behind a fragmented vision for India's future and reiterated the RSS's commitment to protecting the nation's identity.

Include turmeric farming machinery in mechanisation scheme: Kodanda

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Commission, headed by its Chairman, M. Kodanda Reddy, has urged the state government to include machinery needed for turmeric cultivation under the Farm Mechanisation Scheme. This request follows a visit by the commission members and officials to Nizamabad district on January 9 where they interacted with turmeric farmers and visited the Turmeric Research Station in Kammarpally.

During the discussions, farmers highlighted the need for specific equipment to improve turmeric farming and processing. Based on their inputs, the commission

recommended the inclusion of three vital pieces of machinery under the subsidy scheme, viz. turmeric bed maker and digger, polisher and boiler.

In a formal letter addressed to the Minister for Agriculture, Cooperation, Marketing, and Textiles, Tummala Nageshwar Rao, Kodanda emphasized the importance of these machines in improving efficiency and productivity in turmeric farming. The inclusion of these items in the scheme would address the challenges faced by farmers, he said.

The commission requested immediate action to integrate these items into the scheme so that turmeric farmers can benefit from the state's help for agricultural mechanization.

Public confidence in KTR declining: Adi Srinivas

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress has strongly reacted to the Supreme Court's remarks in a case involving KT Rama Rao, describing the developments as a significant blow to the BRS leader.

Speaking on the matter, Government Whip Adi Srinivas made pointed remarks, accusing KTR of misleading the public and misusing public funds.

"On the one hand, KTR faces a legal setback, and on the other, the public's trust in him is declining. While claiming there is no corruption, the misuse of public money is evident," said Srinivas, questioning KTR's accountability in the

context of mounting allegations. He criticized the BRS government for calling the legal actions against its leaders "false cases."

"We are not like the BRS government, where doors are broken down, and arrests are made without due process. The law is taking its course in this case," he said.

Highlighting the broader implications, he demanded that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao issue a public apology for KTR's alleged misconduct.

"What will KTR say to the people now? The former Chief Minister owes an apology for his son's actions," Srinivas added.

Surekha: Ensure proper implementation of govt welfare schemes

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Minister for Environment, Forest, and Endowments, Konda Surekha, has directed Collectors to ensure the effective implementation of government schemes, emphasizing that every eligible beneficiary must be covered.

She suggested creating WhatsApp groups for each constituency and including her in these groups to facilitate real-time monitoring. Chairing a virtual review meeting from New Delhi with the collectors of Medak, Sangareddy and Siddipet districts — Rahul Raj, Valluru Kranti and Mikkilineni Manu Choudary — Surekha underlined the Congress government's commitment to public welfare.

As the nation prepares to celebrate 75 years of the Constitution on January 26, 2025, the Telangana Government is set to launch several flagship programmes like Rythu Bharosa, Indiramma Aathmiya Bharosa, issue of new ration cards and the allocation of Indiramma houses. Surekha stressed the need to imple-

ment these schemes diligently.

She warned of strict action in case of negligence and directed officials to set up grievance cells at the mandal level to address public complaints.

Surekha clarified that as per Rythu Bharosa, only landholders registered on the Bhubharati portal would be eligible for financial assistance. She emphasized strict adherence to eligibility norms, excluding lands converted for non-agricultural purposes like housing layouts, mining and commercial uses. She also suggested using nodal officers to oversee the implementation of these norms at the district and mandal levels.

For Indiramma Aathmiya Bharosa, the focus would be on providing financial aid to the families of landless agricultural labour. Beneficiaries must have worked a minimum of 20 days under the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS). Surekha directed gram sabhas to follow prescribed guidelines for beneficiary identification and sought details of job cardholders in each district.

Implement Indiramma Aathmiya Bharosa without cuts: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS's Siddipet MLA, Harish Rao, emphasized the need for the government to implement the Indiramma Aathmiya Bharosa scheme without cuts so that all agricultural labourers can receive its benefits.

Addressing a virtual review meeting of the erstwhile Medak district on Wednesday, Harish expressed concern over the exclusion of marginal farmers with minimal land-holdings from the scheme. "Farmers holding just a cent of land are being disqualified as agricultural workers, which is unfortunate," he said.

Highlighting the plight of farmers with less than an acre, he said that around 24,57,000 such farmers exist in the state and they rely on agricultural



labour for their livelihood. Harish criticized the government's criteria for recognizing agricultural workers under the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS), which requires at least 20 days of work. "This rule fails to consider those who cannot work due to medical or other issues. Such exclusions should be revised to provide help for all," he said. "This disparity is unjust, particularly for Dalits and tribals, whose families often split small plots among multiple members," he added.

Revanth is 'Chumma Minister' not CM: Kaushik

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLAs Padi Kaushik Reddy and Dr Kalvakuntla Sanjay lashed out at Jagityal Congress MLA Dr Sanjay Kumar and the Congress leadership and accused them of corruption and false propaganda.

Addressing a press conference at the Telangana Bhavan, Kaushik said that Dr Sanjay, whom he called a 'broker and thief', had attacked him during the Karimnagar district review meeting.

Refuting claims made by some media outlets that he had attacked Dr Sanjay Kumar, Kaushik clarified, "I questioned the lack of implementation of Congress's promises, including farm loan waivers. Instead of answering, Congress representatives resorted to personal attacks."

He accused Dr Sanjay Kumar of being politically insignificant without KCR's support, stating, "If not for KCR, Dr Sanjay Kumar wouldn't have won even as a ward



member, let alone as an MLA." Kaushik launched a scathing attack on Congress leader Revanth Reddy, accusing him of filing 28 cases against him for questioning the party's unfulfilled promises. He labelled Revanth as a "blackmailer, cheater and broker," adding, "Revanth is a criminal, caught red-handed in the cash-for-vote scandal. He isn't a Chief Minister, he's a 'Chumma Minister.'"

The MLA also highlighted attacks on the BRS office in Bhongir, accusing Congress workers of disrespecting KCR's photos. "When KCR's photo was thrown on the ground, it was like a bullet piercing the hearts of Telangana people," he said.

TODAY
ALMANAC
Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Jan 16 03:23 AM to Jan 17 04:06 AM
Chaturthi: Jan 17 04:06 AM to Jan 17 05:30 AM
Nakshatram: Ashlesha: Jan 15 10:28 AM to Jan 16 11:16 AM
Magha: Jan 16 11:16 AM to Jan 17 12:44 PM
Rahukalam: 1:49 PM to 3:12 PM
Yamagandam: 6:53 AM to 8:16 AM
Varjyam: 12:00 AM to 01:42 AM
Gulika: 9:39 AM to 11:02 AM
Amritakalam: 09:37 AM to 11:16 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:03 PM to 12:48 PM
HYDERABAD WEATHER
Forecast: Partly Cloudy
Temp: 28°
Humidity: 66%
Sunrise: 6:50 AM
Sunset: 6:02 PM
Updated: January 15, 2025 5:00 PM

Lapses galore...

Continued from page 1
Notices were sent by FEO to Ace Nxt Gen on November 29, 2022, January 16, 2023, and February 20, 2023, highlighting these defaults. Despite the promoter's defaults, FEO proceeded with the event on February 11, 2023. Even after the Season 9 event took place on February 11, 2023, FEO sent another notice on May 30, 2023, requesting post-event reconciliation and settlement of accounts. Eventually, on October 27, 2023, the FEO terminated the agreement due to the promoter's persistent non-compliance. Eventually, the hosting agreement with Ace Nxt Gen was terminated on October 27, 2023, citing repeated non-compliance. This means that even when the tripartite agreement was

in force, the government made payments. The second instalment of Rs 22.5 crore for Season 10 was paid on October 11, 2023, when the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) for the Assembly elections was in force. This payment was made without obtaining approval from the Election Commission of India (ECI), a clear violation of election guidelines. After Ace Nxt Gen's termination, the Telangana Government stepped in to assume dual roles as both promoter and host for Season 10. The HMDA, acting on government instructions, not only facilitated payments but also took on the operational and financial responsibilities earlier assigned to Ace Nxt Gen. However, this move raises concerns. Despite Ace Nxt Gen's clear payment defaults and eventual exit, the government did not initiate punitive measures

against the promoter. Instead, HMDA absorbed the liabilities, fuelling speculation of favouritism. "Ace Nxt Gen failed to pay the second and third instalments for Season 9, but the FEO still conducted the event in February 2023. Despite the promoter's financial defaults, neither the HMDA nor the Telangana Government took immediate action to address them, indicating leniency towards Ace Nxt Gen," sources said. With Rs 54.88 crore already spent by HMDA, including payments made during the MCC and without proper administrative sanctions, the Formula E saga has exposed serious governance failures. "The government prioritized a promoter with a history of defaults and ignored procedural norms. The public deserves answers," sources said.

Meta India...

Continued from page 1
"As the world's largest democracy, India conducted the 2024 elections with over 640 million voters. People of India reaffirmed their trust in NDA led by PM @narendramodi Ji's leadership," said Vaishnav, who is Minister for Information and Broadcasting as well as IT. The minister had expressed disappointment at Zuckerberg's remarks and had debunked the statement by the Meta honcho as "misinformation". "From free food for 800 million, 2.2 billion free vaccines, and aid to nations worldwide during COVID, to leading India as the fastest-growing major economy, PM Modi's decisive 3rd-term victory is a testament to good governance and public trust. @Meta, it's disappointing to see misinformation from Mr Zuckerberg himself. Let's uphold facts and credibility," Vaishnav had said. Meanwhile, Dubey on Wednesday said he treated the matter of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's remarks on Indian elections as "closed" after an official of the social networking platform tendered the apology.

Revanth: Represent...

Continued from page 1
approved by the respective river boards. On the Polavaram project, the Chief Minister emphasized the need for a timely study by IIT Hyderabad to assess the submergence impact on Bhadrachalam and surrounding areas. He instructed officials to speed up this process to ensure that Telangana's concerns are documented effectively. Revanth also urged the swift completion of the approval process for the Sammakka-Saralamma Barrage and the Palamuru-Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. These projects, he said, are vital for Telangana's irrigation needs and should be prioritized. The review meeting was attended by Irrigation Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy, Ministers Sridhar Babu and Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Chief Secretary Shanti Kumari, Chief Minister's Principal Secretary V. Seshadri, Irrigation Advisor Adityanath Das, and Irrigation Secretary Rahul Bojja. The CM reiterated that Telangana would make a strong case for water allocations under KWDT-II, ensuring adherence to legal provisions while protecting the state's irrigation interests.

India emerging...

Continued from page 1
more than 100 countries, he noted. "In the last decade, 39 of the 40 naval vessels inducted were built in Indian shipyards, reflecting our commitment to 'Make in India'," he said. He also highlighted the ongoing construction of 60 ships worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore, and its multiplier effect on economy and job creation, particularly in the MSME sector which supplies most shipbuilding components. **Rahul to...**
Continued from page 1
which are expected to be finalized by January-end. "Decisions regarding Cabinet expansion will be taken by the Chief Minister and the high command. We also discussed the restructuring of the TPCC Working Committee to ensure DCC Presidents have strong public support," Mahesh said. This meeting, chaired by KC Venugopal, highlights Congress's intent to consolidate its position in Telangana before major political developments.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025

03



CITY EVENTS

S Jaipal Reddy Jayanthi

To be organized by GAD

Venue

Ravindra Bharathi
January 16,
(9 am to 10 pm)

Live Performance

By Taara (Band)

Venue

36 Downtown Brew Pub
(Vapour)
January 16, (8 pm)

Thursday Night

Featuring DJ Salman

Venue

36 Downtown Brew Pub
(Vapour)
January 16, (8 pm)

Live Music Performance

By Dakshin (Band)

Venue

Amnesia Sky Bar
January 16, (8 pm)

Global Kite & Sweet Fest has 15 lakh floating visitors

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The International Kite & Sweet Festival 2025, organised by the Government of Telangana from January 13 to 15, concluded on Wednesday evening at Parade Grounds, drawing 15 lakh floating visitors.

The three-day festival featured participants from 19 countries and 50 national kite flyers from 13 Indian states. Cultural performances such as Perini, Oggu Dolu and Dappu showcased Telangana's rich traditions, along with performances from other states promoting unity.

Visitors enjoyed 100 stalls of handlooms and handicrafts and 60 food courts offering Telangana and other cuisines.

The Sweet Festival, organised by Cultural Language Indian Connections (CLIC), displayed 1,200 varieties of sweets made by Hyderabad residents, reflecting national integration.

Attendees also admired large kites shaped like animals, robots and flowers, which filled the sky with vibrant



colours.

Dignitaries including Secunderabad MLA Ganesh, officials from various departments and VIPs attended. Support from multiple organisations ensured the festival's

success.

A special night kite flying event and a live concert by Mangli and team highlighted the celebrations during the closing ceremony. This festival celebrated the

Langar House traffic cop hurt by Chinese manja

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A traffic constable of Langar House was injured by Chinese manja on Sankranti day (Tuesday) at Narayanguda Flyover. He was immediately shifted to a nearby private hospital and received five stitches on his neck. He was advised rest. Langar House Traffic CI Sanjay told The Pioneer, "Constable Shivaraj has finished his duty on Tuesday afternoon and was travelling home. As he was passing by Narayanguda Flyover, he was hit by Chinese manja and sustained a neck injury. He received five stitches and was advised rest."

"We have filed a complaint at Langar House police station and registered a case. The investigation will be done in this regard," he added.

artistry of kite-flying, uniting participants through a shared passion for this ancient tradition.

Deceased in double murder case identified

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Narsingi Police has identified the victims who were found murdered in its limits.

One of the deceased was Ankit Saket, a native of Madhya Pradesh, and Bindu, from Chhattisgarh.

The preliminary investigations suggest the two shared an extra-marital relationship.

Bindu, who resided in LB Nagar and a mother of three, was reportedly brought to Nanakramguda by Ankit on January 8. Ankit, who lived in Nanakramguda, had arranged for Bindu to stay in a friend's room.

However, Ankit was reportedly missing in Gachibowli shortly thereafter, while Bindu's family filed a missing person's report at Vanasthalipuram.

The gruesome murders came to light when the bodies of Ankit and Bindu were discovered on Monday in Narsingi. The police suspect the involvement of family members from both sides due to the alleged relationship between the victims.



First woman officer, Padmaja, takes charge as PCOM of SCR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The first woman officer of the Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS), K Padmaja, took charge as Principal Chief Operations Manager (PCOM) of South Central Railway (SCR) at Rail Nilayam, Secunderabad, on Wednesday. A 1991 IRTS batch officer, she holds bachelor's degrees in Science and Education.

Before this, Padmaja was a Principal Chief Commercial Manager (PCCM) of SCR and also held an additional charge as PCOM. With over 30 years of service in Indian Railways, she has held key roles, including Assistant Commercial Manager, Assistant Traffic Manager and Senior Divisional Safety Officer across various divisions of the SCR. At the headquarters, she served in roles of Chief Traffic Manager and Chief Passenger Traffic Manager.

She has also worked as Advisor (Transport) for Godavari Fertilizers Co. Ltd and General Manager of CONCOR, Hyderabad. As PCCM since July 2024, she ensured smooth passenger and freight operations while prioritizing customer satisfaction and revenue growth.

SRIDHAR BABU MEETS UNION MINISTERS

TG State to promote tourism & technology

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana's IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu presented a proposal to Union Ministers Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Culture & Tourism) and Ashwini Vaishnaw (Railways, Electronics & IT) during his visit to Delhi on Wednesday. The proposal focuses on promoting the state's tourism and technology sectors.

Minister Sridhar Babu proposed transforming the 'Kaleshwaram-Manthani-Ramagiri' corridor into a world-class spiritual and heritage tourism circuit. The Kaleshwaram Mukteswar temple, a 1,000-year-old site, is known for its spiritual significance and unique dual Shivalingas. The temple, already attracting millions of visitors, could become a major eco-tourism hub with Central assistance. Similarly, the Ramagiri fort, rich in history and mythology, is poised to become a global heritage site with strategic



Telangana's IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu presenting a proposal to Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Culture & Tourism) in Delhi

investments. The Minister emphasised the importance of integrating history, spirituality and natural beauty to create a premier global tourism destination. "This is about celebrating India's soul," he stated, urging the Central government's support for the vision.

In his meeting with Minister Vaishnaw, Sridhar Babu emphasised Telangana's role in semiconductor manufacturing. He outlined the state's plans, support for industries in this field and the need for a National Disaster Recovery

Zone. He also invited Vaishnaw to the BioAsia Summit in Hyderabad to be held in February 2025.

Minister Babu shared how the Telangana government, led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, offers incentives to industries in semiconductor manufacturing. He highlighted the state's potential to become a national leader in the sector.

The Minister also discussed Telangana's advancements in AI and Cybersecurity, along with growing interest from top companies in establishing data centres.

Key sub-stations in Hyd inspected

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to ensure uninterrupted power supply across Telangana, CMD of TGTRANSCO D Krishna Bhaskar conducted a surprise inspection of the 400KV Raidurg GIS sub-station and the 220KV Gachibowli sub-station on Wednesday. The inspections focused on addressing the increasing power demand, particularly in the GHMC areas and the IT corridor of Hyderabad.

Krishna Bhaskar directed the Chief Engineer, Superintendent Engineer and other staff to implement preventive measures and closely monitor the power supply on every 33KV feeder. "Immediate rectification measures must be taken in case of issues, and accountability should be fixed for any negligence," the CMD stated during the inspection.

The CMD emphasised the importance of maintaining sufficient material stocks, including transformers and current transformers.

Kakarla meet on radiology to be held on Feb 2

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In honour of Padma Shri Professor Kakarla Subba Rao's centenary celebrations, a one-day national radiology conference will be held on February 2 at Crest Auditorium, Hyderabad. The event is being organised jointly by the Society of Indian Radiographers (Telangana Chapter) and the Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS).

The conference brochure was unveiled on Wednesday at NIMS by Dr Beerappa Nagari, Director of NIMS, Dr Liza Rajasekhar, Dean and Dr Anu Kapoor, Head of the Radiodiagnosis department.

The conference will bring together radiologists, technical experts and students from across the country. Renowned speakers, including Dr Jagan Mohan Reddy, Dr Vijayanand H Kelkar, Dr Ramakrishna, Dr Raouri Power, Dr Panneer Selvam, Gaddam Gangadhar,



Dr Beerappa Nagari, Director of NIMS, Dr Liza Rajasekhar, Dean, releasing the poster of the conference

Arjun Manje Gowda and Dr Sujata Patnaik, will deliver guest lectures on various topics.

Radiology students from different states will present research papers during the event. The best research paper will be awarded the Professor Kakarla Best Scientific Paper Award, which includes a cash prize and a memento.

Additionally, the Dr Kakarla Lifetime Achievement

Award will be presented to a radiographer for outstanding service in radiology. This year, the award will be given to Shankar K Bhagat, Technical Officer at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, and member of the Maharashtra Medical Allied Professionals Council.

Approximately 400 technical experts and students are expected to participate in this prestigious event.

200 surgical trainees to take final MRCS exam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In all, 200 surgical trainees have come to Hyderabad from all over India to take Final MRCS Examinations held by The Royal College of Surgeons of England from January 15 to 19.

Dr P Raghu Ram, Founding Director, KIMS-Ushalakshmi Centre for Breast Diseases, told The Pioneer, "In the last 10 years over 1,800 to 2,000 have taken the examination.

In all, 35 eminent examiners from the UK, India and the Middle East have flown down to Hyderabad to assess 200 surgical trainees, who have come to Hyderabad from all over India to take this examination, which is spread over five days."

One arrested for trying to sell country-made weapons

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A youth developer who worked for a brief period in Hyderabad had left to his home town in Uttar Pradesh. Later developed contacts with illegal firearm-makers to start business in Hyderabad and earn easy money.

The Rachakonda Police nabbed the accused identified as Harekrishna Yadav (26) and collected two country-made pistols (0.32MM), one Tapancha, 10 live rounds and a mobile phone from him.

Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu said that the accused, along with his brother Murali came to Hyderabad in 2019 and worked in a company at Bibinagar. After



Rachakonda Commissioner of Police Sudheer Babu addressing the Press on Wednesday

three years, he left the job and went back to his native village and eked out livelihood by farming.

His village borders Bihar and he was having contacts with illegal firearm manufacturers. He hatched a plan to procure country-made

weapons and planned to sell the same in Hyderabad at high price.

The Rachakonda Police said that they are in communication with the Bihar Police in identifying another accused Sampath Yadav, resident of Shapur village, Bihiya mandal,

Bhojpur dist, Bihar State, who has supplied weapons to Harekrishna.

While asking questions on the worth of weapons, CP Sudheer Babu explained that it depends on the demand that one is asking for and then the weapons are sold.

TGCETs 2025 schedule announced; to start on April 29

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE) chaired by Prof V Balakista Reddy, has released the schedule for the Telangana Common Entrance Tests (TGCETs) 2025. These computer-based tests (CBTs) are conducted for admissions into professional courses for the academic year 2025-26 across the State. They will begin from April 29 and continue till June 14.

TG EAPCET (Engineering, Agriculture, Pharmacy) is from April 29 to 30 (Agriculture & Pharmacy) and May 2 to 5 (Engineering), conducted by JNTU, Hyderabad.

TGCET (Lateral Entry for Engineering, Pharmacy) is May 12, organised by Osmania University. TG Ed.CET (B.Ed Admissions) is on June 1, under Kakatiya University. TG LAW CET and PGLCET (LLB and LLM admissions) is on June 6 conducted by Osmania

University. TG ICET (MBA, MCA Admissions) is on June 8-9, under MGU. TG PGCEET (Postgraduate Engineering, Pharmacy) is from June 16 to 19 by JNTU, Hyderabad. TG PECET (Physical Education) is from June 11 to 14, including Physical Efficiency and Skill Tests, under Palamuru University.

Detailed notifications regarding application procedures, eligibility and fees will be issued by respective CET conveners in due courses, said the release.

NATIONAL STARTUP DAY 2025

Startups urge govt to lower exim duties, standardise domestic manufacturing

SAMUEL JOSHUA samueljoshuamjmc@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Startups urged the government to lower import-export duties and standardise domestic manufacturing on National Startup Day 2025. Ashva Wearable Technologies, an AI-integrated medical device startup, highlighted India's startup ecosystem as an example of innovation, driving progress in various industries. Its founder Anmol Saxena called for reducing GST on medical devices, more funding for R&D and lower import-export taxes on raw materials to make life-saving technologies more affordable and accessible.

Ashva also appreciates IKP Knowledge Park in Telangana for supporting their startup in the healthcare sector. The startup believes that if hospitals are encouraged to adopt certified technologies with incentives like NABH credits, it will benefit patients nation-wide and improve India's medical innovation leadership.

Meanwhile, MaarsMedia, a media communications startup based in Hyderabad, thanked T-Hub, India's leading startup incubator, for supporting their idea. Aditya from the startup said T-Hub helped turn their vision into reality by offering mentorship, resources, and a network to grow their business.

Telangana-based Axial Aero



Private Limited, a winner in the Aero Innovate category of the National Startup Awards 2023, is excelling in aerospace innovation. Its products, including a high-tech simulator, are setting new standards in military and commercial use. Axial Aero's success highlights the role of startups in shaping the aerospace sector, both in Telangana and across

India. The Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) CGM Satya Prakash Singh shared that women lead 21% of funded startups in India. He noted the growth of the ecosystem, with over 1,60,000 startups receiving support, including 22 unicorns. Singh also emphasised that passion-driven startups, not just trend-following ones, have better chances of success.

ElectricPe, an EV startup founded in 2021, is enhancing India's EV adoption with its app, which provides real-time charging station availability. In 2024, ElectricPe partnered with Google, further boosting its presence in India's green mobility future.

Hyd's office market faces rising vacancy levels

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's office market is bracing up for a significant rise in vacancy rates, with levels projected to increase to 24-24.5 per cent by March 2026 from 14.1 per cent in March 2023, according to the latest ICRA report. The city is expected to have the lowest occupancy among India's top six cities by the same period.

The report attributes this trend to an oversupply of office space, driven by Hyderabad's unique unlimited Floor Space Index (FSI) regulation, which allows developers to undertake large speculative projects. While Hyderabad witnessed an all-time high supply of 19 million



square feet (msf) in FY2024, annual absorption rates remain significantly lower, estimated at 9-12 msf through FY2026.

"Hyderabad is the only major Indian city with an unlimited FSI rule.

This has resulted in substantial speculative construction, creating a significant demand-

per cent by March 2026. In contrast, HYTEC City, benefiting from better connectivity, is expected to maintain relatively stable vacancy levels at 9.5-10 per cent.

Despite the high vacancy rates, the market conditions could prove advantageous for new tenants.

Existing rental agreements are expected to see steady escalations, but landlords are likely to offer incentives such as extended rent-free periods or discounted rates for new leases.

However, these trends are likely to pressure developers, affecting returns on investment and debt-raising potential for future projects with low expected occupancy.



Nalgonda Collector Ila Tripathi conducting a surprise inspection at the Primary Health Centre at Gurrempodu in Nalgonda district on Wednesday

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Collector orders dismissal of contract employees of PHC

PNS ■ NALGONDA

District Collector Ila Tripathi has ordered the dismissal of contract employees and suspension of the permanent staff of Gurrempodu Primary Health Centre (PHC) for unauthorised absence from duty.

During the surprise inspection at the PHC on Wednesday, it was found that none of the staff, including the Community Health Officer, were conspicuous by their absence. The staff was absent though Wednesday was not a public holiday.

Expressing her dismay, the Collector described the employees' negligence as

unacceptable, especially given the State government's emphasis on healthcare.

Contractual employees who were dismissed include pharmacist Shyam, lab technician Sandhya, data entry operator Madhavi, and attendants Srinivas, Aruna Jyothi, and Ellamma. Regular staff members, Attendant Lakshminarayana and pharmacist Bhagyamma, were suspended pending further inquiry.

The Collector warned that stern action would be taken against any employee found neglecting their duties. She emphasised that healthcare is a priority for the government, and leaving public welfare in jeopardy would not be tolerated.

Groundnut cultivation area shrinks in Telangana

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Groundnut cultivation has significantly declined in Telangana due to concerns over monkey attacks and pest infestations, which have severely impacted crop yields. Traders are also refusing to purchase the crop, citing poor quality, which has further discouraged farmers from growing groundnuts. As a result, farmers are opting to grow other crops, leading to a 50 per cent reduction in the area under groundnut cultivation across several districts in the state.

Monkeys have been uprooting groundnut plants before they develop pods, drastically reducing yields. Instead of the usual 15 quintals yield per acre, farmers are now only harvesting around 8 quintals per acre. This has forced many to turn to crops like cotton, chilli, and maize. Protecting groundnut crops from monkey raids has become a monumental challenge for farmers.

Additionally, unseasonal rains have damaged plants during the flowering stage, while pests such as leaf borers have been harming the seeds in the pods, stunting their growth. These combined factors have led to a significant drop in yields, with output now limited to 8 quintals per acre



instead of the normal 12-15 quintals.

In Wanaparthy, a district traditionally known for groundnut cultivation, the area dedicated to the crop has fallen from 25,000 acres to just 11,000 acres. Similarly, districts such as Narsampeta, Vardhanapeta, Yeturagaram, Dharmasagar, Veleru, Torru, Parakala, Sayampeta, and Kamalapur, which previously cultivated groundnuts over 12,000-14,000 acres, have seen their cultivation areas shrink to 6,000-8,000 acres. According to agricultural officials,

this sharp decline in groundnut cultivation is a result of these ongoing challenges.

The minimum support price for groundnut has also decreased by 13 per cent over the past year, adding to the financial strain on farmers. The government set the price at Rs 6,783 per quintal, but in the Wanaparthy market, the price initially stood at Rs 6,826 per quintal. Now, it has dropped to Rs 5,944. In December, the price was Rs 6,205 per quintal, but it has recently fluctuated between Rs 4,500 and Rs 6,517 per

quintal, causing uncertainty among farmers. In Warangal district's Yenumamula market, groundnut prices have ranged from a maximum of Rs 5,200 per quintal to a minimum of Rs 4,170 per quintal.

The cost of cultivating groundnuts is substantial. Farmers must spend at least Rs 13,000 for seeds alone, and the total cost of cultivation per acre rises to Rs 40,000. However, with yields of only 8 quintals per acre, farmers are earning just Rs 33,000 to Rs 35,000, which is not sufficient to cover the expenses and sustain their livelihoods.



Ill-fated bus

Pilgrim from Telangana dies as bus catches fire

PNS ■ NIRMAL

An elderly passenger tragically lost his life when a private bus, carrying pilgrims from Telangana to the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, caught fire on Tuesday. A 70-year-old farmer Sheelam Drupathi from Palsi village under Kubheer mandal in Nirmal district, was killed after being engulfed by flames.

The fire, it was suspected, could have been caused by Drupathi's smoking. While Drupathi tragically lost his life, 49 other pilgrims traveling on the bus had a narrow escape as they had disembarked the vehicle moments before the fire erupted.

The bus was destroyed by the blaze. Drupathi is survived by his wife, son, and daughter.

According to local people, a total of 200 people from Bhainsa, Kubheer, and surrounding areas had embarked on a pilgrimage to Prayagraj for the Maha Kumbh Mela, with some intending to also visit Varanasi and other major temples in Uttar Pradesh. The group had traveled in five buses, with about 10 pilgrims from Palsi village.

Officials told to ensure welfare schemes reach all eligible

PNS ■ WANAPARTHY

District Collector Adarsh Surabhi on Wednesday directed officials to conduct surveys at the grassroots level to ensure that the state government's prestigious welfare schemes reach only eligible beneficiaries. He emphasised that the surveys should be carried out from January 16 to 20, in line with the government's directives, to ensure that schemes such as Indiramma houses, Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa, Rythu Bharosa, and the issuance of new ration cards, set to be launched by the government from January 26, are provided only to deserving individuals.

During a review meeting with the nodal officers on Wednesday at the Collector's office, the Collector instructed the officials to identify eligible applicants for white ration cards, Indiramma houses, Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa, and Rythu Bharosa during the survey. The survey will be conducted by revenue staff, municipal staff, panchayat secretaries, and agriculture extension officers. Nodal officers and special mandal



Wanaparthy Collector Adarsh Surabhi holding a review meeting in Wanaparthy on Wednesday

officials will be appointed, with responsibilities assigned to Tahsildars and MPDOs to ensure the smooth conduct of the survey.

The Collector noted that following a thorough review of white ration card applications received through the public administration, 6,647 applications in Wanaparthy district were shortlisted for final verification. These will be verified during the survey from January 16 to 20 and will be finalized in the village councils scheduled from January 21 to 24.

For the Indiramma houses, 142,075 applicants have applied, and after the door-to-door survey, 36,206 applica-

tions made it to the final list in Wanaparthy district. These applications will be further examined during the field survey from January 16 to 20 and will be discussed in the village councils.

Regarding the Indiramma Atmiya Bharosa, which provides financial assistance of Rs 12,000 annually to poor families without agricultural land, the district has 121,844 job cardholders.

Of these, families who worked for at least 25 days under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in 2023-24 will be eligible for the financial support.

A total of 49,354 such families have been identified in the district as per the state report. The survey will identify eligible beneficiaries during these four days.

For Rythu Bharosa, guidelines were issued to identify agricultural land that is eligible for the scheme. During the survey from January 16 to 20, non-agricultural lands, house plots, layouts, acquired lands, and endowed lands will be identified, and the report will be submitted online.

Missing youth found dead in Khammam

PNS ■ KHAMMAM

A young man, who had come to home to celebrate the Sankranti festival, went missing under mysterious circumstances and was later found dead in Khammam town.

The deceased was identified as P Sanjay Kumar (22) from Rajiv Swagruha Colony in Khammam rural mandal, who was undergoing software training in Hyderabad. He arrived in Khammam on January 12 to celebrate the festival. On Monday in the early hours, he was on his way to the new bus station on his two-wheeler to pick up his brother, Gnanasai, who was returning from Hyderabad for the festival.

Before reaching the bus stand, Sanjay Kumar reportedly called his brother to say that his bike had been hit by a vehicle near a chicken shop close to their colony.

He later sent a voice message stating that four people in an auto rickshaw had abducted him after killing a woman, and they were trying to kill him too. Sanjay pleaded for help, providing his live location, but his phone was switched off shortly after.

Family members, local youths,

and the police began a search in the area, including the NSP canal, but were only able to find his bike. Sanjay's body was discovered at the Tanikella NSP canal locks on Tuesday.

Khammam rural police have sent the body for postmortem at the Government General Hospital. Inspector of Police Raju mentioned that authorities are reviewing



Sanjay Kumar

ing CCTV footage for further clues about the incident. As of now, there is no information about the woman who was allegedly killed by the assailants.

Relatives of Sanjay Kumar staged a protest, demanding that the police arrest the culprits and ensure punishment to them.

Two persons injured by manja thread

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD/ YADADRI BHUVANGIRI

Two persons suffered injuries in separate incidents after "manja" strings of kites allegedly slit their throats in different places in the State, police said on Wednesday.

The incidents occurred on 'Makar Sankranti', a harvest festival during which kite flying is an integral part.

At Navipet in Nizamabad district, a man in his 30s was hospitalised after a manja thread cut his throat, resulting in a bleeding injury while he was riding a two-wheeler on Tuesday.

In yet another incident, a middle-aged man driving a two-wheeler in Yadagirigutta on Wednesday suffered a minor cut on his neck after the thread of a kite got "entangled" around his neck, causing him to fall.

A man had died in January when a manja string from a kite allegedly slit his throat while he was riding a two-wheeler.

The police in all district said the use of Chinese manja, a synthetic nylon string coated with abrasive materials like powdered glass or metal, poses significant risks to public safety, wildlife, and the environment.

Despite bans in all district, its availability and use during kite festivals and other events continue to raise serious concerns, police said.

The sale and use of "Chinese manja" is illegal and punishable by law, with imprisonment of up to five years and a fine up to Rs one lakh, police added.



A person who was injured when manja slit his throat at Yadagirigutta on Wednesday

Absence of police commissioner leads to chaos in Nizamabad district

PNS ■ NIZAMABAD

"When the cat's away, the mice will." The idiom seems appropriate given the situation in Nizamabad district. The absence of the Police Commissioner in the Nizamabad district has led to serious concerns about law enforcement, with authorities treating the situation as having reportedly slid into chaos.

Reports indicate that officials are extorting money from sand mining traders and intervening in civil matters, such as land disputes, creating further complications. Due to the lack of leadership, certain police stations have become hotspots for controversy, with Sub-Inspectors and Circle Inspectors acting with impunity, it is alleged. Officers who face resistance to their orders are allegedly filing false cases against citizens.



Serious allegations have emerged regarding the behaviour of a section of police officials, who are entrusted with maintaining law and order. Complaints have surfaced about how these officers manage cases within their jurisdictions, with some turning a blind eye to issues related to illegal sand mining, rice meant for public distribution, and other illicit activities.

Citizens have raised concerns, some of which have been

communicated to senior officers, MLAs, and other authorities, it is said. Allegations that include police officers interfering in land matters have surfaced. These complaints have been forwarded to senior officials, including the Inspector General of Police and Director General of Police, according to sources.

It may be recalled that the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in November arrested B Krishna Kumar, Sub-Inspector

of Police from Varni station for demanding and accepting Rs 20,000. The bribe was allegedly demanded in exchange for issuing a notice under Section 35 of the BNSS and to avoid future harassment of the complainant.

This has led to complaints against approximately 12 police stations across the district. In response, Multi-Zone Inspector General of Police Chandrashekar Reddy has initiated an investigation into the allegations, and action is expected to be taken against the officers involved.

The absence of a police commissioner has resulted in lower-level officers acting without accountability. People's frustration is mounting among people, and there is growing demand for the appointment of a police commissioner to restore order and accountability in the district.

Three revenue officials in ACB net in Jagtial dist

PNS ■ JAGTIAL

On Wednesday, Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) officials arrested the Metpally Sub-registrar, an attendant, and a document writer for demanding a bribe from a landowner.

According to ACB officials, Sunke Vishnu, a resident of

Thimmapur in Metpally mandal, approached Sub-Registrar Asifuddin to mortgage his 266-yard plot of land. The officer allegedly demanded a bribe of Rs.10,000 and agreed to accept Rs 5,000. The landowner was asked to hand over the money to Ravi, an outsourcing employee.

The landowner reported the matter to ACB, which set up a trap. Ravi was caught accepting Rs 5,000 from the landowner inside the Sub-Registrar office. Since Ravi took the bribe on the sub-registrar's instructions, Asifuddin was also arrested. In addition, document writer Ravi was arrested in connection with the case.



Three revenue officials who are caught by the ACB for allegedly accepting bribe at Metpally in Jagtial district on Wednesday

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

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

File No.: C6/11/2025-LHS Dated: 15-01-2025.

Where as the following notifications were issued and Gazettes were published for the Public purpose for Hyderabad Airport Metro Limited, Phase-II, from MGBS to Chandrayangutta, Corridor-VI, situated at Share-E-Hyderabad Village, Bahadurapura Mandal of Hyderabad District.

In response to the Said Notifications the following affected person (Property owners and others) have come forward to settle their claims through Negotiation. The details of the willing affected persons are as follows.

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	C6/27/2024 - LHS (26 to 50)	HAML No.22 dated 16-11-2025

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. Yds
1	2	3	4
Smt. Iqbal Unnisa Begum, D/o. Late Shaik Mohiuddin, R/o. 17-9-245, Nowri Nada Ali Baig, Yakulpura, Charminar, Hyderabad.500023.	1.LHS 39C	22-3-765	78.39
Sri/Mohammed Aleem, S/o. Shaik Ibrahim R/o. 17-6-141, Peer Pasha Masjid, Dabeerpura, Charminar, Hyderabad.	2 LHS 38C	23-3-767	12.85

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	C6/48/2024 - LHS (51 to 75)	HAML No.23 dated 16-11-2025

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. Yds
1	2	3	4
Sri. Mahamood Osman Shareef, S/o. Mohammed Dawood Shareef, R/o. 22-3-494-1, Dabirpura, Charminar, Hyderabad.500023.	3 LHS 69A	23-3-494/1	29.91

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	C6/110/2024 - LHS (126 to 150)	HAML No.38 dated 07-12-2025

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. Yds
1	2	3	4
Smt. Shabana, W/o. Abdul Gayyum, D/o. Late Shaik Mohiuddin, R/o. 17-9-245, Nowri Nada Ali Baig, Yakulpura, Charminar, Hyderabad.500023.	4.LHS 131	23-1-515 to 516,	15.50
1.Sri. Abid Shareef, S/o. Mohammed Shareef Represented By: Smt. Shams Unnisa Saba,W/o. Abid Shareef, R/o. 23-1-498/6, Bibi Bazar, Dabeerpura, Charminar, Hyderabad.	5.LHS 136	23-3-767	6.17

S.NO.	NOTIFICATION NO. & DATE	GAZETTE NO. & DATE
1.	C6/112/2024 - LHS (175 to 200)	HAML No.40 dated 07-12-2025

Name and address	Sketch No.	Premises No.	Extent in Sq. Yds
1	2	3	4
Sri. Mohd Fahad Adil, S/o. Mohd Awaiz Adil R/o. 18-7-230, Charminar, Hyderabad.500023.	6.LHS 195	18-7-205 /C/2/9/1	110.46

It is hereby notified calling for claims and objections if any, to be filed before the District Collector, Hyderabad District/Special Deputy Collector, LA, HAML, Rasoolpura, Hyderabad within the Seven days of publication of this Notification i.e., by 21-01-2025.

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

Date: 15-01-2025

DIPR.R.O.No. 784/LA/PP/ADVT/AGENCY/2024-25

ACROSS THE STATES



Sudarshan Chakra Corps celebrates 77th Army Day

Sudarshan Chakra Corps celebrated the 77th Army Day on Wednesday, with its chief exhorting soldiers to resolve to uphold the glorious traditions of the Army while embracing challenges. The celebration began with a wreath-laying ceremony at Shaheed Smarak War Memorial at Dronachal by Major General Sharad Kumar Shrivastava, Chief of Staff, Sudarshan Chakra Corps, an official said. Shrivastava stressed that every soldier must resolve to uphold the glorious traditions of the Army while embracing the challenges of the future with determination and pride, he said. He called upon the officers and other ranks to bring "greater success and glory to our motherland and contribute indefatigably towards nation-building". The XXI Corps or Sudarshan Chakra Corps, a strike corps of the Army, is headquartered in Bhopal.



SC issues notice to Centre over rising cyber crimes, spam calls

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought a response from the Centre on a PIL alleging an "enormous rise" in cyber crimes and "nuisance" of unsolicited calls in the country. Observing government agencies were doing their bit, a bench comprising Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar issued a notice to the Department of Telecommunications. "Yes, we understand the problem is there. Let the Centre respond," the bench said, noting the PIL of one Gowrishankar from Bengaluru. The plea sought a direction to telecom network operators to implement the calling name presentation service (CNAP). The service, which facilitates identification of the caller's name and is usually displayed in the caller ID section of the phone, may help recipients to make informed decisions about calls and combat spam calls.



'Will take up Bangla embankment issue with Centre'

Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday assured the Tripura Assembly he will take up with the Centre the issue of Bangladesh government's move to build a massive embankment opposite Kailashahar subdivision in the state's Unakoti district. The assurance came after Congress legislator Birajit Sinha drew Saha's attention on the matter. "The Bangladesh government has been constructing a massive embankment opposite Kailashahar. We have a 40-year-old embankment at Rangaiti. If our embankment is not strengthened on an urgent basis, people will suffer in case of floods," Singh said.

'FOOD SAFETY ON WHEELS'

Mobile labs to check food quality at Maha Kumbh

PNS ■ MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

The Uttar Pradesh government on Wednesday announced the deployment of mobile laboratories to carry out food inspections at eateries in the Maha Kumbh Mela area here, aiming to monitor hygiene and safety standards.



Assistant Food Commissioner (Grade 2) Sushil Kumar Singh emphasised the use of 'Food Safety on Wheels' to prevent the distribution of spoiled or adulterated food to the pilgrims.

"These mobile laboratories conduct on-the-spot testing of food and beverages. Regular quality checks are conducted at hotels, dhabas, and small stalls, with food safety complaints promptly addressed to ensure swift action,"

Singh added.

In a statement, the Uttar Pradesh government said that under the leadership of chief minister Yogi Adityanath, efforts are being made to ensure clean and quality food for the millions of devotees attending the Maha Kumbh.

"The fair is divided into five zones and 25 sectors, with food

safety officers in each sector regularly monitoring hygiene and safety standards," the government said. "All food safety operations are coordinated from the central office located on Sankat Mochan Marg in Sector 24. This office oversees food monitoring efforts and supervises the deployment of teams across the fair," it added.

India's spiritual culture guided by spirit of service: Modi

● SAYS NDA GOVT WORKING SELFLESSLY FOR PEOPLE

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday asserted India's spiritual culture is deeply rooted in the spirit of service and his government has been working selflessly for people's welfare for more than a decade.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating an ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness) temple at Kharghar in Navi Mumbai, Modi, who assumed office for a third time in June last year, emphasised his government has launched a slew of welfare measures like building toilets, homes for the poor and providing LPG connections and medical insurance to citizens.

"The spirit of service is a symbol of secularism. The main foundation of our spiritual culture is the spirit of service. India is not just a

piece of land surrounded by geographical boundaries. It is a living land, living culture. Knowledge is spirituality and if we want to understand India, we have to imbibe spirituality," he underlined in his speech.

He said followers of ISKCON, a global bhakti movement founded on the Bhagavad Gita teachings, across the world are connected to each other by their devotion to Lord Krishna. Modi said the spirit of service propagated by the ISKCON movement inspires the youth and helps them create a sensitive society which promotes human values. "It inspires people to heal in India and look after their well-being," the PM maintained. Modi said true service is symbolized by selfless human endeavour where there is no other interest and described India as an "extraordinary, wondrous land".



Situation in Kashmir improved after Article 370 abrogation: Shah

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Asserting that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has improved after the abrogation of Article 370, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said no one now dares to do any mischief when the Krishna Janmashtami procession passes through Srinagar's Lal Chowk.

Speaking at Kalol in Gandhinagar district, the BJP leader said it was former prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru who implemented Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir.

Under Article 370, a special status was given to the region.

"By abrogating Article 370 in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clear message to the world that for Indians, there is nothing bigger than the self-respect of India and its honour," said Shah, on a three-day Gujarat visit from January 14. He was addressing a gathering in Kalol town after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of various projects worth Rs 194 crore.

"There was a time when Army's support was necessary to hoist the tricolor at Lal Chowk in Srinagar. But today, no one dares to do any mischief when Krishna Janmashtami procession passes through the Lal Chowk," the home

minister said. Nearly 2.80 crore tourists, mostly from Gujarat, have visited Kashmir and returned safely without facing any issues, he said, adding that this transformation was the result of PM Modi's hardworking, sensitive and alert leadership.

"Under the PM's leadership, India became the fifth largest economy in the world, and it is certain we will reach the third spot in 2027. And, we are working towards making India the number one country by 2047 and God will definitely help us in our endeavour," said Shah, Lok Sabha MP from Gandhinagar.

He inaugurated 19 projects and laid foundation stone for eight projects, including one for converting the existing road connecting Sanand town with Kalol into a six-lane highway.

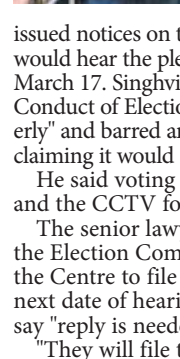
"There was a time during the Congress rule when village sarpanchs had to struggle to get a small grant of Rs 5,000 from the government. Today, under the BJP rule, works worth crores of rupees are carried out without causing any hardship to sarpanchs," he added.

He thanked the people of the region for making the BJP victorious in all seven assembly segments, including Sanand and Kalol, which are part of the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency.

ELECTION RULES ROW SC seeks Centre, poll panel reply on Jairam Ramesh's plea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and the poll panel on Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's plea against the recent amendments, including no public access to CCTV, to the 1961 election rules. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Ramesh, and issued notices on the plea. The bench said it would hear the plea in the week commencing March 17. Singhvi said amendments to the 1961 Conduct of Election Rules were made "very cleverly" and barred any access to CCTV footage claiming it would reveal the identity of the voter.



He said voting choices were never revealed and the CCTV footage couldn't reveal votes. The senior lawyer urged the bench to ask the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Centre to file their responses before the next date of hearing else they would come and say "reply is needed to be filed" on that day.

"They will file the responses," the CJ said. The Congress leader filed the writ petition in December challenging the recent amendments to the 1961 rules and expressed "hope" that the apex court would help "restore the fast eroding" integrity of the electoral process.

The government has tweaked an election rule to prevent public inspection of certain electronic documents such as CCTV camera and webcasting footage besides video recordings of candidates to prevent their misuse.

Ramesh had said, "The integrity of the electoral process is fast eroding. Hopefully the Supreme Court will help restore it." "A writ has just been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the recent amendments to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961," he wrote on X earlier. Ramesh said the ECI, a constitutional body charged with the conduct of free and fair elections, couldn't be allowed to unilaterally, and without public consultation, amend such a vital law in such a brazen manner.

'Advanced light helicopter will remain our workhorse'

PNS ■ PUNE

Army Chief Gen Udaya D. Dwivedi on Wednesday sought to allay apprehensions over the safety of advanced light helicopter (ALH) and said the home-grown chopper has not hit a "rough patch" and it will remain a "workhorse" for the force. His comments during a press interaction held here after the 77th Army Day Parade come amid reports suggesting there could be safety concerns with this platform, especially after a crash incident in Gujarat's Porbandar early this month.

Gen Dwivedi was asked if the ALH has hit a "rough patch" after the incident. "Let me assure the countrymen and my Indian Army that ALH has not hit a rough patch. This kind of a small accident keeps taking place, all over the world. Even the

best helicopters which are there in the world, they also meet with such accidents," the Army chief said. In 2023 and 2024, the Indian Army has flown ALH for 40,000 hours. And, in those 40,000 hours there's only one glitch that took place, he said. "And, we are flying at altitudes of more than 15,000 ft. So, ALH is a workhorse and it will remain a workhorse and we have 100 per cent confidence in this platform," the Army chief added.

ALH Dhruv is an indigenously developed platform made by Bengaluru-based Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Its armed version is ALH Rudra. Three crew members were killed after an ALH of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) had crashed during landing at Porbandar airport in Gujarat on January 5.

Gen Dwivedi was asked if the ALH has hit a "rough patch" after the incident. "Let me assure the countrymen and my Indian Army that ALH has not hit a rough patch. This kind of a small accident keeps taking place, all over the world. Even the



Kejriwal losing polls, resorting to diversionary tactics: BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal is resorting to diversionary tactics to hide his failures, the BJP said on Wednesday, citing his multiple claims, including about the likely arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Atishi and BJP declaring Ramesh Bidhuri as its CM candidate.

In an apparent tit for tat counter, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia

cited "reliable sources" to claim that Kejriwal is considering Amanatullah Khan and Naresh Balyan for the Leader of Opposition as the BJP is set to get a majority in the Delhi assembly polls.

Khan "hates" Hindus and "supports" Rohingyas, Bhatia alleged, claiming that this is why Kejriwal likes him.

The AAP chief prefers Balyan due to the MLA's involvement in "extor-

tion," the BJP spokesperson said.

He said Kejriwal has nothing to show for the AAP government's work in Delhi as he has failed to fulfil promises of piped water supply to every house, cleaning Yamuna, and building roads, schools and hospitals. That is why he has resorted to diversionary tactics of making big claims like Atishi is expected to be arrested, and the BJP is distributing gold chains among voters,

Bhatia said. The former Delhi CM is set to lose from the New Delhi constituency, Bhatia claimed.

Kejriwal should tell who is going to be the Leader of Opposition, the BJP leader said, claiming the former Delhi chief minister cannot hold the position himself because of the bail conditions imposed by the Supreme Court in the excise case.

Bhatia accused Kejriwal of insulting a woman chief minister like

Atishi by calling her a "temporary CM".

Kejriwal also got Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal beaten up at his residence, the BJP spokesperson alleged, claiming that the AAP has been anti-women.

At the press conference, another BJP spokesperson, Shazia Ilmi, accused AAP MLA Vinay Mishra of threatening and beating up a Dalit woman.

'INACTION ON MISLEADING ADS'

SC warns states, UTs of contempt proceedings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday warned states and union territories of contempt action if they failed to act against misleading advertisements. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan perused a note submitted by senior advocate Shadan Farasat, who is assisting the apex court as an amicus curiae in the matter, and observed a number of states were non-compliant as indicated in the note.

"We make it clear that if we find non-compliance by any of the states and union territories, we may have to initiate proceedings under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, against the states concerned," the bench said.

The issue pertaining to misleading advertisements had cropped up before the top court while hearing a plea filed by the Indian Medical Association in 2022 alleging a

smear campaign by Patanjali Ayurved Ltd against the Covid vaccination drive and modern systems of medicine.

The top court had highlighted the aspect of misleading advertisements being published or displayed in media contrary to the provisions of the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 and the rules, the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, and the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

During the hearing on Wednesday, the amicus said as per the affidavits filed by the states and union territories so far, virtually no prosecution under the 1954 Act was taking place.

While Section 3 of the Act deals with prohibition of advertisement of certain drugs for treatment of certain diseases and disorders, Section 4 relates to prohibition of misleading advertisements of drugs. The bench referred to affidavits



filed by some of the states and questioned why they hadn't acted on the basis of complaints received.

Some states, it noted, found it difficult to identify the violators. "We will take contempt action now," the bench said, "and we will threadbare examine the compliance

made by each state."

The bench said it would consider the compliance made by Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir on February 10. And if these states wanted to file further affidavits reporting compliance, they were free to do so by February 3, it added.

The bench said compliance by states including Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab would be considered on February 24.

It said compliance regarding other states and union territories would be considered on March 17.

While hearing the matter in July last year, the apex court said the Ministry of Ayush should set up a dashboard to make available to the consumers the details about the complaints filed on misleading advertisements and the progress made on them.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Wildfires: A call for action

Los Angeles fires ravage city as President-elect Trump prepares for second term amid climate change controversy

As President-elect Donald Trump prepares to assume office for his second term, the United States faces devastation from the Los Angeles fires, which have claimed several lives and caused billions of dollars in damages. Trump has maintained that there is no such thing as climate change and has even withdrawn from Paris climate agreement. He has been fighting developing countries and even its own allies over climate change. The Los Angeles fires a direct consequence of climate change must come as an eye-opener to the president-elect. The city has become a focal point for devastating wildfires, which have grown in intensity and frequency over the past few decades. The wildfires of recent years, including the catastrophic ones in 2023, serve as a stark reminder of the urgent need to address the underlying factors fueling these disasters and to build a more resilient future. Wildfires in Los Angeles and the broader Southern California region are driven by a confluence of factors: prolonged droughts, climate change, urban sprawl into fire-prone areas, and an accumulation of dry vegetation. The Los Angeles fires have destroyed several homes, displaced thousands of residents and led to several fatalities. The economic toll have reached billions of dollars, while the ecological damage will take decades to repair.



The increasing frequency and severity of wildfires are directly linked to climate change. Rising temperatures, prolonged droughts, and shifting weather patterns create ideal conditions for fires to ignite and spread rapidly. These fires underscore the necessity of global and local actions to mitigate climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources. One of the significant contributors to wildfire vulnerability is urban sprawl into wildland-urban interface areas. Accumulated dry vegetation acts as fuel for wildfires. The Los Angeles fires are a wake-up call for governments across the world. Addressing the wildfire crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that includes tackling climate change, revising urban development policies, investing in emergency preparedness and fostering community engagement. Los Angeles, like many other regions around the world, must learn to adapt to a man-made reality where wildfires are a persistent threat. By applying the lessons learned from past disasters, the city can build a safer, more resilient future for its residents and ecosystems. But for that to happen the decisions must be taken at the highest level and the world leaders must bury the hatchet and come to an agreement that something concrete needs to be done to mitigate the climate disaster. It is a universal problem affecting all of us so a unified action alone can curb this menace. The Los Angeles fires might prompt Donald Trump to consider the importance of taking action for the greater good, rather than focusing solely on appeasing his supporters.

reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transitioning to renewable energy sources. One of the significant contributors to wildfire vulnerability is urban sprawl into wildland-urban interface areas. Accumulated dry vegetation acts as fuel for wildfires. The Los Angeles fires are a wake-up call for governments across the world. Addressing the wildfire crisis requires a multi-faceted approach that includes tackling climate change, revising urban development policies, investing in emergency preparedness and fostering community engagement. Los Angeles, like many other regions around the world, must learn to adapt to a man-made reality where wildfires are a persistent threat. By applying the lessons learned from past disasters, the city can build a safer, more resilient future for its residents and ecosystems. But for that to happen the decisions must be taken at the highest level and the world leaders must bury the hatchet and come to an agreement that something concrete needs to be done to mitigate the climate disaster. It is a universal problem affecting all of us so a unified action alone can curb this menace. The Los Angeles fires might prompt Donald Trump to consider the importance of taking action for the greater good, rather than focusing solely on appeasing his supporters.

PICTALK



A woman makes 'rangoli' during 'Pongal' festival celebrations, in Chikkamagaluru

Women breaking the glass ceiling

Women are all set to break the barriers at the highest level as the Vatican and Canada brace up for the top post for a lady



KALYANI SHANKAR

Two dramatic announcements were made last week that could significantly advance women's empowerment worldwide. The first was a historic decision from the Vatican, which saw Pope Francis appoint Sister Simona Brambilla as the prefect for the first time.

This 59-year-old Consolata Missionary, previously the second-in-command of the order department, has created history. Her position corrects the gender imbalance to a certain extent. Sister Brambilla's appointment is seen as a progressive step forward. This position, long considered a male domain, is now open to women for the first time. She will oversee all religious orders within the Catholic Church, a significant step forward since no woman has held this prestigious position before. Thus, the contribution by women to the Church is at last acknowledged and an essential precedent for further empowerment of women. Incidentally, a significant Vatican summit brought Catholic leaders worldwide not long ago. It addressed the importance of enhancing women's leadership roles, among other issues—important representatives from over 100 countries, including Cardinals and Bishops. It also considered a proposal concerning women deacons. Again, Pope Francis granted the women in the Church the right to vote for the first time two years ago, in line with his commitment to advancing women within the Church in decision-making roles. It also promoted gender equality within the Church and women's participation at the highest levels. The Pope had also set up two Vatican Commissions on the potential ordination of women as deacons. The second dramatic announcement was the resignation of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and, subsequently, the race to become Prime Minister. It has all the potential to elect a woman Prime Minister. After a decade in power marked by both successes and challenges, Trudeau's resignation had been dramatic. Ten years ago Trudeau began with great promise but ended amid mounting difficulties



at home and abroad. He faced challenges such as inflation, housing issues, and immigration, which weakened the Liberal Party. After Trudeau's resignation, senior leaders in the Liberal Party, including Anita Anand, the current transport minister, were preparing to replace him. Anand, a senior party member, was born in rural Nova Scotia and moved to Ontario in 1985. She was first elected as the MP for Oakville in 2019 and has held various significant roles, including Minister of Public Services and Procurement, President of the Treasury Board, and Minister of National Defence. Anand missed the chance of making history as Canada's first female Prime Minister of colour and Indian descent. It would have potentially marked a significant shift in women's empowerment in Canadian politics. However, she withdrew from the race on Sunday to return to her academic career, disappointing her supporters. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne are potential contenders to succeed Trudeau. Canada has a



IF CANADA ELECTS A WOMAN, IT WOULD CORRECT THE GENDER IMBALANCE DESPITE WOMEN HOLDING ESSENTIAL PORTFOLIOS LIKE DEFENCE AND FINANCE

record 103 female MPs, including 22 elected in the 2021 federal election. Other frontrunners include former central banker Mark Carney, whose recent resignation prompted Trudeau's exit. Candidates must declare their intent and pay a \$350,000 entry fee by January 23. So far, Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc and Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly have withdrawn from the race to focus on their duties, with Anita Anand recently bowing out. The challenges Trudeau's successor will face, including repairing strained international relations and managing domestic policy issues, underscore the urgent need for a leader with a clear vision and strong leadership skills. Indians are interested in Canada because of the large Indian diaspora. Recently, tensions between India and Canada have escalated after Prime Minister Trudeau accused India of involvement in the shooting of a Khalistani terrorist in Surrey in June 2023. In retaliation, India stopped issuing new visas to Canadians and asked Canada to reduce its diplomatic presence. In contrast to Trudeau, India hopes for a pro-

India Prime Minister. If Canada elects a woman, it would correct the gender imbalance despite women holding essential portfolios like Defence and Finance. The election of a woman as the next Prime Minister could mark a significant milestone in Canadian politics, furthering the cause of women's empowerment and challenging traditional gender roles in leadership. Trudeau's successor will inherit a lot of problems. There are tensions between the US and India. One of the critical tasks will be to repair strains in foreign policy issues. There is also a lot of backlog in the immigration. On the domestic side, Canada's Liberal Party faced internal problems, which led to Trudeau's exit. The election results will be available on March 8. In the meantime, the election landscape is becoming more transparent, as leaders like Anita Anand have already withdrawn from the race. It is also interesting to note that Vice President Kamala Harris won in the 2020 polls. The US has yet to elect a woman president. (The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BORDER FENCING DISPUTE

Madam — Apropos to the article "India summons Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner." The escalation of tensions along the India-Bangladesh border is yet another reflection of the low point in bilateral ties between two neighbouring countries. Bangladesh's concern over India's efforts to fence the international boundary to stem smuggling and other transnational crimes is misplaced, especially since there have been several attempts by smugglers and traffickers from the Bangladeshi side to transgress the border. But India is well within its rights to construct fencing in porous sections of the border to prevent transnational crimes in the wake of stray incidents of violence, including firing reported from along the border, especially in West Bengal. The key aim of fencing the India-Bangladesh border is cracking down on smuggling and streamlining the legitimate movement of goods and people. However, there are mechanisms in place to address these issues, and if necessary, these can be revisited to make them work more effectively. Meanwhile, it would be foolish to undo all the achievements of the past and create another point of dispute in a relationship that is already weighed down because of the new political dynamics in Dhaka. More than addressing the immediate irritants on the border, the two sides need to take further steps to arrest the slide in the overall relationship and prevent new areas of divergence.

N Sathasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

CEASEFIRE IN SIGHT

Madam — An encouraging piece of news has emerged once again from Gaza. Hamas has recently agreed to release some of the Israeli citizens it has been holding hostage. Discussions between Hamas and Israeli officials had been ongoing for several days regarding this matter. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a sudden attack

BCCI disallows spouse travel with team



The step taken by the BCCI to improve the performance of the Indian cricket team is both positive and visionary. After facing consecutive defeats, the BCCI has decided to prohibit players from taking their families along on foreign tours to ensure discipline and main-

tain focus. This decision is a significant step toward enhancing the team's mental and physical health. When all team members unite and focus solely on the game, their performance is bound to improve.

Spending time with family is important, but during tournaments, undivided attention on the game is essential. This decision will not only strengthen players' mindsets but also fortify team spirit. It will create a healthy competitive environment, motivating players to deliver their best. Additionally, spending more time with team management and coaching staff will refine their strategies and skills. This decision, taken with players' long-term careers and national pride in mind, will instill professional discipline and inspire them to stay goal-oriented. In the long run, this will prove beneficial for Indian cricket.

R K Jain | Barwani

INDIA ENGAGES WITH AFGHANISTAN

Madam — India's ties with Afghanistan have been strong for a long time. However, over the last four years, the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan has slightly strained these relations. The recent meeting between India's foreign secretary and Afghanistan's acting foreign minister in Dubai might help strengthen the bond once again. It is essential for India to maintain close relations with Afghanistan, regardless of who is in power. Currently, both Afghanistan and the Taliban are at odds with Pakistan, especially after Pakistan's recent attack on the Afghanistan border, which has further strained their relations. Geopolitically, this situation benefits India, as Pakistan's focus on its border with Afghanistan reduces its capacity to infiltrate India with terrorists. Strengthening ties with the Taliban-led Afghanistan and extending support could help India reduce its security concerns.

Priya Thakur | Ujjain

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The timeless value of soft skills in the fast-paced world

In a world that often uses wealth and appearances as markers of success, the true essence of human interaction—soft skills—frequently takes a backseat

We are often judged by factors that may not be relevant in the long run. Wealth, physical features, the name of the school or college we attended, flashy clothes, and many more, are the parameters used to measure our success. We forget that soft skills are equally, if not more, important. I waited patiently for my turn in the check-in queue at the airport during a recent visit to Mumbai. The young lady behind the counter handed the boarding pass to the passenger and guided her to walk some distance to get a wheelchair. The older lady cryptically remarked that the wheelchair was expected to come to her instead of the other way around. The counter girl looked clueless. Later in the evening, I walked over to the express check-in counter at the hotel. I waited patiently as the gentleman bent down to retrieve something before completing my formalities. Another counter lady walked by looking at me. Since the man did not resurface even after a lapse of time, I looked at the gentleman behind the adjoining table, who offered



to assist me, explaining that the computer system at the other counter was not working. None from the crowd at the reception had bothered to assist me. The private company I worked for won laurels year after year as the best employer. I wondered about the criteria for the evaluation, more so since I saw many of the executives quitting the company and dissatisfied with the working conditions. The HR employees responsible for implementing all the right words in the rulebook failed to decipher the basic principles of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. All three companies are reputed names in the private sector.

They recruit people with the best credentials from the best business schools or the best in the hospitality industry. One would expect them to understand soft skills, unlike those working in the government sector. I was witness to and on the receiving end of a raid by an enforcement agency while working in a private company. The officials barged into the office accompanied by uniformed policemen. Orders were rudely barked at me not to touch the telephone. My mobile phone was snatched from my hands. The officials remained in the office for more than 24 hours during which I, and the other team members, were not allowed to contact our families. We were made to feel like criminals for no reason. I was recently stopped by a traffic policeman after I had crossed a legitimate green traffic signal. I was perplexed. Another policeman sauntered over to ask me the reasons for my arguing with the other official. He rudely reprimanded me when I showed my ignorance of the matter. The

policeman had stopped me apparently for crossing the red signal. Fortunately for me, there were cameras at the crossing, which proved my innocence. We face a similar lack of soft skills in our personal lives. Decades earlier, my wife and I were not given a table for lunch at a famous restaurant in Delhi. We were a newly wedded young couple and were probably not dressed the same way as their regular clientele. An attractive personality, a good education and a good job are enough for parents to settle marriages of daughters to strangers, not knowing if the young man will treat the girl well. There are countless examples. I was taught to be a good human being. The children of today are more intelligent and smart. All that we need to do is to teach them to be a better person each succeeding day. Soft skills will follow. (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA





FIRST COLUMN THE POWER OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK

It comes in handy when the pursuit of happiness is interrupted by challenges



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

All of us have a deep desire to be in a state of happiness forever. But it's quite difficult to find someone who is truly blessed, to remain always happy. Isn't it? The fact is that for most of us, the happy times are often broken by periodic sorrow or disappointment. It has been observed that a prerequisite for happiness is success in all our endeavours. Therefore, all of us go to great lengths to ensure that we succeed in everything we do. But unfortunately here too, things don't go the way we want them to.

Throughout our lives, we put in the maximum possible efforts to succeed to prevent failure, but ironically, despite all our desire for success, we undermine our efforts by thinking negatively. It might be hard to believe, but the reality is that we pave the way for our success or failure through our thoughts. Yes! After all, every human action begins with a thought, which is followed by reflection, a decision and then action. So, if our thoughts and actions are completely in harmony, we attain success. However, if our minds are full of doubts or fear about the task we are performing, it undermines our chances of success. So how does one



train a thought to work in our favour? Is it possible? Yeah! It is. The only thing that we need to do is to make our thoughts as pure and positive as those of the Almighty Supreme who transforms this world from one of sorrow and misery to one of peace and happiness with just a seed of powerful thought. A simple way to begin this process of transformation is to use asseveration. An asseveration is a resolute statement that we make to ourselves.

All of us use it intentionally or unintentionally throughout our day. When we wake up with a positive thought like "I feel great", that is a positive asseveration. On the other day if we drag ourselves out of bed in the morning and whimper: "Ohh I feel drowsy", that is a negative asseveration. We must understand that both these statements help us to maintain the emotional state that we are in. Majority of the people across the world do not give much importance to self-talk, i.e. the things that we say to ourselves. It is indeed a very important part of our lives because it deeply affects our conscious and subconscious minds. Remember! We listen to everything we say to ourselves consciously or subconsciously. Because our asseveration works so well to create and maintain our state of mind, we can use it cleverly to change our state of mind to our best advantage.

There is no doubt that it takes a lot of effort and time, but with persistence, asseverations can become a strong tool to make our outlook and life healthier and happier. We can either create or maintain a powerful state of mind with positive asseverations or use them to counter our negative self-talk. Let's say you are running for a half marathon. Despite all the preparations, you tend to lose rhythm and get into some snag.

All of a sudden your confidence sags and you catch yourself thinking "I can't do this. I shouldn't have registered for a half marathon. My capacity is too low, I am too weak as compared to others..." All this negative thinking, if allowed to persist, will guarantee that you fail. You can make up some positive asseverations to counter this thinking. Like, you might think, "I feel confident, I can do this, Slow and Steady wins the Race." If you repeat this several times, you will soon start feeling better & achieve your desired goal. While using this self-motivation technique of asseveration, we become more conscious of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, and start feeling better about ourselves. The only thing that we need to remember is "Never to give up", because however slow the results may seem to be coming, these techniques give us greater control of our thoughts, feelings and behaviour, putting us in charge of our lives.

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

The communication crossroads of 2025



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

With disinformation on the rise and the human connection often overshadowed by algorithms, the question looms: Are we fostering understanding, or fueling division?



In 2025, the world is navigating a labyrinth of communication complexities. From geopolitical tensions to the pervasive influence of technology, communication strategies are at the centre of global stability—or instability.

As the tools of interaction evolve, so too do the challenges, responsibilities, and opportunities they present. Are we prepared for what lies ahead, or are we hurtling toward a crisis of our own making? The challenges of communication in 2025 are markedly different from those a decade ago. Geopolitical dynamics have shifted, with nations leveraging digital platforms as both tools of diplomacy and instruments of disinformation. The lines between statecraft and cyber influence are blurred, creating a volatile ecosystem where words carry as much weight as weapons.

The rise of artificial intelligence and algorithm-driven content has exacerbated these challenges. While these tools offer unprecedented efficiency, they also prioritize engagement metrics over truth. The result is an overabundance of sensationalist, clickbait content that often prioritises superficiality over substance. In this cacophony, nuanced perspectives and deeply researched narratives are drowned out, leaving the global audience vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation. The role of media as the "fourth estate" has never been more critical—or more scrutinized. In an era of hyper-connectivity, the media's ability to shape public perception and influence geopolitical outcomes is unparalleled. But with great power comes great responsibility. Shouldn't media foster positive and conscious impact? Shouldn't it hold itself accountable for the narratives it propagates? Unfortunately, the race for clicks and views often overshadows these ideals. The prevalence of sensationalist headlines, shallow analysis, and polarised reporting erodes trust in media institutions. This calls for a renewed focus on media literacy—not just for consumers but for creators as well.



OVERHYPERED NARRATIVES INFLATE MINOR ISSUES INTO CRISES, OVERSTRETCHED RESOURCES DILUTE THE QUALITY OF CONTENT, AND OVERIMAGINED SOLUTIONS PROMISE MORE THAN THEY CAN DELIVER. TOGETHER, THESE TENDENCIES CREATE A COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT RIFE WITH MISTRUST AND MISUNDERSTANDING

Journalists, editors, and content creators must be sensitised to the implications of their work, while audiences must be equipped to critically evaluate the information they consume. In dissecting modern communication challenges, one troubling trend emerges: superficial solutions to complex problems. Whether it's a rushed headline, an oversimplified tweet, or a reductive policy announcement, brevity often comes at the cost of depth.

While the demand for digestible content is understandable, it risks trivialising critical issues and fostering a culture of intellectual complacency. To counter this, there is an urgent need for robust communication evaluation strategies. Independent evaluators should assess the quality, accuracy, and impact of information disseminated by platforms, news outlets, and governments. This would not only enhance accountability but also restore faith in the integrity of communication. The phenomenon of the "30s"—overhyped, overstretched, and overimagined—poses a significant threat to effective communication in 2025.

Overhyped narratives inflate minor issues into crises, overstretched resources dilute the quality of content, and overimagined solutions promise more than they can deliver. Together, these tendencies create a communication environment rife with mistrust and misunderstanding. In geopolitics, this can have disastrous consequences. Overhyped tensions can escalate conflicts, overstretched diplomacy can falter under scrutiny, and overimagined strategies can fail to address the realities on the ground. To mitigate these risks, communication must be grounded in authenticity, clarity, and purpose. Despite these challenges,

there is hope. The rapid evolution of communication technologies offers opportunities for better synergy and collaboration. Tools like multilingual AI models, real-time translation software, and immersive virtual platforms can bridge cultural and linguistic divides, fostering a greater understanding of geopolitics. However, these tools must be wielded with care. Over-reliance on algorithms and automation can lead to a loss of human connection and empathy. The human element in communication—context, emotion, and nuance—remains irreplaceable. To ensure these tools are used effectively, their deployment must be guided by ethical frameworks and human oversight. When it comes to India, the nation stands as a dynamic force in efficient geopolitics and communication, blending tradition with innovation. With its rich heritage of diverse narratives and its growing role as a voice for the Global South, India's communication outreach is uniquely positioned to bridge cultural and ideological divides.

The country's influence has expanded far beyond its borders, particularly through its active participation in multilateral forums like the G20, BRICS, and the United Nations. India's emphasis on South-South cooperation and its role as a leader in digital innovation makes it a fertile ground for reshaping global communication paradigms.

By championing inclusive narratives and fostering dialogue on issues critical to the Global South—such as climate justice, sustainable development, equitable access to technology, and strengthening the education system—India leverages its communication landscape to promote solidarity and shared growth among developing nations. As a

communication powerhouse, India's strategies offer a template for balancing tradition and innovation, providing hope for a more connected and empathetic world. Looking ahead, the most profound paradigm shift in communication lies in its potential to resolve, rather than exacerbate, conflicts. In a world marked by division, the ability to convey messages of reconciliation, empathy, and cooperation is invaluable. Governments, media, and technology companies must prioritise communication strategies that unite rather than divide. For instance, collaborative storytelling initiatives could bring together voices from conflicting regions to share common experiences. Platforms could amplify narratives of peacebuilding and resilience, while governments could invest in cultural diplomacy to foster mutual understanding. The communication landscape of 2025 is a double-edged sword. While challenges like misinformation, and superficiality loom large, the potential for positive transformation is equally significant.

To navigate this precarious moment, we must prioritise media literacy, accountability, and ethical use of technology. We must move away from shallow, divisive narratives and embrace depth, authenticity, and empathy. The question is not whether we have the tools to create meaningful change, it is whether we have the will to use them wisely. In an age of unprecedented connectivity, the power of communication lies not in the tools themselves but in how we choose to wield them. The future depends on our ability to communicate with clarity, conscience, and care.

(The writer is a former civil servant; Views are personal. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad)

California's wildfire tragedy: A wake-up call for India's forest fire management

The Los Angeles disaster underscores the growing wildfire risks in India due to climate change and human activity

For the past week, firefighters in Los Angeles have been locked in a desperate battle against devastating wildfires, which have claimed numerous lives and forced the evacuation of over 200,000 residents. Driven by powerful Santa Ana winds and prolonged drought conditions, these fires have scorched hundreds of square kilometers, wreaking havoc in densely populated areas like Pacific Palisades and Altadena.



SATENDRA

This disaster has left homes, places of worship, and critical infrastructure in ruins, forcing many into shelters and leaving thousands without electricity. The financial toll of these fires is staggering, estimated between \$135 billion and \$150 billion, making this one of the most economically destructive

wildfires in US history. Beyond the immediate destruction, the long-term effects are profound: soil degradation, harm to water systems, loss of wildlife, and deteriorating air quality. Moreover, the vast carbon emissions from these fires will intensify global climate change,

further exacerbating the environmental crisis. This catastrophe serves as a stark warning for India. According to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report, climate change will likely worsen drought conditions and elevate temperatures in forested areas of South Asia, including India, thereby increasing the risk of wildfires. To address these emerging challenges, India must overhaul its forest fire management strategies, drawing on lessons from global experiences like California's recent tragedy.

India's forest cover is already under significant pressure from human activities and changing climatic conditions. The Forest Survey of India (FSI) reveals that 36 per cent of Indian forests are classified as highly, very highly, or

extremely vulnerable to fires. Regions such as the Northeast, Garhwal Himalayas, and Central India are particularly at risk. Alarmingly, over 90 per cent of forest fires in the country are attributed to human actions, ranging from negligence to deliberate acts. California's wildfire crisis underscores the urgent need to rethink existing forest fire management strategies to address the evolving challenges posed by changing climatic and socio-economic conditions.

With its rich biodiversity and diverse forest ecosystems, India stands to gain valuable insights from such disasters. Developing a comprehensive strategy that prioritises effective early warning systems, robust governance, institu-



tional collaboration, and increased investment in research and development is crucial to safeguarding India's forests.

A national action plan aligned with international frameworks like the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction would significantly enhance India's

ability to manage forest fire risks. Understanding the dynamics of disasters is essential to mitigating these risks. Conducting vulnerability assessments at both meso- and micro-levels can help identify high-risk zones. Investment in research and development, in collaboration with national and international organisations, can advance technologies for fire detection, prediction, and suppression.

Enhancing governance in forest fire management is equally critical. Updated policy frameworks should integrate forest fire management into disaster management plans at both national and state levels. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and field manuals must be revised and

streamlined to support effective detection, reporting, and management of forest fires. Establishing a dedicated National Institute of Forest Fire Management could strengthen training programmes for forest officials, community members, and other stakeholders, while fostering better coordination among forest departments, disaster management agencies, and local communities.

Building resilience is paramount. Leveraging advanced technologies like drones, artificial intelligence, and satellite monitoring systems can significantly improve early detection and suppression efforts. Creating a national Air Operation Wing to handle aerial firefighting operations would enable rapid responses

to fires. Capacity-building initiatives, such as training sessions and mock drills, would equip forest personnel and local communities with essential firefighting skills and SOPs. Collaboration with international research institutions to develop innovative solutions—such as replacing non-native tree species with indigenous, fire-resistant varieties and creating eco-friendly fire suppression methods—can further strengthen forest resilience and sustainability. Establishing a national forest fire knowledge network would facilitate the sharing of best practices, research findings, and innovative approaches. *(The writer is former executive director of the National Institute of Disaster Management; views are personal)*

IN BRIEF



Gold rises to Rs 80,800 per 10 gm; silver rules flat

Gold prices increased Rs 220 to Rs 80,800 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid a rise in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal finished at Rs 80,580 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. However, silver was trading flat at Rs 91,700 per kg on Wednesday. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity rose by Rs 220 to Rs 80,400 per 10 grams. It had settled at Rs 80,180 per 10 grams on Tuesday. Traders said gold rallied due to fresh demand from local jewellers and a strong trend in the overseas markets. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery rallied Rs 470 or 0.6 per cent to Rs 78,626 per 10 grams. "Gold experienced positive buying momentum as a weaker dollar index lent support to the metal."



Bank of Maharashtra Q3 profit rises to Rs 1,406 crore

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Wednesday posted a 36 per cent rise in net profit to Rs 1,406 crore in the third quarter ended December 2024 with rising interest income. The Pune-based lender had posted a net profit of Rs 1,036 crore in the October-December period a year ago. Total income increased to Rs 7,112 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 5,851 crore in the same period previous year, BoM said in a regulatory filing. The bank earned an interest income of Rs 6,325 crore during the quarter compared to Rs 5,171 crore a year ago. The bank was able to reduce gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to 1.80 per cent of the gross loans by the end of December 2024 from 2.04 per cent in the year-ago period. Similarly, net NPAs or bad loans came down to 0.2 per cent from 0.22 per cent at the end of the third quarter of the previous fiscal.



Sistema.bio raises \$3.5 mn from Novastar Ventures

Sistema.bio, which specialises in biogas technology, on Wednesday said it has raised USD 3.5 million from Novastar Ventures during an internal financing round of USD 7.75 million held recently. Combined with Novastar's investment, Sistema.bio has raised total financing of USD 18.5 million in 2024, with a focus on regional geographic growth and adding new products. This will accelerate Sistema.bio's expansion into new African markets, new agricultural and energy products and its overall growth, the company said in a statement. This funding will also help address the global demand for renewable energy, promote regenerative agricultural solutions, and support carbon emission reduction projects. The funding also sets the stage for Sistema.bio's anticipated Series C round.

Will achieve ethanol blending target in 2 months: Gadkari

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will achieve its target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in the next two months, Union minister Nitin Gadkari said on Wednesday.

The practice of blending ethanol with petrol began in 2001 as a pilot project.

"We will achieve this target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in the next two months. Use of E20 (petrol with 20 per cent ethanol) will help in reducing pollution," Gadkari said while speaking at an event.

The road transport and highways minister said Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, Maruti Suzuki, and Hyundai Motors have started manufacturing vehicles that run on 100 per cent bio-ethanol.

Gadkari said pollution is a serious problem in the country as 42 Indian cities are among 50 most-polluted cities in the world.

"We import fossil fuels worth Rs 22 lakh crore, which is also causing pollution," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the higher 20 per cent ethanol-blend-



ed petrol in 2023. In the first phase, 15 cities was covered.

Use of ethanol, extracted from sugarcane as well as broken rice and other agri produce, will help India -- the world's third largest oil consumer -- bring down its reliance on overseas shipments.

India is 85 per cent dependent on imports for meeting its oil needs.

Use of E20 leads to an estimated reduction of carbon monoxide emissions by about 50 per cent in two-wheelers and about 30 per cent in four-wheelers compared to E0 (neat petrol).

The target of achieving average 10 per cent blending was achieved in June 2022, much ahead of the target date of November 2022.

India, UK looking to resume talks on trade pact in Feb: Comm Min

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and the UK are exploring convenient dates to resume the talks for the proposed free trade agreement in early February, according to the commerce ministry.

The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles.

"Mutually convenient date is being explored for the next round of negotiations for early February," the ministry informed on Wednesday.

The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from USD 20.36 billion in 2022-23.

Regarding a similar agreement with the European Union (EU), the ministry said that the tenth round of talks is scheduled from March 10-14 in Brussels.

The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). In the ninth round, both sides discussed trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement along with necessary rules such as rules of ori-



The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment protection agreement and an agreement on geographical indications (GIs). In the ninth round, both sides discussed trade issues covering goods, services, investment and government procurement

gin, SPS (sanitary and phytosanitary), and technical barriers to trade.

In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It was stalled in 2013 due to differences over several issues.

The total trade has surpassed USD 200 billion in 2023. India exported USD 75.18 billion in goods and USD 31.13 billion in services to the EU, while the EU exported USD 63.44 billion in goods and USD 31.35 billion in services to India.

Further on the India-Eurasian Economic Union

(EAEU) free trade agreement, it said that the two sides are currently in the process of finalising terms of references for the pact.

The five members of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

In such agreements, two or more trading partners either eliminate or significantly reduce customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. These agreements provide greater market access to Indian goods and services.

Russia is the top trading partner of India in the bloc. India's exports to Russia stood at USD 4.26 billion in 2023-24, while imports were USD 61.43 billion due to an increase in crude oil imports.

On the progress in talks for review of free trade agreement in goods between India and ASEAN, Additional Secretary in the ministry Rajesh Agarwal said that the next round of meeting is scheduled from February 10 onwards in Indonesia.

There is progress in the negotiations, but there are some issues in goods.

Govt to soon launch data analytics platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is working to develop a data analytics platform with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) to get much better insights into the country's trade figures, Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said on Wednesday.

He said the ministry is already analysing the data of various sectors and comparing it comprehensively with previous years.

"We are working on that project. It may be launched at any time...we will be giving you much better insights into the data," he told reporters here.

"Whether there is a consistency in our growth or not, whether resiliency has come in our exports or not? So these kinds of insights are now coming. We are working in that direction. Soon you will find that. There will be a launch of platform which will give us better data analytics," he added.

The ministry has already formed a committee, comprising officials from com-



merce and finance ministries, to create a robust mechanism for publishing consistent and accurate data following errors in gold import figures.

The committee is working on a standard operating procedure to ensure that there is better coordination between the DGCIIS and the DG (Systems). Due to the migration of data transmission mechanism from SEZ (special economic zone) to ICEGATE (Indian Customs Electronic Gateway), figures of precious metals needed revision as double counting was noticed.

The double counting occurred because the system was calculating both imports into SEZ and subsequent clear-

ance into DTA (domestic tariff area) as separate transactions after the migration.

The government has revised gold import data, bringing down numbers for November by USD 5 billion to USD 9.84 billion.

According to revised data of the commerce ministry arm, Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCIS), gold import numbers have been slashed since April 2024, revealing excess imports of about USD 11.7 billion during the first eight months of 2024-25.

Kolkata-based DGCIS is an organisation for the collection, compilation and dissemination of India's trade statistics and commercial information.

DGCI&S receives trade data from over 500 locations and about 2.5 lakh transactions every day from different seaports, land ports, airports and inland container depots.

He added that data is always updated, revised and reconciled.

Green investments to rise five-fold to Rs 31 lakh cr: Crisil

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will see a five-fold growth in green investments to Rs 31 lakh crore between 2025 and 2030, rating agency CRISIL said on Wednesday.

It further said this is a crucial part of an estimated USD 10-trillion investments needed through 2070 to achieve the country's net-zero goals as per the Updated First Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement.

"Based on the plans announced by the government and corporates, and progress on the ground, we estimate Rs 31 lakh crore of green investments through 2030," Crisil Ltd Managing Director & CEO Amish Mehta said.

"Accelerating grants and incentives, scaling up blended finance initiatives with multilaterals, policy support and flexibility to drive initiatives for carbon market development and industrial decarbonisation are imperatives in the road ahead," he added.

Among India's key NDC commitments are a 45 per cent reduction in the carbon inten-



sity of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030 from 2005 levels, and an increase in the share of cumulative installed power capacity from non-fossil-fuel-based energy resources to 50 per cent.

The rating agency said of the Rs 31 lakh crore investments foreseen, Rs 19 lakh crore is seen going into renewable energy and storage, Rs 4.1 lakh crore into transport and automotive sectors, and Rs 3.3 lakh crore into oil & gas.

However, it said for relatively high-risk projects such as green hydrogen, CCUS (carbon capture, utilisation and storage), energy storage and other emerging technologies, government grants and incentives will hold the key in improving project viability.

Hero MotoCorp looks to bolster play in EV, premium segments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Hero MotoCorp is aiming to expand its play in the electric two-wheeler segment while also strengthening presence in the premium segment as part of its overall growth strategy for the mid-term, CEO Niranjan Gupta said on Wednesday.

The country's largest two-wheeler maker is also looking to bolster presence in the global markets while enhancing digital and AI elements across its entire operating ecosystem.

The company, which currently sells electric products under Vida brand, is looking to add electric models in the first quarter of next fiscal year to cater to the diverse customer segments.

"In January, we launched Vida V2 which is the affordable product that we launched in the sub Rs 1 lakh price segment. More action is lined up in the EV portfolio in the first quarter of the next fiscal," Gupta told reporters in an interaction here.

India's electronics exports hit 24-month high

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's electronics exports rose 35.11 per cent to USD 3.58 billion in December 2024, marking the highest level of shipments in the last 24 months, according to the commerce ministry data.

The robust performance reflects the growing momentum in the country's electronics manufacturing sector, driven by favourable government policies, increased global demand, and expanding domestic production capacities.

Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said there has been a consistent growth in exports of engineering and electronics.

"In December 2024, electronic goods exports have been highest so far. In the last 24 months, it was highest at USD 3.58 billion in one month," he told reporters here. Since January this year, the electronic goods exports is recording healthy growth.

First e-commerce export hub may start operations in March

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The first e-commerce export hub in the country is expected to be operationalised from March this year, a senior government official said on Wednesday.

The pilot launch of these hubs has been approved for five firms -- logistics aggregator Shiprocket and air cargo handling company Cargo Service Centre in Delhi; DHL and Lexship in Bengaluru; and goGlocal in Mumbai, Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) Santosh Kumar



Saranghi said. He said the departments of commerce and revenue, along with the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), are working on formulating a standard operating procedure (SOP) to operationalise these hubs. "We expect the first e-commerce hub operational by March of this year," he told

reporters here. The key features of these hubs would include self-sealing with no customs/BCAS examination at gateway ports; easy reimport policy for returns; and onsite outposts for quality and certifying agencies.

"The move assumes significance as India is looking to tap into the growing export opportunities in this segment."

E-commerce exports have the potential to grow to over USD 100 billion by 2030 and then further to USD 200-250 billion in the coming years.

Sebi resolves over 5,600 complaints through SCORES platform

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has disposed of 5,636 complaints in December last year through its complaint redressal system SCORES platform.

According to Sebi data, the complaints pending as of November 30, 2024, stood at 5,826.

During December, the regulator received 5,193 fresh complaints, bringing the total applications to 11,019.

Of these, 5,383 complaints remained unresolved as of December 31, 2024, the regulator said in a public notice on Tuesday.

The markets watchdog also highlighted that the average resolution time taken by entities to submit Action Taken Reports

(ATRs) to investors in December was eight days. For complaints escalated to the first-level review, the average resolution time was five days, showcasing the efficacy of the updated system.

Under the upgraded SCORES 2.0 framework, complaints are automatically forwarded to the concerned entity, which is given 21 days to submit an ATR to the investor.

If dissatisfied, investors can opt for a first-level review within 15 days. During this period, complaints remain on the pending list, even if an ATR has been submitted. If the investor continues to be unsatisfied, they can escalate the issue to a second-level review by the regulator, with the same timeline for resolution applying, Sebi said.

India needs to boost turmeric exports: Report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India needs to implement targeted interventions to stabilise turmeric production and empower farmers to achieve its goal of USD 1 billion in turmeric exports by 2030, according to a report released by ICRIER-Amway.

The report, released a day after the launch of the National Turmeric Board in Telangana's Nizamabad, outlines strategies to strengthen India's position as a global turmeric producer and exporter, ICRIER Director Deepak Mishra said after

unveiling the report on Wednesday. Establishing a single nodal agency like the National Turmeric Board can ensure quality standards, traceability and streamline certification and testing processes, the report added.

Once the domestic quality and standards are in order, signing mutual recognition agreements for standards and certification for both fresh and processed turmeric with key export markets can reduce the compliance burden and enhance trade. "Subsidies should be linked



to help develop high-end product value chains," the report said.

For example, there can be

subsidies for third-party certification, cultivation of high curcumin varieties, research and development (R&D) for

value-added turmeric products and for promoting GI products. Investments in post-harvest infrastructure, scaling up turmeric FPOs and fostering knowledge sharing through R&D and global collaborations are crucial for maintaining competitiveness, it said.

The report recommended promoting high-curcumin varieties and leveraging international platforms to solidify India's position as a leading turmeric exporter.

"By aligning production practices with international benchmarks and fostering a

collaborative ecosystem, India can solidify its position as a reliable and preferred supplier of high-quality turmeric in the global market," the report said. India's current turmeric cultivation area spans 297,000 hectares with annual production at 10.4 lakh tonnes in 2023-24.

The report, jointly prepared by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and Amway India, emphasises the importance of collaborative platforms involving policymakers, traders, corporations and processors.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
TENDER NOTIFICATION
 TENDER NOTICE NO. 19/EECC-2/UPPL/GHMC/2024-25 Dated: 16-01-2025
 Name of the Work: For 6 Works "Balance work of First of Community hall at Padmasathi colony, in Ward No. 10 Uppal, Uppal Circle-2, GHMC. Construction of 2nd floor Community Hall at Kurma Sangam, Bharath Nagar in Ward No. 10-Uppal, Uppal Circle-2, GHMC". Estimate Amount: Rs. 92.09 Lakhs. Last Date & Time for Receipts of Bids: 24-01-2025 @ 03:00 PM. Name & Address Officer: Sri. V. Harial, Executive Engineer, Uppal Div. No.2, GHMC. For further details can be seen at e-procurement @ http://www.tender.telangana.gov.in Sd/- Executive Engineer Circle-2, Uppal, GHMC. B.O.No: 202-PPCL/ADVT/1/2024-25, Dt. 16-01-2025

Established in 2019, Animal Warriors and Conservation Society (AWCS) has emerged as a beacon of hope for animals in distress, specialising in complex rescue operations and community-driven conservation initiatives. In an exclusive chat with The Pioneer, Pradeep Paraku, the visionary founder of AWCS shared the inspiring journey behind his Hyderabad-based organisation



Pioneering animal rescue and conservation in Hyd

PNS| HYDERABAD

In a world where animals often bear the brunt of human activity, the Animal Warriors and Conservation Society (AWCS) is leading the charge to protect and rescue those in need. Founded in 2019 by Pradeep Paraku, this Hyderabad-based organisation has carved a niche for itself by specialising in complex animal rescue operations and promoting conservation initiatives that benefit both wildlife and the environment.

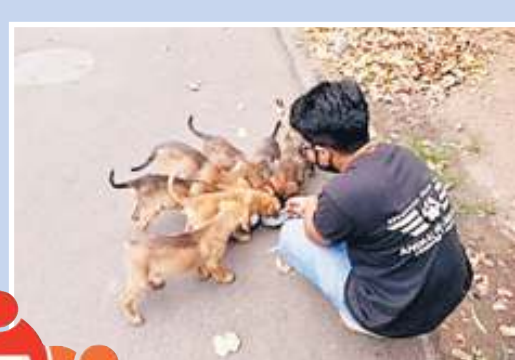
"I was inspired to start AWCS after years of volunteering with Mission of Hyderabad," says Pradeep Paraku. "I observed that general animal rescue organisations often struggled with specialised situations, such as rescuing birds from high places. These rescues require unique equipment and expertise, and I felt a strong need to create an organisation that could address these challenges effectively."

AWCS has gained recognition for its expertise in handling challenging rescues. From freeing birds trapped in high places to saving animals fallen into wells or entangled in kite strings, the organisation is equipped with the skills and tools to address critical scenarios.

To amplify its impact, AWCS is working towards establishing a dedicated bird rescue and awareness centre. "Birds are particularly vulnerable, and we aim to provide specialised care and raise awareness about their plight," says Paraku.

The kite festival season sees an uptick in AWCS's educational efforts. "We conduct workshops for children, promoting responsible kite flying practices while ensuring they understand the dangers posed by nylon manja," Paraku shares.

AWCS operates through diverse funding sources, including partnerships with corporate giants like HCL Foundation, Hyundai and Indian Oil. Additionally, funds raised during rescue operations contribute to its sustainability. "We maintain a structured budget plan,



with 30% allocated to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities," Paraku notes. AWCS's commitment to animal welfare and conservation is unwavering.

AWCS isn't limited to animal rescue - it is a multi-faceted organisation with innovative conservation initiatives

- 1. Coastal Cleanup**
In Andhra Pradesh, AWCS is launching a unique project to retrieve discarded fishing nets from the ocean floor, addressing the pressing issue of marine plastic pollution.
- 2. Responsible kite flying**
Partnering with the HCL Foundation, AWCS educates children about the dangers of nylon manja (kite string) and encourages communities to report its sale. "We start our awareness campaigns in

September, visiting kite vendors to educate them and stop the sale of harmful materials," Paraku explains.

- 3. Bring back sparrows**
This initiative has distributed over 2,500 free sparrow nest boxes, benefiting an estimated 20,000 sparrows. The project aims to revive urban sparrow populations. "The response has been overwhelming," says Paraku.
- 4. Water bowls for stray animals**
During scorching summer months, AWCS distributes water bowls to alleviate the suffering of stray animals.

By combining rescue operations with innovative community-based projects, the organisation is making a lasting impact on both animal lives and the environment. "Our mission is to create a society where animals are cared for,

and human activities are conducted responsibly," says Paraku. Through its efforts, AWCS is not just rescuing animals - it is fostering a culture of empathy, responsibility, and sustainable coexistence.

THE ART OF METAL GROOVES

In the ever-evolving world of metal drumming, it takes a rare combination of technical prowess and artistic vision to truly stand out. Rohith is one such drummer whose mastery of metal grooves has left a profound impression on both peers and audiences alike.

Having witnessed his work firsthand, it's clear that Rohith brings an intensity to drumming matched only by his creativity. His deep understanding of sub-genres like slam, grindcore, and death metal allows him to craft grooves that defy expectations, giving the music a fresh, unpredictable edge.

Rohith's attention to rhythmic detail is striking. He doesn't just play for the sake of speed or aggression—every beat serves a purpose. His use of odd-time signatures and polyrhythms adds a progressive

dimension to his drumming, challenging the listener's perception while staying rooted in metal's core essence.

One of the defining elements of Rohith's style is his double bass drumming technique. It's not merely about endurance but about precision, clarity, and musicality. His feet move with remarkable dexterity, producing patterns that elevate the intensity of his performances without overpowering the rest of the arrangement.

Beyond his technical skill, Rohith's sense of musical storytelling makes him a standout figure in the metal scene. His drum parts aren't just timekeepers; they are pivotal to the narrative of each song. His fills and transitions feel like natural extensions of the composition, demonstrating a deep understanding of dynamics and tension-building.

What further sets Rohith apart is his versatility across different styles of rock and metal. His covers of Linkin Park's iconic tracks showcase his ability to adapt to nu-metal grooves with a modern, polished touch.

Additionally, his cover of "Afterlife" by Avenged Sevenfold highlights his mastery of complex drum arrangements, particularly the intricate transitions and syncopated rhythms that were hallmarks of The Rev's drumming.

While his live performances are electrifying, it's Rohith's compositional mindset that truly defines his artistry. He approaches drumming with a balance of academic insight and practical experience, drawing from his Rockschool training to innovate within traditional frameworks. This blend of structured education and personal exploration

has helped him push the boundaries of what modern metal drumming can achieve.

Rohith's contributions are further distinguished by his ability to merge cultural influences into his playing. Rooted in both Indian and Western musical traditions, he brings a unique, cross-cultural perspective to his drumming. This refreshing approach resonates with a global audience, bridging musical gaps and creating new possibilities within the genre. As a drummer who has played for several bands, I've encountered many who excel in speed, technicality, or showmanship—but few manage to combine all these elements with the level of finesse that Rohith does. His dedication to his craft is evident in every performance, and his influence continues to grow both in the UK and beyond.

Rohith is not just another drummer in the metal scene—he's a pioneer, pushing the boundaries of what it means to play metal drums. His ability to craft grooves that are both intricate and accessible is a testament to his deep understanding of the genre. For anyone seeking inspiration or insight into modern drumming, Rohith's journey is one to follow closely.

It's drummers like Rohith who will continue to shape the future of metal. His work reminds us that true artistry lies in evolution, adaptability, and an unwavering commitment to excellence. The metal world is undoubtedly in good hands with talents like him leading the charge.

(The music review is written by Akash Kishore, drummer for Warmarshall and Lurid.)



Your eyes could reveal your stroke risk!

A groundbreaking study by an international research team has revealed that routine eye examinations can serve as a reliable tool to predict an individual's risk of stroke. Led by the Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA) in Melbourne, the study identified a specific blood vessel "fingerprint" in the retina that is as effective in assessing stroke risk as traditional methods, but without the need for invasive procedures.

The findings, reported by Xinhua News Agency, highlight that this "fingerprint" comprises 118 indicators of vascular health, which can be analyzed using fundus photography—a standard imaging technique employed in routine eye tests. The researchers developed a machine learning tool known as the Retinal-based Microvascular Health Assessment System (RMHAS) to process fundus photographs and assess stroke risk.

The study analyzed the retinal images of 45,161 participants in the United Kingdom, with an average age of 55. Over an average follow-up period of 12.5 years, 749 of the participants experienced a stroke.

The researchers identified 29 of the 118 vascular indicators as being significantly linked to the risk of a first-time stroke. Among these, 17 indicators were related to vascular density, which measures the proportion of tissue in a specific region occupied by blood vessels. Reduced

vascular density in the retina and brain was found to increase stroke risk.

For each change in vascular density indicators, the stroke risk was observed to rise by 10-19%. Similarly, a decrease in the twistedness and complexity of blood vessels elevated stroke risk by 10.5-19.5%.

The study underscores the practicality of using retinal imaging for early stroke risk assessment. "Given that age and sex are readily available, and retinal parameters can be obtained through routine fundus photography, this model presents a practical and easily implementable approach for incident stroke risk assessment, particularly for primary healthcare and low-resource settings," the researchers explained.

Stroke, which affects over 100 million people globally and leads to approximately 6.7 million deaths annually, is a significant cause of disability and mortality. Early identification of individuals at high risk is critical for reducing stroke-related complications and fatalities. This research paves the way for widespread use of routine eye tests as a non-invasive and cost-effective method for identifying individuals at risk of stroke, particularly in regions with limited healthcare resources.

The study represents a major step forward in leveraging technology and routine medical practices to address one of the world's most pressing health concerns.

what's brewing?



The highly anticipated gala event "Mrs India Telangana and Andhra Pradesh 2025," Grand Finale, Close to 60 ladies from diverse backgrounds across age groups coming from different places including outside of India, walked the ramp, promoting women's health for a brighter future. DK Aruna, MP Dr Geeta Nagasree Senior Surgical Oncologist and Deepali Phadnis, National Director Mrs India were Guests of Honour, while the panel of judges consisting of distinguished individuals at Citadel Hotels and Conventions, Shamshabad.

Kavita Jain

Mamta Trivedi

Photos by- SV Chary

PARTY

FUN

ARCHIE



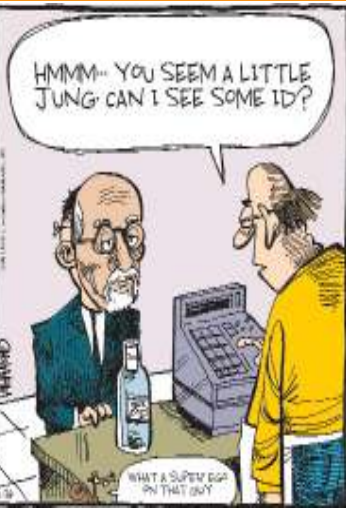
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



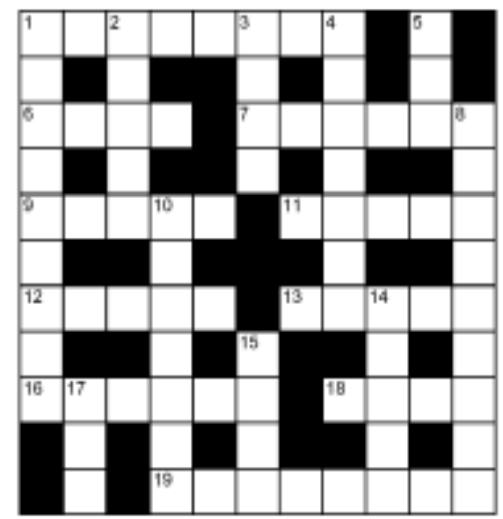
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



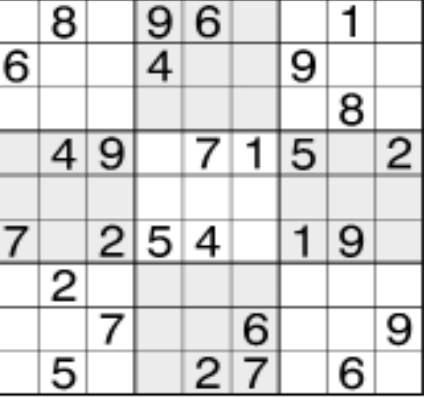
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

ACROSS

- Sick people in hospital
- A feeling that makes you scratch
- Ran after trying to catch
- One of your five senses
- Pimples on the face
- Requires
- Opposite of winner
- Attend classes here
- Young child
- Studied closely
- Wash your hair with this
- Frozen water
- Smashed to pieces
- This turns into a frog
- The country of the Spanish
- A biting insect
- A popular pet

DOWN

- See these at an art gallery
- Small nails for carpets
- Pleasant



GINGER MEGGS



VENKATESH, ANIL RAVIPUDI COMBO ONCE AGAIN BACK WITH A BANG

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

Venkatesh Daggubati and Anil Ravipudi earlier delivered a super successful film 'F2' which was released at the Sankranti time. Now, both of them joined for a film titled 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam', and released on the Sankranti Festival day. Dil Raju and his brother Shirish are the producers and their promotions for this film are on top. Bheems Ceciroleo is the music director, while Aishwarya Rajesh and Meenakshi Chaudhary are the female leads. Did this film give Venkatesh a much-needed break? Here is the story and analysis.

Story:

Chief Minister Keshava (VK Naresh) invites top businessman Satya Akella (Avasarala Srinivas) to the State to put up a few companies from him. Meenakshi (Meenakshi Chaudhary) takes care of his security, but Pandey gang come to know that Satya is in town, so they kidnap him. Keshava doesn't want to leak the kidnap news to the media, so he asks the IG to set up a secret mission to get back Satya Akella. The IG suggests that encounter specialist and former cop Yadagiri Damodara Raju (Venkatesh) alias Vendi Raju, is the correct person. But he may not agree to lead the operation as he gets angry with the department. Meenakshi says that she will take care of Raju to accept this secret mission as she says she is his former girlfriend. She lands in a village in Rajahmundry, where Raju is living with his wife Bhagyam (Aishwarya Rajesh) and four kids. How Meenakshi conveys Raju



to accept this mission? Bhagyam, so possessive about her husband, also part of this mission and how these three along with few other people, rescue Satya Akella and what happens in the end is the crux of the story.

Analysis:

Director Anil Ravipudi and Venkatesh earlier delivered a successful film 'F2'. It was a hilarious film and Anil Ravipudi is strong with his writing skills. Many of his films are successful, because of his strong writing, especially the comic scenes. Whether it is 'Pataas', 'Raja the Great', 'Sarileru Neekevuru', 'F2', these films are successful because of their strong writing. But there is also criticism about Anil Ravipudi that he added some witty dia-

logues to his comic writing. His recent film 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' is also not much of a great film, but he mixed a crime element with a family drama. He just provided some entertainment sequences and maintained the same till the end.

A gang kidnaps a top businessman, a former police officer YD Raju along with his wife and ex-girlfriend start a rescue operation. How the operation went on and how they rescue the businessman in the end is told in a hilarious way. Director Anil has taken a temple cinema that dealt mostly with comic scenes. The first half of the film goes with Raju and his family, his flashback episode of his girlfriend with comic scenes. Bulli Raju, a kid character played by Revanth, rendered some witty and adult dialogues, which is not nice. But

it seems, these days, Anil Ravipudi thinks it is entertainment for audiences. He is also told by his father, played by Venkatesh, that the kid is spoiled because of the OTTs. One doesn't understand how a small kid watches OTTs at that age. There are many scenes, which everyone feels are entertaining in the film.

In the second half, some characters like Upendra Limaye, a jailer, and another cop Sai Kumar, are introduced and both these are egoist cops. These two provide some entertainment in the second half. The rescue operation goes with the two leading ladies, where a husband suffers between his wife and ex-girlfriend. There are also some Venkatesh's earlier film references like 'Intlo Illalu Vantintlo Priyuralu'. Some satirical comic scenes like where Venkatesh

asks 'on my flow of dialogues didn't hurt someone's feelings'. The entire story is completely predictable and goes with the routine narration. The climax fight is also made with some humour with Venkatesh narrating the satirical dialogues on life. The Sankranti festival is in the South is a big one, and people want some entertainment, so this film definitely provides it for them. The second half is a big drag with the regular kind of comic scenes.

When it comes to the performance, Venkatesh once again showcases his comic angle. He did earlier in many films, especially in Anil Ravipudi film 'F2', so this time also he provides much humour with his dialogue timing, punches and body language. Aishwarya Rajesh, seen in some serious films, is first time playing in an

entertainment one and she does a neat job. Her Godavari accent and the way she carries her role is superb. Meenakshi Chaudhary also comes out with flying colours as she rightly competes with Venky and Aishwarya. The kid Revanth performed really well and provided entertainment. VTV Ganesh, VK Naresh, Upendra Limaye all do their job well and provide some laughs. Avasarala and Sai Kumar support well with many other actors like Muralidhar Goud, Pammi Saiy.

Finally, 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam' is packaged with loads of entertainment with a crime element. It's a predictable movie with a normal story, but at the same time Anil Ravipudi is successful in providing a few laughs with this film. Definitely this Sankranti belongs to Venkatesh as this film fits into the festival vibes. Producer Dil Raju, who lost money in his other film 'Game Changer', may get solace with this film's success.

Film: Sankranthiki Vasthunnam
Cast: Venkatesh Daggubati, Aishwarya Rajesh, Meenakshi Chaudhary, VK Naresh, Upendra Limaye, Sai Kumar, VTV Ganesh, Srinivas Reddy and others
Cinematographer: Sameer Reddy
Music: Bheems Ceciroleo
Producers: Dil Raju, Shirish
Writer and director: Anil Ravipudi
Release Date: January 14, 2025
Rating: 2.5/5

'Baby' pair is together again



The small film 'Baby' was a big sensation in the year 2023 with its stupendous success. Anand Deverakonda and Vaishnavi Chaitanya are the lead pair in this film and they became overnight stars with its success. Now, both of these actors are together again for another film 'An Unfinished Story'. Sithara Entertainments announced the film and it is directed by Aditya Hasan of popular

'90s A Middle Class Biopic' web series. This web series is also a big sensation in ETV Win which is directed by Aditya Hasan.

Now, this 'An Unfinished Story' film is the continuation of that web series, announced the makers. They unveiled an announcement concept video showcasing the journey of a small boy who once enthralled us in that iconic series now grown into a larger than life role played by Anand Deverakonda. The film promises a delightful mix of comedy, romance, emotion and drama catering to audiences of all kinds.

Raghu Teja played by Mouli is a key role in that web series and it was stopped when he completed his intermediate. Raghu grew up as a big man and the film story revolves around him and how his love and other parts of his life is going to be told in an entertaining way. Anand is playing as Raghu and Vaishnavi is playing as his love interest in this film. Hesham Abdul Wahab is providing the music.

The announcement video has already generated buzz as a cult blockbuster in the making.

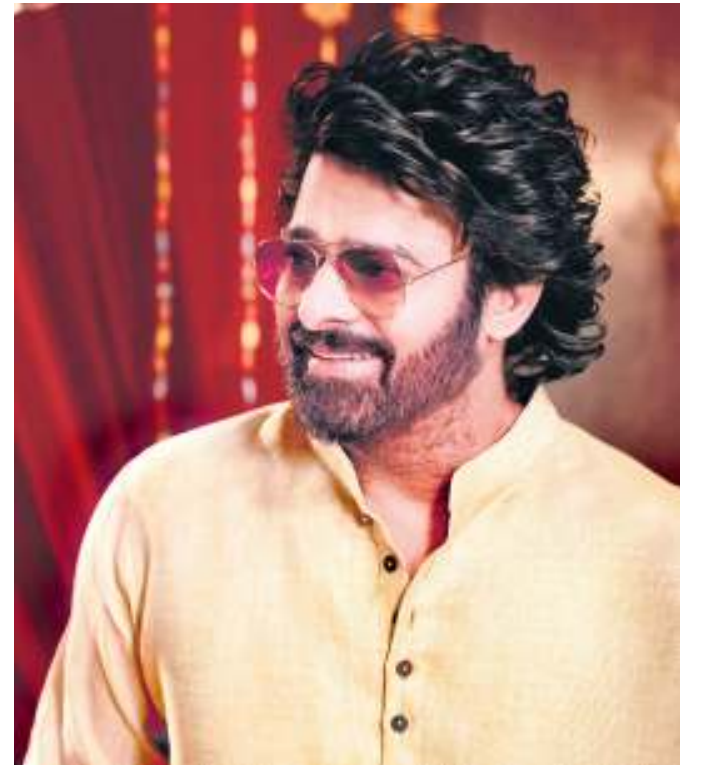
Another still from The Raja Saab released

All eyes are on 'The Raja Saab' that stars Prabhas as the lead actor. Maruthi is the director, while TG Vishwaprasad is the producer. The film started long back and still shooting is going on.

The makers announced that they are planning to release it on April 10, this year, but there are reports that it may be postponed to some other date.

In the meantime, the makers released Prabhas' looks from the film. The film is touted to be a romantic horror genre - a genre Prabhas has not explored before - there is a great deal of curiosity surrounding it.

To mark the occasion of Makara Sankranti, the makers have unveiled a new poster from the film. Though the makers released the still, they didn't mention the date of the release. Prabhas is popular not only in Telugu, but also in other languages, so the film is going to be released in all other languages too. Nidhi Agarwal, Malavika Mohanan are playing the female leads, while Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt is playing the villain.



Tamil actor Vikram Prabhu debut in Telugu with 'Ghaati'

Director Krish Jagramudi is coming up with a film titled 'Ghaati' that stars Anushka Shetty as the female lead. Now, the director is introducing Tamil actor Vikram Prabhu to Telugu with this film as the lead actor. The makers earlier unveiled the look of Anushka Shetty on her birthday and it gives enough curiosity among the Telugu film lovers.

Now, the director releases the look of Vikram Prabhu from the film and he is playing Desi Raju in it. On the occasion of the actor's birthday, the makers unveil the look of him. They also told the glimpse of the story and how it goes. Vikram is shown being chased by the police through dense forests and rugged ghat areas. What follows is a series of intense action sequences where he takes on goons. The action-packed sequences end with a lighter, romantic touch as Vikram and Anushka, say the makers.

The film promises to be an intense journey into the darker realms of human nature, where characters must confront their pasts, make impossible choices, and ultimately seek redemption. After the film 'Vedam', Krish is joining hands with Anushka second time with this 'Ghaati'. Rajeev Reddy and Sai Babu Jagarlamudi are the producers. Sai Madhav Burra, who worked with Krish for all his movies, is again writing dialogues for this film.



BALAKRISHNA TITLE FOR SHARWANAND

Balakrishna's old film 'Nari Nari Naduma Murari' is one of the classic films in the actor's career. After 34 years, the same old title was chosen for Sharwanand's upcoming project. Interestingly, the first look of this new 'Nari Nari Naduma Murari' unveiled by Nandamuri Balakrishna and Ram Charan. Ram Abbaraju of 'Samajavaragamana' fame is directing this film. On the occasion of Sankranti festival, the

makers released the look of this film. Sakshi Vaidya and Samyuktha are playing the female leads opposite Sharwanand. The film is touted to be a joyful, hilarious ride, according to the makers. As the title suggests and the core theme of the film, the first-look poster also shows the protagonist's amusing dilemma. Sharwa is seen caught in a chaotic situation, struggling between his two girlfriends, portrayed by Sakshi Vaidya and Samyuktha.

On the other hand Sharwanand is struggling to get a good break as his last few films didn't do well. The actor is now banking on this romantic comedy 'Nari Nari Naduma Murari', which is due for a release in the coming days. The film is produced by Ramabrahmam Sunkara, while Vishal Chandra Shekar is providing the music. The movie is currently in production, with the lead actors actively involved in the shoot.

Vishwak Sen turns into female Laila

There are quite a few actors like Rajendra Prasad, VK Naresh, Kamal Haasan who were portrayed in female get-ups in some of their films. Audience accepted their female look and those films turned blockbusters. Now, Vishwak Sen is also playing a female role in his upcoming film 'Laila'. On the occasion of Pongal, the makers unveil his female look. Vishwak Sen will be portraying both a male and female characters in this film, according to the makers. Directed by Ram Narayan and produced by Sahu Garapati, the film has Akanksha Sharma as the female lead. Vishwak Sen looks strikingly feminine, in the said release poster as the credit goes to his make-up team. This remarkable transformation of Vishwak Sen to portray Laila is truly impressive. The makers also have announced that they are releasing the teaser of this film on January 17. 'Laila' is gearing up for its theatrical release on February 14, as a Valentine's Day special.



Naomi Osaka is back in third round of Grand Slam for the first time in three years

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Naomi Osaka's second-round match at the Australian Open could not possibly have started in a worse way. All of 21 minutes in, she sailed a forehand service return well long and, just like that, trailed 5-0. Osaka strode to the sideline for the changeover, plopped herself down and draped a white towel over her head, blocking out all sights and leaving her with just her thoughts. She stayed like that throughout the break between games, even maneuvering a water bottle under that towel to take a drink. This was not a match against some unknown opponent, someone Osaka knew for sure she could beat. It was against 20th-seeded Karolina Muchova, the runner-up at the 2023 French Open and a three-time semifinalist at other majors, including at Melbourne Park in 2021. Muchova also had defeated Osaka in their two most recent matchups. None of that mattered on this afternoon, though: Osaka

forgot about that disappointing start and came all the way back to win 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday. What was her mindset? "Just be aware and try not to get so negative on yourself. I think, for me, the score in the first set was very dramatic, but there was key points that I could have maybe won a game here or there," Osaka explained afterward. "So I kept trying to tell myself that." This was, in some ways, a significant moment for Osaka, who once reigned atop women's tennis, winning four Grand Slam titles — two at the Australian Open, two at the U.S. Open — and ascending to No. 1 in the WTA rankings. The victory allowed her to reach the third round at a major tournament for the first time since the 2022 season. Getting to that stage was not considered a big deal at one point for her. But time off because of mental health breaks and then a pregnancy — Osaka's daughter, Shai, was born in July 2023 — changed things. Since returning to action a year ago, Osaka has shown signs of



getting her game back together, including a memorable and narrow loss to then-No. 1 Iga Swiatek at the French Open. This, though, followed a win against 2022 U.S. Open semifinalist Caroline Garcia in Melbourne and meant the progress is real. "It definitely was something that is a goal of mine, especially after last year; I wasn't able to beat a seed in a Grand Slam," Osaka

said. "I'm obviously very thankful that that happened so early this year." She also joked about gaining a measure of "revenge" by defeating Garcia — who eliminated Osaka in Melbourne a year ago — and Muchova in consecutive matches. Next for Osaka is a matchup against Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic, who is also a mother; her daughter, Bella, was born last year. Both Osaka and Bencic are big hitters. "It's going to be a fun match," Bencic said. Muchova wasn't the highest-seeded player to exit Wednesday. That was No. 5 Zheng Qinwen, the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka at the 2024 Australian Open and the gold medalist at the Paris Games last August. Zheng lost a bit of focus after being called for a time violation and never managed to counter 97th-ranked Laura Siegemund's strokes, bowing out 7-6 (3), 6-3 at John Cain Arena. After the chair umpire cited her for taking too long to serve, Zheng hit her next offering so poorly it bounced way before

reaching the net. "I knew," the 36-year-old Siegemund said, "I just had to play more than my best tennis." The player who beat Zheng in the final 12 months ago, No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, stretched her Melbourne Park winning streak to 16 matches as she eyes a third consecutive title, beating No. 54 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-3, 7-5 at Rod Laver Arena. Other women's winners included No. 7 Jessica Pegula, No. 14 Mirra Andreeva and No. 30 Leylah Fernandez, with 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff in action during the night session. Novak Djokovic added to his record collection by playing in his 430th career Grand Slam match — one more than Roger Federer — and, though he dropped a set for the second outing in a row, moved into the third round with a 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2 win over Jaime Faria. Other men who advanced included No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz, who joked that he is now a "serve bot" after hitting 14 aces while dismissing Yoshihito Nishioka 6-0, 6-1, 6-4.



SA20: Joburg Super Kings, Pretoria Capitals register convincing wins

PTI ■ DURBAN

Joburg Super Kings and Pretoria Capitals claimed crucial victories over Durban's Super Giants and Sunrisers Eastern Cape respectively in the Betway SA20. The JSK spin trio of Tabraiz Shamsi, Donovan Ferreira and Imran Tahir combined in perfect tandem to propel the visitors to a 28-run victory at Kingsmead, while the Capitals seamers were influential in their six-wicket bonus point win over the defending champions. Super Giants' middle-order batter Quinton de Kock played a lone hand of 55 (45 balls, 5x4, 2x6) to keep his team afloat in pursuit of JSK's 169/4. But Shamsi, Ferreira and Tahir snared five wickets between them to bowl out the Super Giants for 141. Tahir also produced a moment of brilliance in the field which proved to be hugely inspirational for the visitors. The 45-year-old displayed the athleticism of a teenager to snare a brilliant two-handed diving catch at point off a Wiaan Mulder reverse-sweep. JSK were certainly galvanised by the veteran to squeeze the Super Giants middle-order after the home team seemed well set at 99/4 with the dangerous pair of De Kock and Heinrich Klaasen at the crease. Klaasen (29 of 17 balls) was

building up momentum by striking Matheesha Pathirana for a couple of boundaries and a six, but the Sri Lankan exacted revenge by having him caught down the leg side with the final ball of the 12th over to set in the collapse. Earlier, the Super Kings rallied to a competitive total through contributions from Leus du Plooy (38), Jonny Bairstow (26) and Ferreira (26) before Gerald Coetzee smashed the final two balls of the innings for six for the visitors to seize the momentum. At Centurion, the Capitals benefited from winning the toss with captain Rilee Rossouw having no hesitation in electing to bowl. It immediately proved to be the correct decision on a surface that had been under the covers for a lengthy period of time with the home team's fast bowlers gaining significant seam movement early on. Eathan Bosch (2/18) landed the first blow when he removed opener Zak Crawley. Bosch was well supported by Daryn Dupavillon (3/32), who struck with successive deliveries to send both David Bedingham and Sunrisers captain Aiden Markram back to the pavilion to leave the defending champions in tatters at 3 for 4. The visitors slipped deeper into trouble when Tom Abell and Tristan Stubbs also departed within two runs of each other.

England batter James Vince quits First-Class cricket to play in PSL

PTI ■ LONDON

England batter James Vince on Wednesday quit First-Class cricket to play for Karachi Kings in the upcoming Pakistan Super League, defying ECB's decision not to grant NOCs for its cricketers to appear in the T20 competition. The England board had decided in November, 2024, to refrain from issuing NOCs to all-format players to play in the PSL, scheduled for April-May this season, because the league clashes with the early rounds of the County Championship. Vince, who has played 13 Tests, was expected to lead Hampshire this season as well, but he was retained by the Kings ahead of the PSL draft. "I love Hampshire. It's been



my club and home for 16 years, so I want to be able to maintain my best to keep delivering for Hampshire in T20 cricket, and hopefully even further our success in the competition [the Blast]," Vince said in a statement. "I also need to understand what is best for my family, and combine that with the stage of my career I am at," he added. The 33-year-old, who has been leading Hampshire since 2015, is currently playing for Gulf Giants in the ILT20 tournament in the UAE. Giles White, Hampshire's director of cricket, said they

respected Vince's decision. "James has been at the heart of the club for the best part of 20 years, showing absolute commitment on and off the field as the team's leading batter and captain," said White. "We recognise that this announcement will be tinged with disappointment for many fans but hope everyone will join us in celebrating what he has given to our club over many years." From 216 First-Class matches, Vince has scored 13340 runs at an average of 40 with 30 hundreds. The ESPNcricinfo has, meanwhile, reported that England batter Tom Kohler-Cadmore too quit County cricket to play in the PSL for Peshawar Zalmi, and he is in talks with Somerset in this regard.

Yashasvi Jaiswal joins Mumbai Ranji camp

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal on Wednesday joined the Mumbai camp after confirming his availability for the next round of Ranji Trophy but skipper Rohit Sharma was not to be seen after turning up for a couple of practice on the opening day of training. Rohit, who batted alongside Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday here at the Wankhede Stadium, is expected to resume training in a day or two. However, it remains to be seen if the incumbent Indian skipper would play in the domestic giant's next Ranji Trophy fixture. Rohit is yet to confirm his availability for the Elite Group A contest against Jammu and Kashmir starting on January 23 but so far, no formal discussions have been taken place.



"The selectors are expected to announce the squad on January 20, during which they will follow the due process of checking for the availability of every player. Rohit will also be approached around the time for selection," a Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) official told PTI. The 37-year-old is looking to put an end to his poor run with the bat after he managed a mere 31 runs in three Tests that he played against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Champions Trophy opening in Febuary third week; PCB hopeful Rohit Sharma will be there

PTI ■ LAHORE

The opening ceremony of the Champions Trophy will be held either on February 16 or 17 and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is confident that India captain Rohit Sharma will be in attendance at the event. The PCB source also said that it is awaiting communication from the ICC on the schedule of the customary captains' photo-shoot and the pre-event press conference. The eight-team tournament will get underway on February 19 in Karachi. However, India will play all their matches in Dubai, starting with the clash against Bangladesh on February 20, after refusing to travel to Pakistan owing to security concerns. The source said PCB has procured all relevant clearances from its government to promptly



opening match is on 19th the opening ceremony can be expected either on the 16th or 17th," the source added. He said the schedule of the opening ceremony would depend on the warm-up matches list. The source said that recently three Indian nationals, who were a part of the ICC delegation which came to Pakistan, were promptly issued visas once the world body sent their names to the PCB.

East Bengal seek government intervention over ISL 'step-motherly treatment'

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Alleging "step-motherly treatment" by the Indian Super League organizers, century-old East Bengal club has sought Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya's intervention, claiming that systemic bias, the outdated "refugees club" tag, and refereeing controversies have stalled their progress in the top-tier football competition. The incident occurred during the 'Kolkata Derby' in Guwahati on Saturday where East Bengal lost to arch-rivals Mohun Bagan by a solitary goal. The club claimed the match was marred by biased officiating, including the denial of a clear penalty and a controversial yellow card issued to midfielder Souvik Chakrabarti, which led to his red card and team being



reduced 10 players. In an emotional plea to the sports minister, East Bengal highlighted how the "refugees club" tag has led to their ongoing marginalisation in Indian football. "Fight, Fight and Fight -- this has been the perennial motto of East Bengal club for the last 150 years. This club and its supporters have endured the tumultuous period pre and post-partition only through its fighting spirit. "While the displaced people fought tooth and nail for their substance, the club had to

fight the stigma and the tag of a 'Refugees Club' to establish itself as the leading football club of the country," East Bengal general secretary Rupak Saha wrote in a statement. "We are surprised that even 75 years after independence, we are in a situation where East Bengal Club has been victimised in almost every match of the ISL. "We are forced to think why all this is happening to us it is because we are still considered the 'Refugees Club'. Throughout the last 10-12 years, we had to bear the brunt of biased refereeing, be it in the I-League and more so in the ISL. "During this period, we must have sent close to 50 complaint letters to all the concerned authorities but to no avail and the standard of refereeing has only gone from bad to worse to the worst.

Can't wait to meet Ricky Ponting and ask him about the pull shot: Priyansh Arya

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

When Priyansh Arya hit six sixes in an over last year, he mainly targeted the straight boundary. But when he joins the Punjab Kings IPL camp, it's the pull shot that he wants to perfect with some help from head coach Ricky Ponting, who patented the stroke in his playing days. Those half a dozen sixes off left-arm spinner Manan Bhardwaj's one over in the inaugural Delhi Premier League put Arya under the spotlight and eventually led to the left-hander drawing a potentially life-changing Rs 3.8 crore winning bid from Punjab Kings, more than 12 times his base price of Rs 30 lakh. It was as if the stars aligned for the 23-year-old at the mega auction as he made a belligerent hundred against UP in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy days before the high-profile event in Saudi Arabia. Having been part of Punjab Kings' first pre-season camp in Mumbai last week, Arya has already got the taste of the higher level and says he is bound to become a better

player after his maiden season in the IPL, which begins on March 21. Has life changed for the Delhi lad since the auction day? "Life has not changed much since the auction. Yes, there is more interest from people and my expectations from myself have increased. The pre-season camp gave me a fair idea where I need to be come the IPL as I got to do things I have never done in training before." Arya got to chat with his IPL skipper Shreyas Iyer briefly during the Mumbai camp and apart from him, he is equally excited about spending time with Ponting. "I have not had the chance to speak to Ricky sir. But when I get to meet him, the first thing I want to ask him is about the pull shot," he said referring to one of the best exponents of the pull shot. "I am also really excited about spending time with Iyer. I love the attitude of Iyer and Ricky sir, both on and off the field. I would also like to ask them about their mindset in highs and lows.



"Just by interacting with the best you can learn a lot, I have already experienced it (in the camp)," said Arya, whose parents teach in a government school in the national capital. The IPL is still some time away and if he does get to open alongside Prabhsimran Singh, there will be immense pressure and scrutiny. Will his price tag also play on his mind? "I am not thinking on those lines. For me it is just about learning from the best minds in the game."

And what does he plan to do with the money? "That (is something) my parents will decide," pat came the response from Arya. Growing up, he closely tracked the career of now India head coach Gautam Gambhir as they both came to the same academy in Delhi. Arya loves Gambhir's play against spin and he too has gone on to become a decent batter against the turning ball. No wonder those six sixes came off a spinner. Besides Gambhir, Arya also draws inspiration from Sri Lankan great Kumar Sangakkara. "Right from the beginning, I like to play down the ground. That is what I was thinking at that time (when he hit six sixes). I have followed Gautam bhैया a lot. I loved how he used to play spin and that is what I tried to pick from him. "Among overseas players, I like Kumar Sangakkara. I love his cover drive a lot though personally I like pull shot the most." The moment when his name

came under the hammer will remain fresh in Arya's memory forever. "We were playing the domestic T20 (SMAT) and I was sitting in the hotel with my teammates. I could not express myself after Punjab made that winning bid. "I did not know what do. My phone stopped working. I would have been happy at just being picked but to get this bid made me feel really good," Arya recollected. Arya made his T20 debut for Delhi in 2023 and List A in 2021, long before he achieved the memorable feat in the DPL last year. The southpaw looked back at his journey thus far. "There were challenges. The year I made my debut I got to play only two games and was on the bench the rest of time. The year after I was dropped from the senior team. When I got the DPL stage, I told myself I have to be the best batter in the competition and that happened." He is yet to play first-class cricket and that his next target. However, the ultimate aim is to play Test cricket.