

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
The pioneer

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, Telangana

DON'T MISS...
'Doc's negligence led to daughter's death'

The parents of a 14-month-old girl alleged that the negligence of the doctors of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) caused her daughter's death. The parents, Gangaraju and Kumari, who belong to Kakinada, told the media that their 14-months-old daughter Tanvisri accidentally fell from a stationary motorcycle a few days ago. She suffered an internal injury in the neck. They were brought to the AIIMS for treatment. The doctors administered her anastasia and took for an MRI scan. However, half-an-hour later the...

-PAGE: 4

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 pilgrims. "These mobile laboratories conduct on-the-spot testing of food and beverages..."

-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 Wednesday. The bilateral trade between India and...

-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 Karachi. However, India will play all their matches in Dubai...

-SPORTS

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.

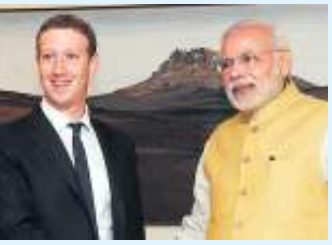
"We should become a global partner in securing the sea from drugs, weapons, and terrorism, and make it safe and prosperous," he said, adding that India's growing naval

'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. "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 Vaishnaw, who is Minister for Information and Broadcasting as well as IT.



Will strengthen party from booth-level: Lokesh

Suggests reforms within party, including term limits for office-bearers

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Lokesh stressed the need for a movement at the cluster, village, mandal, and constituency-levels, and urged the workers to allocate some time for the party's activities, stressing that positions in the party are earned through grassroots work, not by merely being around leaders. He explained that regular feedback from WhatsApp will be used to monitor their performance.

The Minister discussed the need for reforms within the party, including term limits for office-bearers.

Continued on Page 2

Reliance NU Suntech to invest Rs 10,000 cr in solar project

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Reliance NU Suntech Private Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Reliance Power Limited, has announced plans to invest Rs. 10,000 crore in setting up a solar power project in Kurnool district on a build-own-operate basis. The project consisting of a 930 MW solar energy contract with 465 MW/1,860 MWh battery energy storage system (BESS) component is Asia's largest solar and battery energy storage project. The project will guarantee a peak power supply of four hours daily (or a four-hour discharge duration).

Reliance NU Suntech secured the largest individual allocation of 930 MW through a competitive e-reverse auction from a total bid capacity of 2,000 MW for interstate transmission system (ISTS)-con-

Bags SECI contract for 930 MW solar and 465 MW battery storage project

The project will serve as a significant milestone for southern India, creating 1,000 direct jobs and approximately 5,000 indirect employment opportunities during the construction phase.

The project integrates solar power with advanced energy storage systems, enhancing the reliability and cost-effectiveness of renewable energy. By ensuring a consistent power supply even during periods of low solar generation, the initiative bolsters India's renewable energy capacity, reduces dependence on fossil fuels, and reinforces Reliance NU Suntech's leadership in the power generation sector.



connected solar projects. The project is scheduled for commissioning within 24 months of signing the power purchase agreement (PPA). SECI will enter into a 25-year PPA with Reliance NU Suntech, with the solar power generated being supplied to multiple discoms across India.

SWARNA ANDHRA VISION-2047

AP aims for wealthy, healthy, happy society, asserts CM

Explains State's efforts to uplift all sections through various schemes

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu shared his insights on the State's development, upcoming initiatives, and his vision for the future at Naravari Skill Training Centre in Chandragiri constituency of Tirupati district on Wednesday.

Addressing media persons, the Chief Minister noted that people are returning to their native villages to celebrate the Sankranti festival, which is an age-old tradition. The CM said the Swarna Andhra Pradesh Vision 2047 was created with the goal of making every home and village joyful.

He explained that the vision aims for a wealthy, healthy, and happy society. Reflecting on the past, he spoke about Vision 2020, which contributed to Telangana becoming



one of the highest per capita income States in India. He also highlighted the growing economic success of Telugu people globally, as they have become known for high incomes and entrepreneurial excellence.

The Chief Minister spoke about

the State's efforts to uplift all sections of society through initiatives such as the Super 6 schemes. These include increasing social security pensions to Rs 4,000, Rs 6,000, Rs 10,000, and Rs 15,000 for various groups, making the State a leader in social welfare pensions. Andhra Pradesh's pension system is praised for its efficiency and high satisfaction rate, with the State providing 64 lakh pensions monthly, amounting to Rs 33,000 crore annually.

He referred to the 199 Anna Canteens that provide meals to the poor at just Rs 5. "Plans are in place to set up one canteen in every constituency in the future," he added. The Chief Minister reiterated the State's commitment to providing free gas cylinders -- one provided so far and others to follow. They are also looking into piped gas distribution. Additionally, the State has been proactive in releasing long-pending dues, including Rs 6700 crore for employees, police, and contractors, and Rs 996 crore for Polavaram displaced persons.

Continued on Page 2



Gambling dens dominate Sankranti festival



Female bouncers were seen at cockfights and casino hubs, signalling surge in female attendees

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

This year's Sankranti festival in the coastal district of Andhra Pradesh has been marked by an unprecedented rise in the popularity of cockfights, gambling events and the emergence of a gambling dens (Casino culture) that attracted huge crowds from across the region. The festivities, traditionally centred around cockfights and gundata (betting), reached new heights as they were organised on par with East and West Godavari districts, making Krishna district as a major hotspot for these activities during the festival.

Sources report that during the course of the festival, hundreds of crores of rupees changed hands across the State. One of the most striking features of this year's events was the presence of casinos hidden within cockfight arenas. In a remarkable fusion of traditional blood sports and modern gambling, the arenas became hubs for 'high-stakes' casino-style gambling, with entry fees ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000. Despite not officially branding these spaces as casinos, all the tell-tale signs of casino operations were present, slot machines, card tables and roulette wheels, with gamblers freely indulging in various forms of wagering.

At several cockfight venues, political leaders played an unexpected role. In an eye-catching gesture, local and State politicians, including Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan, Minister Nara Lokesh, and other influential figures 'flexed' hoardings were seen near the cockfight arenas. A few cockfight arenas were even inaugurated by noted politicians. Prominent flex boards displaying their photos were put up around the arenas, further blurring the lines between politics and the festival's controversial events.

Even more surprising was the notable presence of female bouncers at these cockfights and casino hubs, a first for many. The increased participation of women in security roles seemed to signal the growing prominence of gambling in these cultural festivities. The influx of female security personnel mirrored the surge in female attendees at the arenas this year, contributing to the changing dynamic at the festival.

Continued on Page 2

Three warships commissioned together for the first time



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

strength is enhancing global confidence in the country.

The prime minister reasserted 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 shipbuilding ecosystem, we are opening new doors to economic growth and self-reliance," he said.

Only Chandrababu can decide when to reshuffle his team

Is Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N 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.

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.

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.



M D RATNA KUMAR Senior Journalist ratnakumar@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.

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.

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 Parda Saradhi made both Chandrababu and Lokesh furious and he earned the wrath of the TDP brass despite apologising.

Jagan to attend daughter's graduation ceremony in London

Former Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has left for London to attend his daughter's graduation ceremony. Jagan and his wife YS Bharathi will participate in the graduation ceremony of their second daughter, Varsha Reddy, who has successfully completed her Master of Science (MSc) in Finance from the prestigious King's College London.

Gambling dens...

Continued from Page 1. However, while the cockfights and gambling activities flourished unchecked, they were carried out in clear defiance of the State's High Court orders banning such practices. Law enforcement and government officials appeared conspicuously absent from many arenas, leading to speculation that the events were being allowed to unfold without intervention.

Lokesh assures support, solution to issues at Praja Darbar

Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh has said that the coalition government will stand by everyone and solve their problems. A Praja Darbar was held in Naravariapalle on Wednesday, the 56th day, after the Sankranti celebrations. Petitions were received from those suffering from various issues.



A petitioner, V Leelakrishna from the Chandragiri constituency, shared his anguish over the medical expenses incurred for his father's illness, which amounted to nearly Rs 2 lakh. He had applied for Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF), but his request was rejected by the previous government due to alleged political bias.

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.

PRISM-10 wins PM's Award for fighting anaemia

District's successful initiative, led by former Collector Nishant Kumar, recognised for significant impact on children's health

The PRISM-10 (Project for Reduction of Infants' Mortality Below 10) project in the district has been recognised with the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for its remarkable efforts in anaemia prevention. During 2023-24, the project took significant strides, particularly focusing on preventing anaemia among children under 10 years of age.



contributed nutritious food items such as dry fruits at their own expense to support the initiative. The current District Collector, A. Shyam Prasad, has continued to focus on large-scale anaemia prevention efforts, further strengthening the district's ongoing initiatives. This recognition is expected to motivate the district to expand its efforts in the future.

The initiative was spearheaded by the then District Collector, Nishant Kumar, who meticulously formed anaemia committees at the village level and monitored their activities closely, leading to successful outcomes. Notably, Pachipenta mandal emerged as a model for the programme, with the local development officer, Laxmikant, playing a key role

in organising awareness programmes that contributed to the project's success. As part of the comprehensive effort, adoption officers were appointed at the village-level to assist individuals suffering from anaemia and ensure continuous monitoring. In a gesture of commitment, some adoption officers even

contributed nutritious food items such as dry fruits at their own expense to support the initiative. The current District Collector, A. Shyam Prasad, has continued to focus on large-scale anaemia prevention efforts, further strengthening the district's ongoing initiatives. This recognition is expected to motivate the district to expand its efforts in the future.

Devotees throng Srivari temple at Maha Kumbh Mela

Devotees visiting the ongoing Maha Kumbh Mela at Prayagraj made a bee-line to the Sri Venkateswara Temple set up by TTD.



The devotees can scan the QR code and donate any amount ranging from Rs.1 to Rs.99,999 to TTD. On January 18, Kalyanotsavam will be held on the stage set up on the premises of Srivari temple from 11 am to 12 noon.

Chairman dines with devotees



TTD Chairman BR Naidu celebrated the Sankranti festival with the devotees in Tirumala by dining with them in Matrusrri Tarigonda Vengamamba Annaprasadam Complex (MTVAC).

The TTD Board chief also interacted with devotees about the quality of Annaprasadam. Meanwhile, the devotees expressed immense pleasure and satisfaction over the improved quality of delicacies being served in Annaprasadam Complex.

2 Judges for AP High Court

The Supreme Court Collegium has recommended the appointment of some judicial officers as judges for the High Courts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. According to the recommendations, four names have been proposed for the Telangana High Court and two for the Andhra Pradesh High Court under the judicial officers' quota.

SC rejects...

Continued from Page 1. State government counsel Mukul Rohatgi informed the court that a charge sheet had already been filed in the case. Justice Trivedi, after reviewing the matter, observed that there was no need to interfere with the High Court's bail order, given the submission of the charge sheet. She also advised Chandrababu to fully cooperate with the investigation whenever required.

AP aims for wealthy, healthy...

Continued from Page 1. In a bid to improve agricultural practices and promote the dairy industry, the government is planning to turn every household into an entrepreneurial hub. The government will also address housing needs, provide gas connections, and ensure 24-hour water supply in rural areas. Under the Surya Ghar scheme, the government will provide solar energy to every home in the region, and individuals can earn income by selling excess electricity.

Will strengthen party...

Continued from Page 1. I am serving my third term as the national general secretary. The party should see 30 per cent new faces every two years to bring in fresh energy," he said, adding that in the previous elections, the party had given tickets to those who had worked hard. He noted that despite the difficult times, the TDP managed a huge victory in the Chandragiri constituency this time and praised the efforts of the youth and other people, apart from the party workers, who helped in the successful implementation of the Yuvagalam and Nijam Gelavali programmes.

No celebrations for VSP...

Continued from Page 1. "This festive season, supposed to bring joy, has instead brought sorrow. I haven't been able to buy new clothes for my children or parents. This delay is causing immense strain on our family's well-being." On Sankranti day, simmering frustration boiled over into a protest outside the plant's main gate. Once proud to be part of VSP, employees now find themselves fighting for their fundamental rights. "While everyone across the State, including Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu, is celebrating Sankranti, we are left fighting for our basic rights," said Varasala Srinivasa Rao, a member of the Visakha Ukku Parirakshana Porata Committee, a workers' rights organisation. "The steel plant was once a symbol of pride. Now, it feels like a betrayal." He added that despite promises made by leaders during a recent visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the workers' plight remained unaddressed. A protest is planned at the office of a local official, Palla Srinivasa Rao, on January 19.

Today Almanac, Krishna Paksha, Tithi, Nakshatram, Magha, Rahukalam, Yamagandam, Varjyam, Gulika, Amritkalam, Vijayawada Weather: Partly Cloudy, Temp: 31°C, Humidity: 60%, Sunrise: 6:39 AM, Sunset: 6:55 PM

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.



Rs. 1,000 cr changed hands during Sankranti in erstwhile Krishna

Besides card games and gundata, casinos were organised for three days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

During the Sankranti celebrations in the erstwhile Krishna district – comprising Krishna, NTR, and Eluru districts – there was a substantial amount of economic activity, with over Rs.1,000 crore reportedly exchanging hands during traditional cockfighting and associated gambling events. Activities such as card games, gundata and casinos attracted a large number of bettors, spectators, and punters. Similar to the well-known arenas in the Godavari districts, extensive preparations were made for cockfighting events, drawing large crowds.

Cockfights were held day and night from January 13 (Bhogi) to 15 (Kanuma), and they ended on Wednesday. Traditional cockfights took place in various locations in NTR district, including Ramavarappadu, Jakkampudi, Ambapuram, Enikepadu, Kondapalli, Vissannapeta, Tiruvuru, Kanchikacherla, and Nandigama. In Krishna district, the blood sport was organised at Edupugallu, Kankipadu, Gannavaram, Surampalli, China Avutapalli, Ampapuram, Bapulapadu, Gudivada, Bantumilli, Krithivennu, and Avaniigadda. Special arrangements were made for VVIPs, VIPs, and local representatives at these cockfighting arenas.

Despite a ban on the blood sport from the Andhra Pradesh High Court, the police were unable to take strict action due to alleged pressure from political figures. Although officers claimed to have attempted to enforce the court's order, cockfights were rampant during the three-day harvest festival, supported by political backing, particularly from leaders of the ruling TDP. Several political figures, including local representatives, were seen enthusiastically participating in the illegal sport.

This year, the number of



Cock fights going on near Vijayawada on Kanuma festival on Wednesday

Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

female spectators increased compared to previous years. A police official, who wished to remain anonymous, stated, "It is true that cockfights were arranged across the erstwhile Krishna district and the stakes were high. We tried to control gambling, such as card games and gundata, but we were under pressure." Many people were observed driving to the locations where the blood sport was organised, cheering as roosters fought each other.

The gambling was reportedly highly organised and conducted openly, raising suspicions that ruling-party leaders were shielding the bettors. In addition to card games and gundata, casinos were set up at all cockfighting venues. Extensive arrangements were made at multiple locations for the fights, and political leaders from various parties attended the events, where organisers had established elaborate tents with seating.

Unconfirmed reports estimate that around Rs.1,000 crore was transacted during the three-day harvest festival, starting from Bhogi and concluding with Kanuma, across the Krishna, NTR, and Eluru districts. The highest levels of betting and related transactions occurred in the Krishna and Eluru districts. However, the Police Department was unable to control the cockfights, allegedly because influential leaders and several cabinet-

rank MLAs instructed officials not to take any action against the organisers. As a result, police officials and their staff did not intervene in the cockfight arenas across the former Krishna district. Consequently, gamblers engaged in gundata and played cards freely, with crores of rupees exchanged between bettors. Those who suffered financial losses returned home in tears, while winners celebrated and enjoyed their success.

Cockfight organisers attack cops

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The final day of the three-day Sankranti festivities took a violent turn as cockfight organisers attacked the police in NTR district on Wednesday. The incident occurred at Jakkampudi, near Pamula Kalva, close to Vijayawada when the police intervened to stop the illegal cockfights and gambling activities. The altercation began when Kothapeta Sub-Inspector Hari Prasad and his team arrived at the Pamula Kalva arena to enforce the law. The organisers, including punters and miscreants, resisted the police intervention and attacked the

Tense atmosphere prevails at Jakkampudi cockfight arena

officers, creating a tense situation at the venue. Despite warnings, the organisers continued to hold cockfights and gambling games into the night. The continued events caused significant traffic jams on the Vijayawada-Vissannapeta R&B Road at Jakkampudi. Local residents expressed their anger at the police, accusing them of accepting bribes to allow the illegal cockfights. Residents lodged complaints with the police

and demanded that the events be stopped immediately. Acting on complaints, SI Hari Prasad and his team rushed to the arena and instructed the organisers to halt the events. In retaliation, the organisers, along with other miscreants, attacked the police officials, escalating the conflict. This incident highlights the challenges faced by law enforcement during the festival, where illegal activities like cockfighting persist despite court bans and police interventions.

School Games: Cycling teams leave for Ranchi

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The School Games Federation of Andhra Pradesh (SGFAP) is set to make its mark in the School Games Nationals Cycling (Track) Championship. The championship will be held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, from January 17 to 21. Teams include boys and girls in Under-14, Under-17, and Under-19 categories. Approximately 30 cyclists from Andhra Pradesh will be competing in the event.

These young athletes departed from Vijayawada to Ranchi on Tuesday night. These teams are ready to represent the State on a national platform. The champi-



onship offers a crucial opportunity for Andhra Pradesh's cyclists to showcase their talent and compete against peers from across the country. It also serves as a stepping stone for budding cyclists aiming for higher recognition in the sport.

The Samagra Siksha Department provided travel allowances (TA), daily allowances

(DA), and sports kits to the participants of the School Games Nationals Cycling (Track). Officials from the School Games Federation's NTR district unit distributed the sports kits to the cyclists. For the Andhra Pradesh teams, the coaches and managers include K Suguna Rao, P Hari Malini, G Rambabu, Suresh Raju, and M Venkatesh.

GST fraudster arrested in Visakhapatnam

Mohammed Saheem created fake invoices amounting to Rs 230 cr, causing Rs 35 cr loss to Govt exchequer

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Officials from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Visakhapatnam Zonal Unit, have arrested Mohammed Saheem V, a resident of Vellore, Tamil Nadu, for masterminding a complex GST input tax credit fraud. The accused is charged with generating fake invoices amounting to Rs 230 crore, causing a loss of Rs 35 crore to the government exchequer.

Saheem is accused of orchestrating a fraudulent network involving 80 shell companies, created using the stolen identities of unsuspecting individuals. The accused's network spanned across Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, where he utilised fake invoices to fraudulently claim input tax credit and evade tax liabilities.

Candidates receive false job promises in medical colleges

Brokers demand money for securing jobs for them

PNS ■ PADERU

Unemployed individuals eagerly awaiting job opportunities in local government medical colleges are becoming victims of a growing scam, as brokers offer false promises of securing employment in exchange for large sums of money.

A total of 15,512 applications were submitted for 244 paramedical and supporting staff positions at the colleges, with the application deadline closing on January 10. However, since the 11th, brokers have been contacting applicants, claiming that for an upfront payment, they can influence the hiring process and secure jobs for them.

"This is a huge fraud," says an applicant who wished to remain anonymous. "I received a call from a broker saying that if I pay Rs. 2 lakh, they could guarantee me a job. They even told me that

the vacancies were limited and that if I didn't act fast, I might miss the opportunity."

The brokers, often using political connections to further their cause, are primarily targeting vulnerable individuals in rural areas. The sums demanded range from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs. 4 lakh, depending on the position. "They pressure you, saying that if you delay even a day, someone else will take your place," explains another applicant. "It's hard to know what to believe when they sound so convincing."

As the scam spreads rapidly, many unemployed individuals are facing significant financial losses. "This is not just about money; it's about trust in the system," says a local community leader. "People are desperate for work, and these brokers are exploiting that desperation. It's appalling."

Kanuma celebrated with devotion and joy

Cattle decorated in traditional style; special prayers offered

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Kanuma, the third day of the Makara Sankranti festival, was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm across the agrarian communities of Vizianagaram and Srikakulam districts. The day, coinciding with the northward journey of the Sun during the auspicious Uttarayana Punyakalam, saw a beautiful display of devotion towards cattle, which are deeply respected and cherished in these regions. Cattle, considered an integral part of the farming family, were decorated in the traditional style as a tribute to their vital role in agricultural activities. Special pujas were offered to the animals, recognising their hard work in the fields, which ensures a bountiful harvest during the Sankranti season.

One of the highlights of the festival was the honour bestowed upon the 'Gangireddu' troupes. These troupes, which play an essential role in the celebrations, were presented with new clothes, money, sweets, and the special Sankranti treats of 'ariselu' and 'bobbattu'. The bull, regarded as the vehicle of Lord Shiva, was especially revered by the villagers on the occasion.

The festival also featured cattle shows where well-bred bulls took centre stage, proudly displayed by farmers who



consider them vital to their agricultural success. In addition to the cattle-related activities, friendly tournaments of Kabaddi, kho-kho, and cricket were organised, and youths took part in the traditional pastime of kite flying by summer storage tanks and open fields. The spiritual aspect of the festival was also observed as special pujas were performed at temples across the districts. Many people, who had moved to other places for work, returned to their native villages to join in the festivities, strengthening the sense of community and tradition. Younger family members, especially, were excited to see the decorations on the cattle and take part in the offerings of Prasadam to cows and other animals.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*,

several village elders emphasised the deep emotional bond between farmers and their cattle. They explained that the pujas and prayers were an expression of gratitude and affection towards the animals, which help secure their livelihood. In a gesture of goodwill, landlords in the village of Dhavalapeta in G. Sigadam mandal, Srikakulam district, distributed clothes and saris to around 200 families. Narasayya, a former sarpanch, shared, "Agricultural labourers are treated as family members in our culture. Without their contributions, we cannot grow anything in the fields. That is why every year we distribute essential commodities and clothes to them and the villagers."



Swatantra satellite channel calendar unveiled

PNS ■ GUNTUR

TDP senior leader Talla Venkatesh Yadav unveiled Swatantra Satellite channel calendar 2025 here on Wednesday. During the unveiling of the calendar, he said that the Swatantra Satellite news channel has been taking steps towards fearlessly taking public issues to the authorities and providing solutions.

He heaped praise on the news channel for standing by the common man. He extended his best wishes to the management and staff on the occasion of Sankranti festival.

EVE's Sankranti celebrations conclude

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Sankranti celebrations in NTR district concluded on a high note with the EVE Open Badminton tournament and vibrant Rangoli competitions. Organised by the EDA Vedadri Engineers (EVE) Friends Circle, the three-day event aimed to promote healthy activities and deter youth from engaging in traditional cockfighting and gambling during the festive season. As part of the Sankranti Sambaralu, Rangoli competitions were held for women at Eda Vedadri's mango garden near the Polavaram Right Main Canal. The event drew significant participation, showcasing traditional artistry.



R&B Minister lays stone for underground drainage system

PNS ■ NANDYALA

Minister for R&B and Infrastructure Development BC Janardhan Reddy laid the foundation stone for the construction of underground drainage system in Banaganapalle.



The underground drainage system is being carried out at a cost of Rs 30.66 crore. As part of constructing underground drainage systems, canals and subterranean canals will also be constructed parallel to the Jurreru stream in Banaganapalle for which the Minister laid the stone today.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said that an open drainage canal would not appear in the town in the next two years as the construction of the underground drainage system would be completed. The underground drainage system was begun despite the burden on the State Government to provide a convenient drainage system so that the people of Banaganapalle would not face any difficulties in the future, the Minister stated.

The Minister alleged that during the previous YSRCP regime no new constructions had been undertaken. The outdated drainage system in some areas in the town got clogged and the drainage water drained

"Under the underground drainage system, 56.2 KMs of underground drainage canals will be dug up. In order to ensure that the drainage water does not merge in the Jurreru stream water, another drainage system will be constructed parallel to the Jurreru stream for 3.6 KMs. The total cost of the underground drainage system is Rs 30.66 crore," Minister Janardhan Reddy revealed.

out and overflowed on the roads. This kind of situation would cause people to suffer from various diseases, he lamented.

"Under the underground drainage system, 56.2 KMs of underground drainage canals will be dug up. In order to ensure that the drainage water does not merge in the Jurreru stream water, another drainage

system will be constructed parallel to the Jurreru stream for 3.6 KMs. The total cost of the underground drainage system is Rs 30.66 crore," Minister Janardhan Reddy revealed.

He directed the officials concerned to take steps to ensure that the underground drainage works are carried out expeditiously and he inspected the preparations for the works.

Parents allege doc's negligence led to their daughter's death

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The parents of a 14-month-old girl alleged that the negligence of the doctors of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) caused her daughter's death.

The parents, Gangaraju and Kumari, who belong to Kakinada, told the media that their 14-months-old daughter Tanwisi accidentally fell from a stationary motorcycle a few days ago. She suffered an internal injury in the neck. They were brought to the AIIMS for treatment. The doctors administered her anastasia and took for an MRI scan.

However, half-an-hour later the doctors told them that the baby girl died in the scanning machine itself. Till she was taken for scanning, she was active, the parents told the media.

They alleged that due to negligence of doctors in providing her proper treatment caused her death. They questioned why the girl died suddenly when scanning was being performed. The parents also questioned the doctors how they could confirm that the deceased girl was suffering cancer without dialysis. The parents lodged a police complaint with the Mangalagiri police.

Meanwhile, AIMS doctors said that the 14 months old child was admitted on January 13 with complaints of difficulty extending the neck, difficulty sitting and standing, gradually progressive bending of the lower back over



the past 3 days, following a history of a fall from a bike one month prior.

Examination revealed an irritable child with abnormal neurological findings. A lesion in the cervical cord was suspected, and an MRI was performed today.

The MRI report revealed an ill-defined, long-segment, intramedullary, expansile T1 hypointense/T2 and STIR hyperintense lesion involving the cervical and upper dorsal spinal cord from the C2 to D4 levels. The lesion occupied the entire cross-sectional area of the cord, suggestive of an intramedullary spinal cord tumor, likely astrocytoma. Small cystic areas were noted within the lesion, along with patchy areas of T2 hyperintensity at the cervicomedullary junction, indicative of cord edema.

After the MRI procedure, the child was noted to have poor breathing efforts and was im-

mediately shifted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. Intubation and resuscitation were initiated, including chest compressions and administering IV adrenaline.

Following an initial response, the child was connected to a ventilator and started on adrenaline infusion. However, the child subsequently experienced cardiac arrest. CPR was restarted and continued for 30 minutes, including defibrillation and intracardiac adrenaline administration under the supervision of a cardiologist.

Despite the best efforts, the child could not be revived.

The doctors of AIIMS confirmed the cause of death as compressive myelopathy due to an intramedullary spinal cord tumor, corticomedullary junction lesion with cord edema (likely astrocytoma), and respiratory arrest due to central hypoventilation/neurogenic shock and denied any medical negligence.

MLA Jayanageswara releases Swatantra TV channel calendar

PNS ■ KURNOOL

MLA BV Jayanageswar Reddy released the Swatantra TV channel 2025 calendar in Yemmiganur on Wednesday.

The MLA, flanked by Town bank Chairman Pratap U Shetti, released the Swatantra TV channel calendar.

The MLA and the Bank chairman conveyed their Sankranti wishes and congratulated the Swatantra TV channel management on occasion.



Adani Krishnapatnam Port receives 18th ICC Environment Excellence Award 2024

PNS ■ NELLORE

Adani Krishnapatnam Port Limited (AKPL) on Wednesday said it received the prestigious 18th Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Environment Excellence Award 2024 in

the service sector under the Platinum category.

The award was presented by Dr. Shashi Panja, Minister for Industries, Commerce and Enterprises of the Government of West Bengal, along with Roshni Sen, Additional Chief Secretary,

Department of Environment, AKPL said in a release here. AKPL Head of Dry Cargo Operations received the award, memento and certification.

This recognition highlights AKPL's outstanding contributions to sustainability, envi-

ronmental innovation, and responsible business practices.

AKPL has implemented groundbreaking initiatives to reduce its environmental footprint, setting benchmarks in operational excellence and environmental stewardship.

Hearty Green Foods representatives call on Eluru MP

PNS ■ ELURU

Hearty Green Foods representatives Sugunapriya Vellanki and Baby Patel called on MP Putta Mahesh Kumar here on Wednesday.

Hearty Green Foods Thailand is a reputed food processing company. Sugunapriya Vellanki and Baby Patel told the media that they were planning to establish a food processing unit in Eluru district and they sought the cooperation of the MP.

The MP said that he is ready to extend all required help to those who come forward to set up industries in Eluru district. He pledged to create huge employment opportunities to the jobless youths in the district by taking steps for establishing industries. He assured of extending full support and providing infrastructure to the Hearty Green Good Thailand to establish their unit here.



"Due to the flawed industrial policy of erstwhile YSRCP regime, the establishment of a mega industrial hub became

an unfulfilled dream," he criticised. Many industrial projects which were granted by the Naidu headed previous

Government were not materialized because of non-cooperation of the YSRCP administration, he slammed, regret-

ting that many major projects remained non-starters.

The YSRCP regime had failed even to provide minimum infrastructure to the enthusiastic entrepreneurs when they came forward to establish industries in the State, he flayed. Furthermore, some of the entrepreneurs backtracked, fearing threats from the ruling party leaders, he lamented.

"Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Nara Lokesh are striving hard to bring huge investment to the state and establishment of industries to generate jobs," he highlighted.

"I am working with an aim of establishing food processing units in Eluru surrounding areas. I have discussed with several industrialists in this regard so far and the discussions are fruitful. Many industries will come up in Eluru Parliamentary constituency," MP Putta Mahesh Kumar acknowledged.

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.

Man, his teenage son killed as two bikes collided

PNS ■ NELLORE

In a tragic road accident, a man and his teenage son were killed when two motorcycles collided at Kasumuru cross road in Venkatchalam mandal on Wednesday.



Police said that the deceased Kalesha (45) and his son (Hamid) (13) were going on a motorcycle. Another motorcycle coming in the opposite direction, collided with the bike, killing the father and son duo instantaneously.

Both the father and son duo were shifted to the Government Hospital at Venkatchalam but there was no doctor in the hospital. Later they were shifted to the GGH in Nellore where they were declared brought dead.

The villagers told the media a youth had liquor in a liquor shop and in an inebriated condition drove his bike at

high speed in a reckless manner causing the accident. They lamented that the GGH is located just 200 meters away from the accident site but there was no doctor in the hospital.

The 108 ambulance did not come to the accident site since the ambulance driver did not attend duty. The locals took the father and son duo to the GGH on their bikes. The family members and relatives demanded action against the hospital doctor for being absent. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH for postmortem.

Manchu Manoj prevented from entering MB University

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The row between veteran film actor and Mohan Babu University Chancellor M Mohan Babu and his younger son Manchu Manoj shifted to Tirupati from Hyderabad as Manoj was prevented from entering into the University on Wednesday leading to mild tension.

Film actor and Mohan Babu's son Manchu Manoj, accompanied by wife Mounika, went to the University campus to pay tributes to his paternal grandfather and paternal grandmother.

However, the police and the security personnel did not allow Manoj to enter the University campus by closing the entrance gate. Manoj was seen shouting at those who closed the gate. The police prevented Manchu Manoj couple to avert a possible clash between the son and father inside the University.

However, some time later, the police allowed the Manoj



couple to go to the University campus to pay tributes to his grandparents. They paid tribute to their grandparents. A jostle took place between the followers and bouncers of Manoj and Vishnu for some time in the University premises leading to a tense situation.

Later talking to the media outside of the University, Manoj alleged that some rowdies were brought from other places to

prevent him from entering into the University campus. He claimed that he had come to the University several times to pay tributes to his grandparents. He argued that the court had not restricted him from paying tributes to his grandparents.

But he exercised restraint as he has respect for the police, he added. He clarified that he had not received court notice so far. He recalled that the court had

ordered that bouncers should not be used. The police showed him the court notice barring his entry into the University campus but he had claimed that he did not receive the notice, he made it clear.

Earlier, Manchu Manoj arrived at Renigunta airport flanked by his wife from Hyderabad. The couple went to the University on the road in a huge rally.

Dry weather likely to prevail in AP in next 7 days

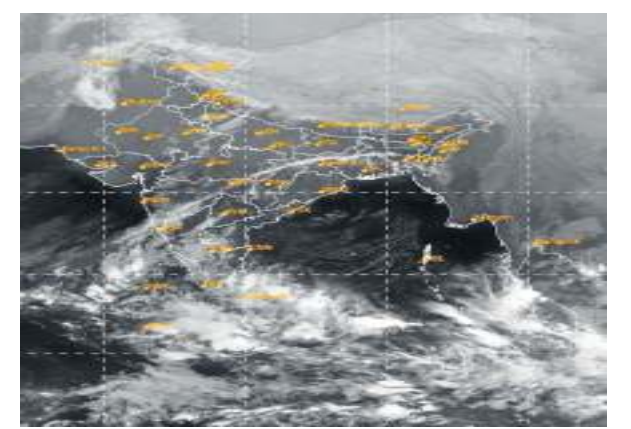
PNS ■ GUNTUR

Dry weather is likely to prevail in Andhra Pradesh during the next seven days, the Meteorological Centre said on Wednesday.

In a daily weather report here, it said that rainfall occurred at one or two places in Rayalaseema and dry

weather prevailed in Coastal Andhra Pradesh during the last 24 hours.

The lowest minimum temperature of 16 degrees Celsius was recorded at Aroyavaram in the plains of Rayalaseema on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, the report added.





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 like 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.

PICTALK



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

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



SANJAY CHANDRA

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)

Women breaking the glass ceiling



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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 Sadhasiva 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





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 "3Os"—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 prioritize 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)*

GANESH ACHARYA ANNOUNCES HIS NEXT FILM 'SIRF TUM'

Vidhi Acharya's V2S Production is thrilled to announce the upcoming film presented by Ganesh Acharya, 'Sirf Tum,' written and directed by the veteran and acclaimed Deepak Shivdasani. Deepak is known for his work on popular films such as 'Baaghi,' 'Gopi Kishan,' 'Bhai,' and 'Krishna.' The film will commence shooting in the first week of April 2025 in Sydney and Australia. 'Sirf Tum' promises to be a unique love story that will captivate audiences with its emotional depth and creative storytelling. The poster for 'Sirf Tum' features a poignant sketch of a boy and a girl holding a pen, hinting at a story filled with emotion and creativity. This intriguing visual has already sparked curiosity and excitement among fans and the film industry alike.

While the cast remains a mystery, the anticipation is building for the reveal of the talented actors who will bring this story to life. The film's unique narrative and the collaboration between Ganesh Acharya and Deepak Shivdasani in association with Soundary Acharya as executive producer are expected to create a cinematic experience that will resonate with audiences. Stay tuned for more updates on 'Sirf Tum' as we embark on this exciting journey!



DISHA PATANI'S HOLLYWOOD DEBUT

Behind the scenes with 'Fast and Furious' actor Tyrese Gibson and Harry Goodwins

Fans of Disha Patani have a reason to celebrate as the diva gears up for her Hollywood debut! Recently, a behind-the-scenes (BTS) picture surfaced, showcasing Disha alongside 'Fast and Furious' star Tyrese Gibson and actor Harry Goodwins. The trio is currently filming for an upcoming web series in Durango, Mexico that marks Disha's first foray into Hollywood.

Disha's Hollywood debut is generating significant buzz, and the BTS picture has only heightened the excitement. In the image, Disha is seen sharing a light moment with her co-stars, hinting at the camaraderie and fun on set. This web series is expected to be a thrilling addition to Disha's already impressive career. The excitement doesn't stop there. Disha will also be seen in the highly anticipated 'Welcome to the Jungle,' directed by Ahmed Khan. This film is the third installment of the popular 'Welcome' franchise and is scheduled for release in 2025. With such an impressive lineup, Disha's fans are eagerly awaiting her performances on both the international and domestic fronts.

what's brewing?

'Sara would often sit quietly on set, immersing herself in the script and her character'

Sara Ali Khan has emerged as one of the most talented actresses of her generation, delivering powerful performances that resonate deeply with audiences. Known for her captivating presence and versatility, she has consistently impressed us with her impeccable portrayals across various roles. Her dedication to her craft continues to shine through, especially in her upcoming film Sky Force. The film's trailer has already offered a glimpse into Sara's portrayal of a humble, strong and hopeful wife of an army officer, played by Veer Pahariya.

Sources close to the project reveal that Sara maintained a focused and grounded approach during the filming process. "She would often sit quietly on set, immersing herself in the script and her character. To stay emotionally connected for key scenes, she consciously avoided distractions, including her phone, to ensure she fully embodied the role of a soldier's wife, capturing the delicate balance between hope and uncertainty," said a source.

This level of dedication and discipline showcases Sara's commitment to perfecting her craft. Her ability to seamlessly transform into any character she takes on only heightens the anticipation for



her performance in Sky Force. Beyond Sky Force, Sara has an exciting slate of films lined up. She will star opposite Aditya Roy Kapur in Anurag Basu's Metro Inn Dino and is also working on a project with Ayushmann Khurrana. In 'Sky Force,' directed by Abhishek Anil Kapur and Sandeep Kewlani, she will share the screen with Akshay Kumar and Veer Pahariya, further adding to the film's buzz.

Varun Dhawan preps for Border 2

Bollywood actor Varun Dhawan, who is currently prepping for 'Border 2,' has honoured the 'real heroes' of India on Army Day on Wednesday. Varun took to Instagram, where he shared two pictures of himself getting clicked with the jawans. One image even had the 'Baby John' star striking a pose with the soldiers next to a tank.

Army Day is celebrated every year in India on January 15. It is in recognition of Lieutenant General Kodandera M Cariappa, later who became Field Marshal, taking over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from General Francis Roy Bucher, the last British Commander-in-Chief of India, on January 15, 1949. The day is celebrated in the form of parades and other military shows in the national capital New Delhi as well as in all headquarters. On the acting front, Varun will next be seen in 'Border 2,' which also stars Sunny Deol, Dilit Dossanj and Ahaan Shetty. The film, which is helmed by Anurag Singh, is the sequel to the 1997 film 'Border,' an epic war film, based on the events of Battle of Longewala (1971). Directed by JP Dutta, the film is set during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. It stars Sunny Deol, Suniel Shetty, Jackie Shroff, Akshaye Khanna, Sudesh Berry, Puneet Issar, Kulbhushan Kharbanda, Tabu, Raakhee, Pooja Bhatt and Sharbani Mukherjee. 'Border 2' is backed by a powerhouse production team comprising Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, JP Dutta and Nidhi Dutta. Presented by Gulshan Kumar & T-Series in association with JP Dutta's JP Films and helmed by Anurag Singh, the sequel is set to carry forward the legacy of the iconic original while delivering a grand cinematic experience. 'Border 2' seems to be based on the 1999 Kargil War. In early 1999, Pakistani troops infiltrated across the Line of Control (LoC) and occupied Indian territory, mostly in the Kargil district.



Priyanka Chopra to star alongside Jonas Brothers in holiday movie; filming underway

Priyanka Chopra is set to join her husband Nick Jonas and his brothers, Joe and Kevin Jonas, for an upcoming holiday film. The project, which is expected to premiere on Disney, brings the Jonas family together for a memorable 2025 holiday season. Filming for the untitled movie began on January 13 in Toronto. As per E! News, Priyanka was spotted on the set alongside her husband Nick and the Jonas brothers. The Citadel actor was spotted wearing a black hoodie and a long black coat with grey and white stripes, while Nick donned a dark puffy jacket, with his hood pulled over to shield him from the snow. The set atmosphere was filled with festive cheer as Priyanka shed her winter coat to reveal a holiday-inspired look, featuring a cream-coloured long-sleeve top paired with a red floor-length skirt. Her brother-in-law Joe embraced the cold in a teal cardigan and dark-wash jeans, maintaining a casual yet stylish appearance. In addition to Priyanka and the Jonas brothers, the movie will feature Frankie Jonas, the youngest sibling of the Jonas family, and Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. star Chloe Bennet.



CHECK WHO AISHVARY THACKERAY IS, BOLLYWOOD'S MOST PROMISING DEBUTANT OF 2025

Aishvarya Thackeray, grandson of Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray, is making waves in Bollywood even before his debut. While his family is rooted in politics, Aishvarya has chosen a different path by entering the entertainment industry with sheer determination. His journey began in 2015 when he worked as an assistant director on Sanjay Leela

Bhansali's Bajirao Mastani. Over the years, he has trained rigorously to perfect his acting and dancing skills. Drawing inspiration from the legendary Michael Jackson, Aishvarya is known for his exceptional dance moves, which have already captured industry attention. Aishvarya is making headlines for his upcoming debut film, helmed by none other than Anurag Kashyap. Industry

insiders have labeled him a 'dark horse,' citing his talent and dedication as standout qualities that make him one to watch. As Bollywood gears up for 2025, Aishvarya is all set to carve his niche in one of the world's most competitive industries. His debut film is among the most anticipated projects of the year, and all eyes are on this promising debutant as he steps into the limelight.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



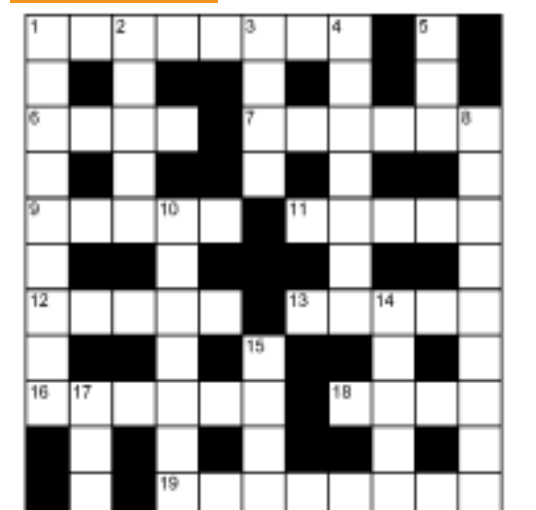
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



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



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Vijayawada

the pioneer

Follow us on
@TheDailyPioneer
facebook.com/
dailypioneer

Thursday
January 16, 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."

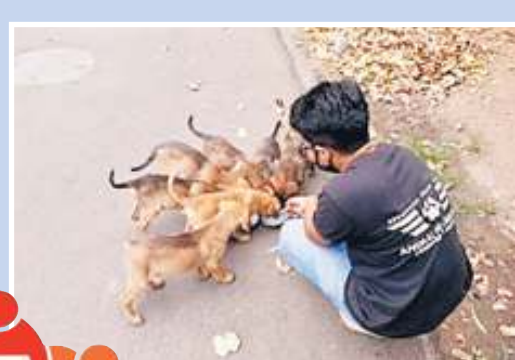
AWCS has gained recognition for its expertise in

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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

reaching the net. "I knew," the 36-year-old Siegemund said, "I just had to play more than my best tennis."



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.

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.

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.



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.

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.

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.



"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.

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 in Karachi. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is confident that India captain Rohit Sharma will be in attendance at the event.



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.

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.



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 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.

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.

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."



"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.

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.

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.

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 Ramabrahman 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.

