

#### '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 Tanwisri accidently 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.



#### 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 Ja 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

### 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 Dubev. 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.

### SC rejects plea to cancel Chandrababu Naidu's bail

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chandrababu Naidu in connection with the AP Skill Development

The Supreme Court, on Wednesday, dismissed a petition filed by the State Crime Investigation Department (CID) under the previous YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government, seeking the cancellation of bail granted to Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president and Andhra Pradesh 📕 Chief Minister N

Corporation scam. A Bench led by Justice Bela Trivedi rejected the CID's petition, which was filed in January 2024, challenging the November 2023 order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court that had grantbail ed

Chandrababu.

Continued on Page 2

P4

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

### Will strengethen party from booth-level: Lokesh

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

#### PNS TIRUPATI

movement at the cluster, village, Education, IT, and Electronics mandal, and constituency-levels, Minister Nara Lokesh has said that and urged the workers to allocate some time for the party's activities, they will launch measures to stressing that positions in the party strengthen the party from the boothlevel from February. "We will allo-cate more time for the party," the are earned through grassroots work, not by merely being around leaders. TDP general secretary said. Lokesh met key leaders and He explained that regular feedback from WhatsApp will be used to

activists in Naravaripalle, Chandragiri constituency, on Wednesday, and assured that the party will support its workers in ing term limits for off

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

PNS TIRUPATI

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 out Visio



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

**SWARNA ANDHRA VISION-2047** 

one of the highest per capita income the State's efforts to uplift all sections States in India. He also highlighted of society through initiatives such as the growing economic success of the Super 6 schemes. These include Telugu people globally, as they have increasing social security pensions society. Reflecting on the past, he become known for high incomes to Rs 4,000, Rs 6,000, Rs 10,000, and and entrepreneurial

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

fare pensions. Andhra Pradesh's

pension system is praised for its effi-

ciency and high satisfaction rate,

employees, police, and contractors, and Rs 996 crore for Polavaram displaced persons

#### 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 preevent press conference. The eightteam tournament will get underway on February 19 in Karachi. However, India will play all their matches in Dubai. -SPORTS every possible way.

Continued on Page 2

tributed to Telangana becoming

Rs 15 000 for various groups mak The Chief Minister spoke about ing the State a leader in social wel-

**Continued on Page 2** 

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

monitor their performance.

The Minister discussed the need

for reforms within the party, includ-

Lokesh stressed the need for a

#### 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 buildown-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 ereverse auction from a total bid capacity of 2,000 MW for interstate transmission system (ISTS)-con- multiple discoms across India.

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



nected 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

#### 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 sys-tems, enhancing the reliability and

cost-effectiveness of renewable ener-gy. 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.

#### No celebrations for **VSP** employees Workers yet to receive **December** salaries

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

While Andhra Pradesh celebrated Sankranti, the harvest festival marked by vibrant colours and family gatherings, a pall of despair hung over the Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP). For the first time in its 40-year history, the plant, a cornerstone of the region's industry, failed to disburse December salaries, plunging its 12,300-strong workforce into a financial crisis during what should have been a time of celebration.

This delay, a recurring issue since September, has ignited widespread unrest. Workers are struggling to meet basic needs, their festive cheer replaced by anxiety. "As of January 15, we still haven't received our salaries," said an employee, who requested anonymity for fear of reprisal.



### 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 gam-bling, 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' flexies/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 partic-ipation 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**

### 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 his-tory, the prime minister underlined the nation's progress in defence production, maritime security and economic growth under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

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

#### Three warships commissioned together for the first time

country's history, the prime minister underlined the nation's progress in defence production, maritime

Noting the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region, he emphasised the need to protect territorial waters, ensure freedom of navigation, and secure trade supply lines.

attention to India's significant contributions as a maritime nation. "In the Indian Ocean region, India has emerged as the 'first responder,' saving hundreds of lives and securing thousands of crores worth of national and international cargo," he

India's vision of a secure and inclusive Indo-Pacific region aligns with its broader global responsibilities, Modi said.

India has always supported an open, secure, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, he said.

The country's defence production has crossed Rs 1.25 lakh crore, with exports reaching more than 100 countries, he noted.

Pointing out that three warships were being commissioned together for the first time in the The prime minister also drew security and economic growth under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative said.

strength is enhancing global confidence in the country. The prime minister reasserted the

a global maritime leader. "India is on its way to becoming a leading mar-itime power and a global economic country's commitment to becoming force. With modernised defence

capabilities and a robust shipbuilding ecosystem, we are opening new doors to economic growth and selfreliance," he said.

### vijayawada 02



PIN

### Only Chandrababu can decide when to reshuffle his team

s Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu

strongly considering a Cabinet reshuffle? The Chief Minister is believed to have concluded that the image of his government is getting spoiled due to some unexpected developments.

Chandrababu has plans to take his coalition government with the NDA forward in the spirit of all three constituents of the ruling front, but circumstances are forcing him to change his plans to continue the same combination even after the 2029 elections. Although it looks premature to take up the task of gaining full control over the administration as well as the political situation in the State, it's natural on the part of a person who has vast experience of ruling the State for four terms to get an 'extension' for his rule by

impressing the elec-torate with populist policies. 6 The image of the BJP and that of Prime Minister Modi POINT and Jana Sena Party (JSP)

chief Pawan Kalyan's strong influence at the ground level made Chandrababu's attempts to grab power easy. After the announcement of the decision to fight elections together against the then chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy by Pawan Kalyan outside the Rajahmundry Central Prison where Chandrababu was remanded in the case dealing with the alleged misappropri-ation of skill development programme funds, Chandrababu has been expect-ing the combination of TDP,

JSP and BJP to succeed. As a token of gratitude towards Pawan Kalyan for his efforts to weld together the alliance through seat adjust-

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

ments by giving up his party's seats to his partners, Chandrababu offered him the Cabinet reshuffle, the fact is post of Deputy Chief Minister. Pawan's JSP contested only 21 seats as he had relinquished case now. seats to protect the interests of

his alliance partners. With his excellent teamwork, his JSP could win all the seats it contested and register a 100% strike rate in the elec-

tions Coming back to the issue of Chandrababu's idea of a

that it is not getting a final shape. For that, Chandrababu needs experienced hands in the Cabinet. But that is not the This is making the CM uncomfortable as warnings

issued to Cabinet colleagues about their performance are not having effect. Key portfolios are not getting the required attention probably due to the absence of experienced hands. What exactly can an expe-



rienced hand in the Cabinet do? Will it improve the administration or will it lead to corruption? These are the questions that are being debated by the public. Nobody believes that persons in power would complete their stints without corruption. Can such people engage in corruption? If they

do such things then they can be punished by the people. United AP by picking P Sabita Reddy for the Home Minister post. Jagan followed his father's change their ways. Chief

Minister Chandrababu Naidu wants the same thing in his Cabinet colleagues. As he has given a free hand to ministers their functioning is not properly monitored. This is causing discomfort to the CM and has made him think that there is an urgent need to reshuffle the Cabinet.

Some incidents have spoiled the government's image and have also hurt TDP cadres. The Home portfolio has been given to Dalit legislator V Anitha. But her PA spoiled the image of not only the Home Minister but that of the government too. The Minister had to remove her PA after his corruption damaged the government's image.

Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy leader Sardar Gouthu started this convention in Lachanna in Srikakulam dis-

trict. Jogi Ramesh is considered hostile due to his criticism of Chandrababu during policy by appointing Dalit M Sucharita as the Home Minister. Chandrababu didn't YSRCP rule. Sharing the dais with a person like Jogi Ramesh by Pardha Saradhi made both Chandrababu and Lokesh furifollow YSR's convention during his first stint in residual AP, ous and he earned the wrath of but he did it now by appointthe TDP brass despite apoloing V Anitha as the Home gising. linister. Home should have gone to Deputy Chief Minister Pawan

Another Minister, K Sreenivas of Vizianagaram, showed due respect towards Kalyan due to its importance. He didn't opt for it but he expressed displeasure over the senior YSRCP leader Botsa Satyanarayana whom he considers as his political guru. poor performance of the Home department. It will not be surprising if Pawan This incident embarrassed the TDP leadership as Botsa has been a strong critic of Chandrababu from the days of becomes the Home Minister in the next Cabinet reshuffle. YSR.

Chandrababu may take quick steps to reshuffle the Cabinet. As the performance Another Minister K Pardha Saradhi got into a controversy over a political function. He of his Cabinet is already facing shared the dais with former public scrutiny, Chandrababu minister Jogi Ramesh while unveiling the statue of BC may not wait for a reshuffle. Otherwise, his government will lose its image.

#### Jagan to attend daughter's graduation ceremony in London

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

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. Varsha graduated with distinction, showcasing her academic excellence.

The ceremony will take place at King's College London on Thursday. Jagan and his wife will return to India later this month.

### 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.

Areas such as Ramavarapadu, Yanamalakuduru, Edupugallu, Ambapuram, Singh Nagar, and Uppururu in the erstwhile Krishna district witnessed emergence of sino-style operation ions arena themed after the Venkateswara Swamy temple in Uppuluru drew large crowds. In Ampapuram of Bapulapadu mandal, an air-conditioned arena with extensive security measures, including iron bars, attracted considerable attention. Punters from Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai joined the locals. On the other hand, the police filed cases against 350 people for organising cockfight and gambling while cockfight arenas in 18 mandals in coastal areas were destroyed by the officials.

### Lokesh assures support, solution to issues at Praja Darbar

#### PNS NARAVARIPALLE

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 Naravaripalle on Wednesday, the 56th day, after the Sankranti celebrations. Petitions were received from those suffering from various issues.

petitioner, А 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. Leelakrishna appealed for support, highlighting his financial struggles and requested aid through CMRF.

Germany. She mentioned A Haimavathi from Anupalli village in that, despite coming from a poor family, she had taken a Ramachandrapuram manloan from a private bank to send her daughter abroad dal, Tirupati district, requested financial assistance under for higher education and her.



sought help through the the Foreign Education Scheme for her daughter, scheme.

Guru Tejaswini, who is study-Ch Madhavi, from Kadapa district, requested the ing for a Master's degree in issuance of SADAREM Certificate for her daughter, who suffers from locomotor disability, and also appealed for a pension to be granted to

N Arunachalam, a former MPTC from Vinayagapuram in Tiruchanur, Tirupati dis-trict, said that lack of progress in securing house pattas for the 120 families who have the 120 ramines who have been residing in the area for the past 43 years. Despite repeated requests to the Revenue authorities, no action has been taken. Arunachalam appealed for prompt action to provide house pattas to these poor families. J Balakishore from Thondavada in Chandragiri

mandal, shared that the educational expenses for his two sons had become a heavy burden and sought financial aid to alleviate their difficul-

district, requested a job at the Tirumala Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanams for her son, who has completed an MBA, to help support the family. Minister Lokesh assured

the petitioners that their concerns will be thoroughly examined, and necessary actions will be taken to resolve the issues raised.

### 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

in organising awareness pro-

grammes that contributed to

were appointed at the village-

the project's success.

#### PNS PARVATHIPURAM

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.

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

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. Special attention was paid to preventing anaemia in vulnerable groups, including children, pregnant women,

and lactating mothers. As part of the comprehen-Nishant Kumar will receive sive effort, adoption officers the Prime Minister's Award for his exemplary service to the level to assist individuals suf-PRISM project during a ceremony in Delhi on January 21, fering from anaemia and ensure continuous monitoring. marking a significant mile-In a gesture of commitment, stone in the district's public health initiatives. some adoption officers even

#### 2 Judges for AP High Court

#### PNS VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court Collegium has

ties. K Jyothishetty from Pulicherla mandal, Chittoor

The police further seized 1,800 knives used in cock fights during the three days of Sankranti festival.

As the festival came to a close, it was clear that gambling under the guise of cockfights and casinos had taken centre stage.

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Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha							
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Magha:	Jan 16 11:16 AM							
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Rahukalam:	1:49 PM to 3:12 PM							
Yamagandam:	6:53 AM to 8:16 AM							
Varjyam:	12:00 AM to 01:42 AM							
Gulika:	9:39 AM to 11:02 AM							
Amritakalam:	09:37 AM to 11:16 AM							
Abhijit Muhurtham:	12:03 PM to 12:48 PM							
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### Devotees throng Srivari temple at Maha Kumbh Mela

#### PNS TIRUMALA

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

Tiruppavai Seva, Thomalaseva, Koluvu and Sahasra Namarchana were performed in the morning in the style of Nitya Kainkaryas in Srivari Temple.

After offering Naivedyam to the lord, the devotees were allowed to have darshan and prasadams were distributed.

Unjal seva was performed to the replica deities of Srivaru along with Sridevi and Bhudevi in the Vahana

SC rejects...

State government counsel Mukul

Rohatgi informed the court that a charge

sheet had already been filed in the case.

Justice Trivedi, after reviewing the mat-

ter, 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 whenev-

In an unexpected turn, the Bench rep-

rimanded senior journalist Bala

Gangadhar Tilak from Swarnandhra for

filing an interlocutory application seek-ing the cancellation of the TDP chief's bail.

Expressing strong displeasure, the Bench

questioned Tilak's involvement in the mat-

ter, asking, "Who are you? What is your

connection to this case? What qualifica-

tions do you have to file a PIL?" The court

strongly criticised third-party interference

in bail proceedings and issued a stern

warning, stressing that such actions could

lead to serious consequences if repeated.

Continued from Page 1

er required.



Mandapam set up on the donations. premises of the main Temple The devotees can scan the

Rs.99,999 to TTD. On January Kalyanotsavam will be held on the stage set up on the

premises of Srivari temple from 11 am to 12 noon. Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad secretary Sri Sri Ram Raghunath, Estate 18, Officer Sri Guna Bhushan Reddy and other officials were present.

natural farming and modernising small

kirana shops through Easy Mart. Waste

with the collection of trash through auto-

rickshaws, which will be composted,

helping make the region cleaner. The

Chief Minister also highlighted the wel-

fare measures for women and SC/ST

communities, such as providing auto-

rickshaws to women for economic

With advancements in technology, the

State will continue to innovate and

leverage these changes to improve

healthcare services for its citizens. He

family should strive to have one entre-

preneur and encouraged the adoption of

AI learning in every household to

The event was attended by Chandragiri MLA Pulivarthi Nani,

District Collector Dr S Venkateswarlu,

discussions on the government's devel-

earning up to Rs 12,000 per month.

### AP aims for wealthy, healthy...

#### Continued from Page 1

management will also be improved "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 empowerment, with the potential for home in the region, and individuals can earn income by selling excess electricity. The goal is to ensure that every home has solar rooftops by this Ugadi," Chandrababu said. The CM announced a new WhatsApp governance initiative, which concluded by emphasising that every will make over 150 services, including Aadhar, caste certificates, and birth certificates, available online. The Chief Minister promised to improve infrastructure, ensure future growth. including building cattle sheds for livestock, ensuring proper drainage, and enhancing street lighting. He also discussed plans to expand healthcare services and provide and others, all of whom participated in meals for patients.

The State is promoting zero-budget opment agenda.



**Chairman dines with devotees** 

#### PNS TIRUMALA

TTD Chairman BR Naidu celebrated the Sankranti festival with the devotees in Tirumala by dining with them in Matrusri 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.

'We should never speak arro-

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.

Justice Hariharinath Sharma and Justice Yadavalli Lakshman Rao have been recommended for the Andhra Pradesh High Court. The President issued the official order for this appointment on Tuesday.

### Will strengethen party...

#### **Continued from Page 1**

"I am serving my third term programmes. He acknowlas the national general secreedged the trust that people had placed in the party with a mastary. The party should see 30 per cent new faces every two sive 164-seat win. years to bring in fresh energy," he said, adding that in the previous elections, the party had people's hopes and expectagiven tickets to those who had tions," Lokesh said, adding, worked hard.

He noted that despite the gantly. I have not forgotten the difficult times, the TDP man-Red Book; it continues its aged a huge victory in the work." He also recalled the Chandragiri constituency this challenges faced during the Yuvagalam programme, hightime and praised the efforts of the youth and other people, apart from the party workers,

#### 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 wellbeing." Ön 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

who helped in the successful ment to taking strict action implementation of the against wrongdoers in sand Yuvagalam and Nijam Gelavali and liquor scandals.

Lokesh also reiterated that the party will soon launch special programmes under the Swarna Andhra initiative, and "We are committed to the called upon party workers to actively participate in them. "We have set a new record with one crore memberships across the State, which is a feat no regional party has achieved in the country. The insurance scheme is already in effect for members, providing five lakh lighting the difficulties faced by insurance for any accidents," he the police and the commit- said.

> 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.

A stark financial paradox underscores the workers' frustration. Despite the salary delays, the plant has performed well financially.

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at 4 pm. Devotees from var-QR code and donate any amount ranging from Rs.1 to ious States were present. Kiosk machine set up A kiosk machine has been set up on the temple premises for the devotees to offer



### vijayawada 03



### **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 Ramavarappaudu, Jakkampudi, Ambapuram, Enikepadu, Kondapalli, Vissannapeta, Tiruvuru, Kanchikacherla, and Nandigama. In Krishna dis-trict, the blood sport was organised at Edupugallu, Kankipadu, Gannavaram, Surampalli, China Avutapalli, Ampapuram, Bapulapadu, Gudivada, Bantumilli, Krithivennu, and Avanigadda. 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, om leaders of t articular ruling TDP. Several political and gundata, but we were made at multiple locations for figures, including local repre- under pressure." Many people the fights, and political leaders sentatives, were seen enthusiastically participating in the illegal sport.





#### Cock fights going on near Vijayawada on Kanuma festival on Wednesday

female spectators increased The gambling was reportedcompared to previous years. A ly highly organised and conpolice official, who wished to ducted openly, raising suspicions that ruling-party leaders were shielding the bettors. In remain anonymous, stated, "It is true that cockfights were arranged across the erstwhile addition to card games and gundata, casinos were set up at Krishna district and the stakes were high. We tried to control all cockfighting venues.



#### Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

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 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 situ- and demanded that the events ation at the venue. Despite warnings, the organisers continued to hold cockfights and gambling games into the

night. The continued events caused significant traffic jams

the Vijayawada-Vissannapeta 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 festival, where illegal activities like cockfighting persist cockfights. Residents lodged despite court bans and police complaints with the police interventions.

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

#### **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 champi-onship 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-

**GST** fraudster

**Visakhapatnam** 

Mohammed Saheem created fake invoices amounting to

Rs 230 cr, causing Rs 35 cr loss to Govt exchequer

Officials from the Directorate

General of GST Intelligence

(DGGI), Visakhapatnam Zonal

Mohammed Saheem V, a res-

ident of Vellore, Tamil Nadu,

for masterminding a complex

GST input tax credit fraud. The

accused is charged with gener-

ating fake invoices amounting

to Rs 230 crore, causing a loss

of Rs 35 crore to the govern-

Saheem is accused of orches-

trating a fraudulent network

involving 80 shell companies,

created using the stolen iden-

tities of unsuspecting individ-

arrested

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Unit, have

ment exchequer.

arrested in



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.

Siksha The Samagra 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 Åndhra Pradesh teams, the coaches and managers include K Suguna Rao, P Hari Malini, G Rambabu, Suresh Raju, and M Venkatesh.

Candidates receive false job promises in medical colleges Brokers demand money for securing jobs for them PNS PADERU the vacancies were limited and

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

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

This year, the number of roosters fought each other.

were observed driving to the locations where the blood sport was organised, cheering as

from various parties attended the events, where organisers had established elaborate tents with seating.

occurred in the Krishna and Eluru districts. However, the Police Department was unable to control the cockfights, allegedly because influential leaders and several cabinet-

Unconfirmed reports esti-

mate that around Rs.1,000

crore was transacted during the

three-day harvest festival, start-

ing from Bhogi and concluding

with Kanuma, across the

Krishna, NTR, and Eluru dis-

tricts. The highest levels of bet-

ting and

ted transactions

mals The ac spanned across Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, where he utilised fake invoices to fraudulently claim input tax credit and evade tax liabilities.

and secure iob s for

"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 appalling?

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

### 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 agraricommunities of an 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 prayers 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 essen-tial role in the celebrations, were presented with new clothes, money, sweets, and the special Sankranti treats of 'ariselu' and 'bobbatlu'. 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



### 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 engag-ing 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.



#### 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.





# **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 system drainage in Banganapalle.

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 Jurrery 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 Jurrery 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.

PNS NELLORE

### 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 Tanwisri accidently 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 immediately 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.



### Hearty Green Foods representatives call on Eluru MP

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

Hearty Green Foods reputed food [hailand] processing company. Sugunapriya Vellanki and processing 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.

#### 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 flaved, Furthermore

Adani Krishnapatnam Port receives 18th

ICC Environment Excellence Award 2024

Platinum category. The award was presented by Dr. Shashi Panja, Minister for Industries, Commerce award, memento and certifiand Enterprises of the cation Government of West Bengal, This recognition highlights along with Roshni Sen, , AKPL's outstanding contribu-Additional Chief Secretary, tions to sustainability, envi-

the service sector under the Department of Environment, ronmental innovation, and AKPL said in a release here. AKPL Head of Dry Cargo Operations received the

responsible business practices.

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

### Public confidence in KTR declining: Adi Srinivas

#### PNS HYDERABAD

The Congress has strongly reacted to the Supreme Court's 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 miscases. use of public money is evident," said Srinivas, questioning KTR's accountability in the context of mounting allegamade without due process. tions.



Environment Excellence Award 2024 in

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



"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-

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.

He criticized the BRS government for calling the legal actions against its leaders "false

that former Chief Minister K. "We are not like the BRS Chandrasekhar Rao issue a government, where doors are public apology for KTR's broken down, and arrests are alleged misconduct.

"What will KTR say to the people now? The former Chief The law is taking its course in Minister owes an apology for his son's actions," Srinivas Highlighting the broader implications, he demanded 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 Venkatachalam mandal on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased Kalesha (45) and his won (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 Venkatachalam 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

nied by wife Mounika, went to the University campus to pay tributes to his paternal groundfather and paternal grand-moth-

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 out-side 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 Manoh arrived at Renigunta airport flanked by his wife from Hyderabad. The couple went to the University on the road in a huge rally.

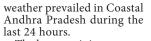
### Dry weather likely to prevail in AP in next 7 days

#### PNS GUNTUR

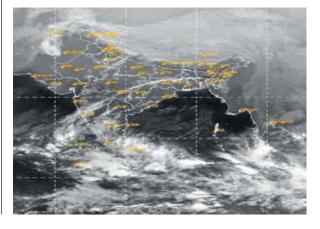
this case," he said.

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



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







# Nation 05

#### ACROSS THE STATES



#### **Sudarshan Chakra Corps** celebrates 77th Army Day

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



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

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

#### VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025

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

### SAYS NDA GOVT WORKING SELFLESSLY FOR PEOPLE

PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

piece of land surrounded by geographical boundaries. It is a living land, living culture. Knowledge is spirituality and if we want to understand India, we have to imbibe spiritu-

understand India, we have to imbibe spiritu-ality," he underlined in his speech. He said followers of ISKCON, a global bhakti movement founded on the Bhagavad Gita teachings, across the world are connect-ed to each other by their devotion to Lord Krishna. Modi said the spirit of service prop-agated by the ISKCON movement inspires the youth and helps them create a sensitive society which promotes human values. "It society which promotes human values. "It inspires people to heal in India and look after their well-being," the PM maintained. Modi said true service is symbolized by self-less human endeavour where there is no other interest and described India as an "extraordinary, wonderous land".





### Situation in Kashmir improved after Article 370 abrogation:Shah

#### PNS AHMEDABAD

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

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

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

"By abrogating Article 370 in 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a clear message to the world that for Indians, there is nothing bigger than the selfrespect of India and its honour," said Shah, on a three-day Gujarat

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

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

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

"There was a time during the Congress rule when village hs had to struggle small grant of Rs 5,000 from the government. Today, under the BJP rule, works worth crores of rupees are carried out without causing any hardship to sarpanchs," he added. He thanked the people of the region for making the BJP victorious in all seven assembly segments, including Sanand and Kalol, which are part of the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency

#### **ELECTION RULES ROW** SC seeks Centre, poll panel reply on Jairam Ramesh's plea PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and the poll panel on Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh's plea against the recent amend-

ments, including no public access to CCTV, to the 1961 election rules. A bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar took note of the submissions of senior advocates Kapil Sibal and Abhishek Manu Singhvi, appearing for Ramesh, and

issued notices on the plea. The bench said it would hear the plea in the week commencing March 17. Singhvi said amendments to the 1961 Conduct of Election Rules were made "very cleverly" and barred any access to CCTV footage claiming it would reveal the identity of the voter

He said voting choices were never revealed and the CCTV footage couldn't reveal votes.

The senior lawyer urged the bench to ask the Election Commission of India (ECI) and the Centre to file their responses before the next date of hearing else they would come and say "reply is needed to be filed" on that day.

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

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

### 'Advanced light helicopter will remain our workhorse'

said.

Army Chief Gen Upendra also meet with such acci-Dwivedi Wednesday sought to allay apprehensions over the safety of advanced light helicopter Indian Army has flown ALH for 40,000 hours. (ALH) and said the homegrown chopper has not hit a "rough patch" and it will remain a "workhorse" for "And, we are flying at altitudes of more than 15,000 ft...So, ALH is a the force. His comments during a press interaction held here after the 77th Army Day Parade come amid reports suggesting there could be safety concerns with this platform, especially after a crash incident in Gujarat's Porbandar early this

month. Gen Dwivedi was asked if the ALH has hit a "rough patch" after the incident. "Let me assure the

countrymen and my Indian Army that ALH has not hit a rough patch. This kind of a small accident keeps taking place, all over the world. Even the



PNS PUNE

remain a workhorse and we have 100 per cent confidence in this (platform)," the Army chief added. ALH Dhruv is an indigenously developed

platform made by Bengaluru - based Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Its armed version is ALH Rudra.

Three crew members were killed after an ALH of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) had crashed during landing at Porbandar airport in Gujarat on January 5

best helicopters which are

there in the world, they

dents," the Army chief

And, in those 40,000 hours

there's only one glitch that took place, he said.

workhorse and it will

In 2023 and 2024, the



#### 'Will take up Bangla embankment issue with Centre'

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

visit from January 14. He was addressing a gathering in Kalol town after inaugurating and laying foundation stones of various projects worth Rs 194 crore.

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

ings of candidates to prevent their misuse. Ramesh had said, "The integrity of the electoral process is fast eroding. Hopefully the Supreme Court will help restore it." "A writ has just been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the recent amendments to the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961," he wrote on X earlier.

Ramesh said the ECI, a constitutional body charged with the conduct of free and fair elections, couldn't be allowed to unilaterally, and without public consultation, amend such a vital law in such a brazen manner

### Kejriwal losing polls, resorting to diversionary tactics: BJP

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia

safety officers in each sector regu-

larly monitoring hygiene and safe-

ty standards," the government said.

coordinated from the central office

located on Sankat Mochan Marg in

Sector 24. This office oversees

"All food safety operations are

cited "reliable sources" to claim tion", the BJP spokesperson said. that Kejriwal is considering Amanatullah Khan and Naresh Balyan for the Leader of Opposition as the BJP is set to get a majority in the Delhi assembly polls. Khan "hates" Hindus and "sup-

ports" Rohingyas, Bhatia alleged, claiming that this is why Kejriwal likes him.

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

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

is set to lose from the New Delhi constituency, Bhatia claimed.

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

Bhatia said. The former Delhi CM Atishi by calling her a "temporary CM".

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

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

The bench said it would consid-

er the compliance made by

Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Goa,

Gujarat and Jammu and Kashmir

on February 10. And if these

states wanted to file further affi-

davits reporting compliance, they

were free to do so by February 3,

made by each states."

#### **'FOOD SAFETY ON WHEELS**'

### Mobile labs to check food quality at Maha Kumbh

#### PNS MAHAKUMBH NAGAR

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

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

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



Singh added

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

the Maha Kumbh. "The fair is divided into five food monitoring efforts and supervises the deployment of teams zones and 25 sectors, with food across the fair," it added.

### SC warns states, UTs of contempt proceedings

**'INACTION ON MISLEADING ADS'** 

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

While Section 3 of the Act deals tioned why they hadn't acted on the with prohibition of advertisement basis of complaints received. of certain drugs for treatment of certain diseases and disorders, ficult to identify the violaters. Section 4 relates to prohibition of misleading advertisements of drugs. now," the bench said, "and we will The bench referred to affidavits threadbare examine the compliance



filed by some of the states and ques-

Some states, it noted, found it dif-

"We will take contempt action

The bench said compliance by states including Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya

it added.

Pradesh and Punjab would be considered on February 24. It said compliance regarding

other states and union territories would be considered on March 17. While hearing the matter in July

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

VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025

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

s 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 Angels 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.



# Wildfires: A call for action Women breaking the glass ceiling



pinion 06

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

wo 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 Brambilta'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 osition 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 oles, among other issuesimportant 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 the race on Sunday to return as 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 to her academic career pointing her supporters. Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland and Innovation Minister Francois-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 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 also 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 LIKE DEFENCE 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-

**BCCI** disallows spouse travel with team

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

#### AND FINANCE

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)

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

Te 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



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 respon-

sible 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 me when I showed my ignoadjoining table, who offered names in the private sector. rance of the matter. The

the best business schools or the best in the hospitality industry. One would expect them to my innocence.

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. Órders 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.

was perplexed. Another policeman sauntered over to ask me the reasons for my arguing with the other official. He rudely reprimanded

They recruit people with policeman had stopped me the best credentials from apparently for crossing the apparently for crossing the red signal. Fortunately for me, there were cameras at the crossing, which proved

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)

#### LETTERS

#### **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 war-torn situation. Indeed, it can be conregarding this matter. On October 7, 2023, Hamas launched a sudden attack Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai



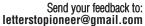
he step taken by the BCCI to improve the performance of the Indian cricket team is both positive and visionary. After facing consecutive defeats, the BCCI has decided to prohibit players from taking their families along on foreign tours to ensure discipline and main-

on Israel, killing nearly 1,200 Israeli citizens and taking around 254 individuals hostage. The unexpected scale of the attack and the killing of innocent civilians shocked Israel deeply. In retaliation, Israel launched counterattacks. More than a year has passed, yet the conflict continues. Hamas is set to release 34 hostages, which include women, children, the elderly, and some ailing soldiers.

Efforts for a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages have been underway for a long time. Recently, Hamas released a video of an Israeli female soldier who is among those held hostage. The soldier, Liri Albag, was one of the Israeli citizens captured by Hamas on October 7, 2023. In the video, Liri blamed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the delay in the release of hostages. Hamas's decision to release some of the Israeli citizens held hostage offers a glimmer of hope in this

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





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### **FIRSTCOLUMN THE POWER OF POSITIVE SELF-TALK**

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



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Il of us have a deep desire to be in a state of happiness forever. A But it's quite difficult to find someone who is a day see a start and a sec a star But it's quite difficult to find someone who is truly blessed, to remain 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



07

analysis

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



n 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 out-comes 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.

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

**INFLATE MINOR** While the demand for digestible content is understandable, it risks **ISSUES INTO** trivialising critical issues and fos-tering 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 dis-QUALITY OF seminated by platforms, news outlets, and governments. This

of communication technologies offers opportunities for better synergy and collaboration. Tools like multilingual AI models, realtime 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 com- resilience, while governments munication, blending tradition could invest in cultural diplomaits rich herwith innovation With itage of diverse narratives and its growing role as a voice for the Global South, India's communication outreach is uniquely posi-tioned 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 sys-tem—India leverages its communication landscape to promote solidarity and shared growth among developing nations. As a

Journalists, editors, and content there is hope. The rapid evolution 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 cv to foster mutual understand ing. 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)

CONTENT, AND would not only enhance account-ability but also restore faith in the **OVERIMAGINED** integrity of communication. The SOLUTIONS

CRISES,

RESOURCES

DILUTE THE

**OVERSTRETCHED** 

phenomenon of the "3Os"-overhyped, overstretched, and over-**PROMISE MORE** imagined—poses a significant threat to effective communication THAN THEY CAN

in 2025. DELIVER. Overhyped narratives inflate minor issues into crises, over-TOGETHER, stretched resources dilute the THESE quality of content, and overimag-

ined solutions promise more than TENDENCIES they can deliver. Together, these tendencies create a communica-CREATE A tion environment rife with mis-COMMUNICATION trust and misunderstanding. In geopolitics, this can have disas-**ENVIRONMENT** trous consequences. Overhyped tensions can escalate conflicts, **RIFE WITH** overstretched diplomacy can falter under scrutiny, and over-**MISTRUST AND** imagined strategies can fail to MISaddress the realities on the ground. To mitigate these risks, UNDERSTANDING communication must be ground-

ed in authenticity, clarity, and pur-pose.Despite these challenges,

### 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

Fighters in Los Angeles have been locked in a desperate battle against devas-tating 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.

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



SATENDRA

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 billion, making this one of the emissions from these fires will most economically destructive intensify global climate change, as highly, very highly, or robust governance, institu-

further exacerbating the enviextremely vulnerable to fires. ronmental crisis. This catastro-Regions such as the Northeast, phe serves as a stark warning Garhwal Himalayas, and for India. According to the Central India are particularly IPCC Sixth Assessment at risk. Alarmingly, over 90 per Report, climate change will cent of forest fires in the counlikely worsen drought conditry are attributed to human actions, ranging from negli-gence to deliberate acts. tions and elevate temperatures in forested areas of South Asia, including India, thereby California's wildfire crisis increasing the risk of wildfires. underscores the urgent need to To address these emerging rethink existing forest fire management strategies to challenges, India must overhaul its forest fire management address the evolving challenges posed by changing geostrategies, drawing on lessons from global experiences like climatic and socio-economic

California's recent tragedy. conditions. With its rich biodiversity and India's forest cover is already under significant pressure diverse forest ecosystems, India stands to gain valuable insights from human activities and changing climatic conditions. from such disasters. The Forest Survey of India Developing a comprehensive (FSI) reveals that 36 per cent strategy that prioritises effecof Indian forests are classified tive early warning systems,



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

risks. Understanding the dvnamics of disasters is essential to mitigating these risks. Conducting vulnerability assessments at both mesoand 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 equal-ly critical. Updated policy frameworks should integrate forest fire management into disaster management plans at both national and state levels. Operating Standard Procedures (SOPs) and field manuals must be revised and

ability to manage forest fire 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

tiatives, 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 solutionssuch 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)

to fires. Capacity-building ini-





# Money 08

1

it said that the two sides are cur-

rently in the process of finalis-

ing terms of references for the

### IN BRIEF



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

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



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

Cate-owned Bank of Maharashtra (BoM) on Wednesday posted a 36 per cent rise in net profit to ORs 1,406 crore in the third quarter ended December 2024 with rising interest income. The Pune-based lender had posted a net profit of Rs 1,036 crore in the October-December period a year ago.

Total income increased to Rs 7,112 crore during the quarter under review against Rs 5,851 crore in the same period previous year, BoM said in a regulatory filing. The bank earned an interest income of Rs 6,325 crore during the quarter compared to Rs 5,171 crore a year ago. The bank was able to reduce gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to 1.80 per cent of the gross loans by the end of December 2024 from 2.04 per cent in the year-ago period. Similarly, net NPAs or bad loans came down to 0.2 per cent from 0.22 per cent at the end of the third quarter of the previous fiscal

#### VIJAYAWADA | THURSDAY | JANUARY 16, 2025

### blending target in 2 months: Gadkari

ed petrol in 2023.

was covered

ments.

petrol).

its oil needs.

In the first phase, 15 cities

Use of ethanol, extracted

from sugarcane as well as bro-

ken rice and other agri pro-

duce, will help India -- the

world's third largest oil con-

sumer -- bring down its

reliance on overseas ship-

India is 85 per cent depen-

Use of E20 leads to an esti-

mated reduction of carbon

monoxide emissions by about

50 per cent in two-wheelers

and about 30 per cent in four-

wheelers compared to E0 (neat

average 10 per cent blending was achieved in June 2022,

much ahead of the target date

merce and finance ministries, to create a robust mechanism

for publishing consistent and

accurate data following errors

on a standard operating proce-

dure to ensure that there is bet-

The committee is working

in gold import figures.

of November 2022

The target of achieving

dent on imports for meeting

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

The practice of blending ethanol with petrol began in 2001 as a pilot project. "We will achieve this target

of 20 per cent ethanol blend-ing in the next two months. Use of E20 (petrol with 20 per cent ethanol) will help in reducing pollution," Gadkari said while speaking at an event.

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

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

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

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



#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

The talks for the proposed FTA began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. "Mutually convenient date is being explored for the next

round of negotiations for early February," the ministry informed on Wednesday. The bilateral trade between

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

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

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

gin, SPS (sanitary and phy-tosanitary), and technical barriers to trade.

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

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

Eurasian Economic Union

The two sides are negotiating a free trade agreement, an investment

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

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

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

There is progress in the nego-tiations, but there are some issues in goods.

Hero MotoCorp

looks to bolster

play in EV,

premium segments

Hero MotoCorp is aiming to

expand its play in the elec-

tric two-wheeler segment

while also strengthening

presence in the premium

segment as part of its over-

all growth strategy for the

mid-term, CEO Niranjan

Gupta said on Wednesday.

wheeler maker is also look-

global markets while

The country's largest two-

PNS NEW DELHI

### Govt to soon launch data analytics platform

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

ter coordination between the tency in our growth or not, DGCIS and the DG (Systems). whether resiliency has come in Due to the migration of our exports or not? So these data transmission mechanism nts are now com from SEZ (special economic ing. We are working in that direction. Soon you will find that. There will be a launch of platform which will give us better data analytics," he added. The double counting The ministry has already occurred because the system formed a committee, comwas calculating both imports into SEZ and subsequent clearprising officials from com-

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

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

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

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

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

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

"Accelerating grants and incentives, scaling up blended finance initiativ th multilaterals, policy support and flexibility to drive initiatives for carbon market development and industrial decarbonisation are imperatives in the road ahead," he added. Among India's key NDC commitments are a 45 per cent reduction in the carbon inten-



sity of its gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030 from 2005 levels, and an increase in the ing to bolster presence in the share of cumulative installed power capacity from non-fosenhancing digital and AI elements across its entire sil-fuel-based energy resources to 50 per cent.

operating ecosystem. The rating agency said of the Rs 31 lakh crore invest-The company, which currently sells electric products ments foreseen, Rs 19 lakh under Vida brand, is looking crore is seen going into renewto add electric models in the able energy and storage, Rs 4.1 first quarter of next fiscal lakh crore into transport and year to cater to the diverse automotive sectors, and Rs 3.3

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

ty, which is given 21 days to submit an ATR to the investor.

opt for a first-level review with-

in 15 days. During this period,

complaints remain on the pend-

ing list, even if an ATR has been

submitted. If the investor con-

tinues to be unsatisfied, they

can escalate the issue to a sec-

ond-level review by the regula-

tor, with the same timeline for

resolution applying, Sebi said.

If dissatisfied, investors can





#### Sistema.bio raises \$3.5 mn from Novastar Ventures

istema.bio, which specialises in biogas technology, on Wednesday said it has raised USD 3.5 million from ONovastar Ventures during an internal financing round of USD 7 75 million held recently Combined with Novastar's investment, Sistema bio has raised a total financing of USD 18.5 million in 2024, with a focus on regional geographic growth and adding new products. This will accelerate Sistema.bio's expansion into new African markets, new agricultural and energy products and its overall growth, the company said in a statement This funding will also help address the global demand for renewable energy, promote regenerative agricultural solutions, and support carbon emission reduction projects. The funding also sets the stage for Sistema.bio's anticipated Series C round.

zone) to ICEGATE (Indian Customs Electronic Gateway), figures of precious metals needed revision as double counting was noticed.

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

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

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

#### India's electronics exports hit 24-month high

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

### First e-commerce export hub may start operations in March

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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



departments of commerce and revenue, along with the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), are working on formulat-

procedure (SOP) to operationalise these hubs. "We expect the first e-commerce hub operational by March of this year," he told

reporters here.

The key features of these hubs would include self-sealing with no cus-toms/BCAS examination at gateway ports; easy reimport policy for returns; and onsite outposts for quality and cer-

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

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

### Sebi resolves over 5,600 plaints through SCORES platform

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

complaints pending as of November 30, 2024, stood at 5,826.

During December, the regulator received 5,193 fresh complaints, bringing

The markets watchdog also

highlighted that the average

resolution time taken by enti-

ties to submit Action Taken

Reports (ATRs) to investors in

December was eight days. For

complaints escalated to the

first-level review, the average

resolution time was five days,

showcasing the efficacy of the

Under the upgraded SCORES 2.0 framework, com-

plaints are automatically for-

warded to the concerned enti-

updated system.

Tuesday.



Complaints can also be disposed of if the investor opts for Online the D i s p u t e Resolution (ODR) mechanism, it added. In another public notice,

Sebi said six complaints were pending for

more than three months on SCORES as of December-end involving entities such as DFM Foods Ltd, Smartowner Services India Pvt Ltd and Nikhil Dayanand Baljekar.

SCORES was launched in June 2011. The platform was designed to help investors lodge their complaints online with Sebi, pertaining to the securities market, against companies, intermediaries and market infrastructure institutions.

### India needs to boost turmeric exports: Report

#### PNS NEW DELHI

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

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

unveiling the report on Wednesday.

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

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

"Subsidies should be linked



to help develop high-end subsidies for third-party cerproduct value chains," the tification, cultivation of high curcumin varieties, research For example, there can be and development (R&D) for

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

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

"By aligning production practices with international benchmarks and fostering a

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

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

tifying agencies.

ing a standard operating



# GANESH ACHARYA ANNOUNCES HIS NEXT FILM 'SIRF TUM'

Widhi Acharya's V2S Production is thrilled to announce the upcom-ing 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!



### 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, Diljit Dosanjh 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.





#### **DISHA PATANI'S HOLLYWOOD DEBUT** Behind the scenes with **'Fast and Furious' actor Tyrese Gibson and Harry Goodwins**

ans 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 'East and Furious' star Tyrese Gibson and actor 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 pic-ture 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 impres-sive career. The excitement doesn't stop there. Disha will also be seen is 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 consis-tently impressed us with her impeccable portravals 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 connect-ed for key scenes, she consciously avoided distractions, including her phone, to ensure she fully embodied the role of a soldier's wife, capturing the del-icate 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.

### 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 AAISHVARY THACKERAY IS,** BOLLYWOOD'S MOST PROMISING DEBUTANT OF 2025

A aishvary Thackeray, grandson of Shiv Sena founder Balasaheb Thackeray, is making waves in Bollywood even before his debut. While his family is rooted in politics, Aaishvary 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 Sanjav Leela

FUN

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, Aaishvary is known for his exceptional dance moves, which have already captured industry attention. Aaishvary is making headlines for his upcoming debut film, helmed by none other than Anurag Kashyap. Industry

ED BUMP

I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU

HAVE FRIENDS OVER IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO STAY INSIDE

AND PLAY VIDEO GAMES.

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, Aaishvary 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.

#### **ARCHIE**

### UGH! IF IT'S TUESDAY, IT MUST BE MS, BEAZLY'S REFRIED GOULASH I DON'T KNOW WHY SHE KEEPS MAKING THE STUFF! PY





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She's the

Prettiest I'm ever seen.

6

#### **CALVIN AND HOBBES**



#### GARFIELD





#### **GINGER MEGGS**

see in

Magazi



She might not be the kind of girl

that you'd



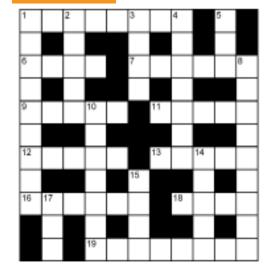


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#### **CROSSWORD**



#### ACROSS

- 1 Sick people in hospital 6 A feeling that makes 8 Smashed to pieces 10 This turns into a frog
- you scratch 7 Ran after trying to catch
- 9 One of your five senses
- 11 Pimples on the face
- 15 A biting insect 12 Requires 17 A popular pet
- 13 Opposite of winner 16 Attend classes here
- 18 Young child
- 19 Studied closely

#### DOWN

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



SOLUTION 793

4 Wash your hair with this

5 Frozen water

14 The country of the

Spanish



# Vijayawada

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> 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

n 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.

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

The kite festival season sees an uptick in AWCS 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 unwaAWCS 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.

#### sponsible kite flying

vering. By combining rescue operations with innovative community-based projects, the organ-

isation is making a lasting impact on both ani-

mal lives and the environment. "Our mission is

to create a society where animals are cared for,

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.

#### Ver-evolving world of dimension to his drumming, chalwhat further sets Rohith apart is has helped him push the boundaries Rohith is not ju

In the ever-evolving world of metal drumming, it takes a rare combination of technical provess 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

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

f dimension to his drumming, challenging the listener's perception while staying rooted in metal's core essence. One of the defining elements of

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.

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 parfermences are

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 with-in 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 drummer's 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 Retinabased 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.

### sports 11



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

#### PTI MELBOURNE

aomi Osaka's secondround match at the Australian Open could not possibly have started in a worse way. All of 21 minutes in, she sailed a forehand service return well long and, just like that, trailed 5-0.

Osaka strode to the sideline for the changeover, plopped herself down and draped a white towel over her head, blocking out all sights and leaving her with just her thoughts. She stayed like that throughout the break between games, even maneuvering a water bottle under that towel to take a drink.

This was not a match against unknown opponent, some someone Osaka knew for sure she could beat. It was against 20thseeded Karolina Muchova, the runner-up at the 2023 French Open and a three-time semifinalist at other majors, including at Melbourne Park in 2021. Muchova also had defeated Osaka in their two most recent matchups. None of that mattered on this afternoon, though: Osaka

forgot about that disappointing start and came all the way back to win 1-6, 6-1, 6-3 on Wednesday. What was her mindset? "Just be aware and try not to get so negative on yourself. I think, for me, the score in the first set was very dramatic, but there was key points that I could have maybe won a game here or there," Osaka explained afterward. "So I kept

trying to tell myself that." This was, in some ways, a significant moment for Osaka, who once reigned atop women's tennis, winning four Grand Slam titles — two at the Australian Open, two at the U.S. Open and ascending to No. 1 in the WTA rankings. The victory allowed her to reach the third round at a major tournament for the first time since the 2022

season. Getting to that stage was not considered a big deal at one point for her. But time off because of mental health breaks and then a pregnancy — Osaka's daughter, Shai, was born in July 2023 changed things.

Since returning to action a year ago, Osaka has shown signs of



getting her game back together, including a memorable and narrow loss to then-No. 1 Iga Swiatek at the French Open. This,

though, followed a win against 2022 U.S. Open semifinalist Caroline Garcia in Melbourne and meant the progress is real.

"It definitely was something that is a goal of mine, especially after last year; I wasn't able to beat a seed in a Grand Slam," Osaka

said. "I'm obviously very thankful reaching the net. that that happened so early this vear."

She also joked about gaining a measure of "revenge" by defeating Garcia — who eliminated Osaka in Melbourne a year ago - and Muchova in consecutive matches. Next for Osaka is a matchup against Tokyo Olympics gold medalist Belinda Bencic, who is also a mother; her daughter, Bella, was born last year. Both Osaka and Bencic are big hitters.

"It's going to be a fun match," Bencic said. Muchova wasn't the highest-seeded player to exit Wednesday. That was No. 5 Zheng Qinwen, the runner-up to Aryna Sabalenka at the 2024 Australian

Open and the gold medalist at the Paris Games last August. Zheng lost a bit of focus after being called for a time violation and never managed to counter 97th-ranked Laura Siegemund's strokes, bowing out 7-6 (3), 6-3 at John Cain Arena.

After the chair umpire cited her for taking too long to serve, Zheng hit her next offering so dismissing poorly it bounced way before 0, 6-1, 6-4.

"I knew," the 36-year-old

Siegemund said, "I just had to play more than my best tennis." The player who beat Zheng in the final 12 months ago, No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, stretched her Melbourne Park winning streak to 16 matches as she eyes a third consecutive title, beating No. 54 Jessica Bouzas Maneiro 6-3, 7-5 at Rod Laver Arena.

Other women's winners included No. 7 Jessica Pegula, No. 14 Mirra Andreeva and No. 30 Leylah Fernandez, with 2023 U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff in action during the night session.

Novak Djokovic added to his record collection by playing in his 430th career Grand Slam match - one more than Roger Federer

- and, though he dropped a set for the second outing in a row, moved into the third round with a 6-1, 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-2 win over Jaime Faria.

Other men who advanced included No. 3 Carlos Alcaraz, who joked that he is now a "serve bot" after hitting 14 aces while dismissing Yoshihito Nishioka 6-



### SA20: Joburg Super Kings, Pretoria Capitals register convincing wins

PTI 📕 DURBAN

Joburg Super Kings and Pretoria Capitals claimed crucial victories over Durban's Super Giants and Sunrisers Eastern Cape respectively in the Betway SA20.

The JSK spin trio of Tabraiz Shamsi, Donovan Ferreira and Imran Tahir combined in perfect tandem to propel the visitors to a 28-run victory at Kingsmead, while the Capitals seamers were influential in their six-wicket visitors to seize the bonus point win over the momentum. defendi ng champion

building up momentum by striking Matheesha Pathirana for a couple of boundaries and a six, but the Sri Lankan

exacted revenge by having him caught down the leg side with the final ball of the 12th over to set in the collapse. Earlier, the Super Kings

rallied to a competitive total through contributions from Leus du Plooy (38), Jonny Bairstow (26) and Ferreira (26) before Gerald Coetzee smashed the final two balls of

# First-Class cricket to play in PSL England batter James Vince Con Wednesday quit First-Class cricket to play for Karachi Kings in the upcoming Pakistan Super League, defying ECB's decision not to grant NOC's for its cricketers to appear in the T20 competition. The England board had The England board had decided in November, 2024, to refrain from issuing NOCs to all-format players to play in the PSL, scheduled for April-May this season, because the league clashes

utilitad

my club and home for 16 years, so I want to be able to maintain my best to keep delivering for Hampshire in T20 cricket, and hopefully even further our success in the competition [the Blast]," Vince said in a statement. "I also need to understand

"I love Hampshire. It's been what is best for my family,

and combine that with the stage of my career I am at," he added. The 33-year-old, who has been leading Hampshire since 2015, is currently playing for Gulf Giants in the ILT20 tournament in the UAE.

Giles White, Hampshire's director of cricket, said they

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

PTI LAHORE The opening ceremony of

with the early rounds of the

County Championship. Vince, who has played 13

Tests, was expected to lead Hampshire this season as

well, but he was retained by

the Kings ahead of the PSL

draft.



respected Vince's decision. "James has been at the heart of the club for the best part of 20 years, showing absolute commitment on and off the field as the team's leading batter and captain," said White.

"We recognise that this announcement will be tinged with disappointment for with disappointment for many fans but hope everyone will join us in celebrating what he has given to our club over many years." From 216 First-Class

matches, Vince has scored 13340 runs at an average of 40 with 30 hundreds.

The ESPNCricinfo has. meanwhile, reported that England batter Tom Kohler-Cadmore too quit County cricket to play in the PSL for Peshawar Zalmi, and he is in talks with Somerset in this regard

### Yashasvi Jaiswal joins Mumbai Ranji camp

#### PTI MUMBAI

India opener Yashasvi Jaiswal Ion 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 course of practice on the for a couple of practice on the

opening day of training. Rohit, who batted alongside Mumbai captain Ajinkya Rahane on Tuesday here at the Wankhede Stadium, is expected to resume training in a day or two.

However, it remains to be seen However, it remains to be seen if the incumbent Indian skipper would play in the domestic giant's next Ranji Trophy fixture. Rohit is yet to confirm his availability for the Elite Group A contest against Jammu and Kashmir starting on January 23 but so far, no formal discussions have been taken place.



"The selectors are expected to announce the squad on January 20, during which they will follow the due process of checking for the availability of every player. Rohit will also be approached around the time for selection," a Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA)

official told PTI. The 37-year-old is looking to put an end to his poor run with the bat after he managed a mere 31 runs in three Tests that he played against Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

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

#### PTI KOI KATA



fight the stigma and the tag of

Super Giants' middle-order batter Ouinton de Kock played a lone hand of 55 (45 balls, 5x4, 2x6) to keep his team afloat in pursuit of JSK's 169/4.

But Shamsi, Ferreira and Tahir snared five wickets between them to bowl out the Super Giants for 141. Tahir also produced a moment of brilliance in the field which proved to be hugely inspirational for the visitors. The 45-year-old displayed the athleticism of a teenager to snare a brilliant two-handed diving catch at point off a Wiaan Mulder reverse-sweep. JSK were certainly galvanised by the veteran to squeeze the Super Giants middle-order after the home team seemed well set at 99/4 with the dangerous pair of De Kock and Heinrich Klaasen at the crease.

Klaasen (29 of 17 balls) was

At Centurion benefited from winning the toss with captain Rilee Rossouw having no hesitation in electing to bowl. It immediately proved to be the correct decision on a surface

that had been under the covers for a lengthy period of time with the home team's fast bowlers gaining significant seam movement early on. Eathan Bosch (2/18) landed

the first blow when he removed opener Zak Crawley. Bosch was well supported by Darvn Dupavillion (3/32), who struck with successive deliveries to send both David Bedingham and Sunrisers captain Aiden Markram back to the pavilion to leave the defending champions in tatters at 3 for 4.

The visitors slipped deeper into trouble when Tom Abell and Tristan Stubbs also departed within two runs of each other.

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' photoshoot and the pre-event press conference.

The eight-team tournament will get underway on February 19 in Karachi. However, India will play all their matches in Dubai, starting with the clash against Bangladesh on February 20, after refusing to travel to Pakistan owing to

security concerns. The source said PCB has procured all relevant from clearances its government to promptly issue visas to all captains, players and team officials who will come here for pretournament events.

CHAMPIONS

PAKISTAN 2025

"This obviously includes Rohit or any other Indian team player or official or board official," he added. Another source confirmed to PTI that the PCB has made it clear to the ICC that the opening ceremony, featuring all teams and their captains, will take place in Pakistan. "This is in line with the usual

protocols and since the

opening match is on 19th the opening ceremony can be expected either on the 16th or 17th," the source added. He said the schedule of the opening ceremony would depend on the warm-up

matches list. The source said that recently three Indian nationals, who were a part of the ICC delegation which came to Pakistan, were promptly issued visas once the world body sent their names to the PCÉ

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" refereeing and tag, controversies have stalled

their progress in the top-tier football competition. The incident occurred during

the 'Kolkata Derby' in Guwahati on Saturday where East Bengal lost to arch-rivals Mohun Bagan by a solitary goal.

has been the perennial motto of East Bengal club for the last 150 years. This club and its supporters have endured The club claimed the match was marred by biased officiating, including the denial of a clear penalty and a the tumultuous period pre and post-partition only through its fighting spirit. "While the displaced people controversial yellow card issued to midfielder Souvik Chakrabarti, which led to his fought tooth and nail for their substance, the club had to red card and team being

a 'Refugees Club' to establish itself as the leading football club of the country," East Bengal general secretary Rupak Saha wrote in a

'We are surprised that even 75 years after independence, we are in a situation where East Bengal Club has been victimised in almost every match of the ISL.

We are forced to think why all this is happening to us is it because we are still considered the 'Refugees Club'. Throughout the last 10 -12 years, we had to bear the brunt of biased referring, be it in the I-League and more so in the ISL.

"During this period, we must have sent close to 50 complaint letters to all the concerned authorities but to no avail and the standard of referring has only gone from bad to worse to the worst.

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

#### PTI NEW DELHI

When Priyansh Arya hit six sixes in an over last year, he mainly targeted the straight boundary. But when he joins the Punjab Kings IPL camp, it's the pull shot that he wants to perfect with some help from head coach Ricky Ponting, who patented the stroke in his playing days.

Those half a dozen sixes off leftarm spinner Manan Bhardwai's one over in the inaugural Delhi Premier League put Arya under the spotlight and eventually led to the left-hander drawing a potentially life-changing Rs 3.8 crore winning bid from Punjab Kings, more than 12 times his base price of Rs 30 lakh.

It was as if the stars aligned for the 23-year-old at the mega auction as he made a belligerent hundred against UP in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy days before the highprofile event in Saudi Arabia. Having been part of Punjab Kings' first pre-season camp in Mumbai last week, Arya has already got the taste of the higher level and says player after his maiden season in the IPL, which begins on March 21

Has life changed for the Delhi lad since the auction day?

"Life has not changed much since the auction. Yes, there is more interest from people and my expectations from myself have increased. The pre-season camp gave me a fair idea where I need to be come the IPL as I got to do things I have never done in training before."

Arya got to chat with his IPL skipper Shreyas Iyer briefly during the Mumbai camp and apart from him, he is equally excited about spending time with Ponting.

"I have not had the chance to speak to Ricky sir. But when I get to meet him, the first thing I want to ask him is about the pull shot," he said referring to one of the best exponents of the pull shot.

"I am also really excited about spending time with Iyer. I love the attitude of Iver and Ricky sir, both on and off the field. I would also like to ask them about their he is bound to become a better mindset in highs and lows.



"Just by interacting with the best national capital you can learn a lot, I have already experienced it (in the camp)," said and if he does get to open Arya, whose parents teach in a alongside Prabhsimran Singh, government

The IPL is still some time away parents teach in a alongside Prabhsimran Singh, For me it is just about learning school in the there will be immense pressure from the best minds in the game."

and scrutiny. Will his price tag also play on his mind? "I am not thinking on those lines.

the monev?

reduced 10 players.

In an emotional plea to the

sports minister, Éast Bengal

highlighted how the "refugees

club" tag has led to their

ongoing marginalisation in Indian football.

"Fight, Fight and Fight -- this

"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 Gambhi as they both came to the same academy in Delhi.

Arya loves Gambhir's play against spin and he too has gone on to become a decent batter against the turning ball. No wonder those six sixes came off a spinner.

Besides Gambhir, Arya also draws inspiration from Sri Lankan great Kumar Sangakkara.

"Right from the beginning, I like to play down the ground. That is what I was thinking at that time (when he hit six sixes). I have followed Gautam bhaiya a lot. I loved how he used to play spin and that is what I tried to pick from him.

"Among overseas players, I like Kumar Sangakkara. I love his cover drive a lot though personally I like pull shot the most."

The moment when his name

And what does he plan to do with came under the hammer will remain fresh in Arya's memory forever.

"We were playing the domestic T20 (SMAT) and I was sitting in the hotel with my teammates. I could not express myself after Punjab made that winning bid.

"I did not know what do. My phone stopped working. I would have been happy at just being picked but to get this bid made me feel really good," Arya recollected. Arya made his T20 debut for Delhi in 2023 and List A in 2021, long before he achieved the memorable feat in the DPL last vear. The southpaw looked back at his journey thus far.

There were challenges. The year I made my debut I got to play only two games and was on the bench the rest of time. The year after I was dropped from the senior team. When I got the DPL stage, I told myself I have to be the best batter in the competition and that happened."

He is yet to play first-class cricket and that his next target. However, the ultimate aim is to play Test cricket





# tollywood **VENKATESH, ANIL RAVIPUDI COMBO ONCE AGAIN BACK WITH A BANG**

#### SURESH KAVIRAYANI sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

enkatesh Daggubati and Anil Ravipudi earlier delivered a super successful film 'F2' which was released at the Sankranthi time. Now, film titled 'Sankranthiki Vasthunnam', and released on the Sankranthi 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 Meenkshi 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 Neekavvaru', '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 Sankranthi 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. Äishwarya 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 Savi.

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 Sankranthi 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 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

ll 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 Sankranthi, 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'

irector Krish Jagrlamudi 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.





### **AKRISHNA TI** JR SHARWA

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. Abbaraju Ram of 'Samajavaragamana' fame is directing this film. On the occasion of Sankranthi 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 firstlook poster also shows the protagonist's amusing dilemma. Sharwa is seen caught in a chaot-ic 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 pro-duced by Ramabrahmam Sunkara, while Vishal Chandra Shekar is providing the music. The movie is currently in production, with the lead actors actively involved in the shoot.

### **Vishwak Sen turns** into female Laila

There are quite a few actors like Raiendra Prasad. VK Naresh, Kamal Haasan who were portraved in female getups 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.

