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'Be ready to tackle cyber warfare, climate change' 5

NO TALKS YET ON INVESTMENTS BY TESLA, STARLINK IN INDIA: GOYAL 8



Telugu girl Ananya Nagalla IS ON RISE P12



QUOTE OF THE DAY
the pioneer

If the BJP had refused to work with the Congress, today KTR would not have posted tweets like this but would have been eating food in Charlapalli Jail. The BRS would not have lost power if KTR knew politics and how to solve the public's problems. Your father has been confined to a farmhouse for entrusting party responsibilities by believing in you



- Raghunandan Rao BJP MP

P4

DON'T MISS...

25 KGs of cannabis seized, two held

The police seized 25 KGs of ganja and arrested two peddlers including a minor boy, at Donkarayi village in Chintur mandal on Thursday. Police said that on a tip off that ganja was being transported illegally, a police team conducted checking of vehicles. The police found 25 KGs of ganja being taken on two motorcycles illegally. The police held two peddlers and one of them was found to be a minor boy. The minor boy was sent to the juvenile home. The drug peddlers lifted the two motorcycles in Vijayawada to use them in the...

-PAGE: 4

Police hold flag march in Sambhal

Police held a flag march in areas near the Shahi Jama Masjid on Thursday, a day before Friday prayers, with top officials saying watertight security was put in place to prevent untoward incidents. The flag march was led by Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Srish Chandra. The police team marched through the busy markets that partially reopened on Thursday. Most of the shops opened for the first time on Thursday since the November 24 violence over a court-ordered survey of the...

-PAGE: 5

Probe ordered against Google, affiliates

Fair trade regulator CCI on Thursday ordered a probe against Google and its affiliates for alleged unfair business practices with respect to listing of real money gaming apps on Play Store. While passing the order, CCI said the "the Commission directs the Director General ('DG') to cause an investigation to be made into the matter under the provisions of Section 26(1) of the Act". The Commission also directed the DG to complete the investigation and submit a consolidated report within 60 days...

-PAGE: 8

India can reach top-50 of FIFA rankings

India can break into the top-50 in the FIFA rankings, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday, according to a release issued by All India Football Federation (AIFF). The top brass of the AIFF, including its president Kalyan Chaubey, met Mandaviya on Thursday to brief him on the existing AIFF-FIFA Academy in Odisha and the plan to build additional four such facilities in different zones. "An elaborate plan has to be chalked out and put in place for execution so that India can reach a FIFA ranking...

-SPORTS

Jagan rubbishes allegations over SECI-AP agreement

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

To sue vernacular media for damages to the tune of Rs 100 cr

- Giving details of the power sale agreement, Jagan said SECI has offered to supply 9,000 MW power to the State at Rs 2.49 per unit and waive inter-State transmission cost and 3,000 MW will be supplied in Sept 2024.
- By accepting the offer the State will be saving Rs 4,400 crore and in 25 years the savings will work out to nearly Rs 1 lakh crore by the waiver of interstate transmission cost.
- The TDP-friendly media has been talking about power being supplied at a cheaper rate in Gujarat, but the production cost is lower in that region and recently in Gujarat where the price quoted was Rs 2.62 and this is post-Covid rate.



Affirming that the power sale agreement between SECI and the State government was for the cheapest price of Rs 2.49 per unit, former Chief Minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy said that he would file a defamation case against the vernacular media that has been 'spinning false and baseless stories damaging his reputation'.

Speaking to media here on Thursday, he said while the agreement was between the Central government represented by SECI and the State government, the question of a third party does not arise and the allegation dragging his name into a controversy and making wild allegations of bribery has no coherence.

When asked about his meeting with Gautam Adani, he said an industrialist meeting a chief minister is nothing unusual and that the Adani Group has various interests in the State. He rubbished the reports of his name being in a report.

"The two vernacular newspapers have been twisting the stories and publishing distorted versions and I will take legal recourse and file for damages to the tune of Rs 100 crore if they do not publish an open apology within 48 hours," he warned.

Giving details of the power sale agreement, Jagan said SECI has offered to supply 9,000 MW power to the State at Rs 2.49 per unit and waive inter-State transmission cost and 3,000 MW will be supplied in September 2024. "This is a bumper offer as it is the cheapest price the State has ever had and we accepted it after following the due procedures.

"We received the letter from SECI on September 15, 2021. It was discussed in the Cabinet and sent to an expert committee, which gave its suggestions after 40 days of study and then the matter was finalised in the scheduled Cabinet meeting in December.

The same SECI has offered power to other States like Chhattisgarh, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu but was higher than Rs 2.49 which was offered to us.

"By accepting the offer the State will be saving Rs 4,400 crore and in 25 years the savings will work out to nearly Rs 1 lakh crore by the waiver of interstate transmission cost," he said.

"Chandrababu, who speaks of wealth creation, had agreed to buy power at an average price of Rs 5.90 per unit, while we agreed to buy it for Rs 2.49 which will help the farmers in getting free power for nine hours and increase their standard of living.

"The TDP-friendly media has been talking about power being supplied at a cheaper rate in Gujarat, but the production cost is lower in that region and recently in Gujarat where the price quoted was Rs 2.62 and this is post-Covid rate," he said.

"Besides buying power at the cheapest rate, wealth creation has been done by developing thee ports and 17 medical colleges," he said.

"We have redefined welfare by erasing the middlemen system and crediting the amount to the beneficiaries' bank accounts through DBT, setting up RBKs to look after farmer welfare and brought in revolutionary changes in education system while Chandrababu Naidu's policies are regressive and badly affecting all sections of people," he added.

ACID LEAK MISHAP: One more worker dies, ex gratia announced

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

One more worker, Veera Sekhar, passed away on Thursday due to the aftereffects of a leakage of 400 litres of hydrochloric acid leak from the reactor-cum-receiver tank (GLR-325) on Tuesday night at Tagore Laboratories Pvt. Ltd, in the Jawaharlal Nehru Pharma City (JNPC) of Parawada mandal, affecting nine workers. Another worker, Amit Bagh, succumbed to the injuries on Wednesday.

Andhra Pradesh Labour and Factories Minister Vasansetty Subhash expressed his deepest condolences to the families of the deceased workers. "This is a heart-wrenching tragedy. I extend my deepest sympathies to the families who have lost their loved ones," he said in a statement.

The Minister announced that the families of Veera Sekhar and Amit Bagh would receive an ex-gratia payment of Rs. 40 lakh each, which will be covered by the factory management.

"The families of the deceased will receive financial assistance to help them cope with this difficult time," Subhash added.

The third injured worker, currently in critical condition in the ICU, remains in a precarious state. However, there are hopes for his recovery. "We are closely monitoring the condition of the third worker, and while his situation is concerning, we are hopeful that he will show signs of improvement soon," Minister Subhash remarked.

Meanwhile, two of the other injured workers are reportedly recovering. In response to the tragedy, the Labour Minister emphasised the need for a thorough investigation into the incident.

"We will conduct a detailed investigation into the company's role in this incident and ensure that appropriate action is taken to prevent such tragedies in the future," Subhash assured.

Minister Subhash also held urgent discussions with the District Collector and factory management, urging them to take swift action to address the safety concerns and prevent future accidents. "Strict safety measures must be implemented to ensure that such incidents do not happen again," he stressed.

Minister urges farmers to sell paddy at procurement centres



Cautions against selling paddy to middlemen and private traders

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister for Public Distribution System, Civil Supplies, and Consumer Affairs, Nadendla Manohar, has urged farmers to sell their paddy at the Paddy Procurement Centres (PPC) established at Rythu Seva Kendras (RSK) across the State to ensure that they receive the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their produce. He cautioned against selling paddy to middlemen and private traders, who often do not offer the MSP set by the Union Government.

Minister Manohar along with Pamarru MLA Varla Kumara Raja visited Kanumuru, Kondayapalem, and Addada villages of Pamarru mandal in the Krishna district. He inspected paddy procurement centres and interacted with the farmers. He enquired about the farmers regarding issues faced during the paddy selling. Some of the farmers complained that millers are not accepting MTU 1262 paddy.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister assured them that the State government will procure the MTU1262 paddy variety produce. Farmers need not worry about this. If there are any issues with the millers, the farmers can contact him over phone. Then, he will speak to the officials concerned and resolve the issues, he assured.

The Minister emphasised that the Paddy Procurement Centres are designed to protect farmers from exploitation, providing them with fair compensation for their efforts and securing their livelihoods.

Continued on Page 2



Dwaraka Tirumala Rao to retire from service in January

State govt wants to retain him as DGP beyond retirement date, plans to seek Centre's approval

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Director General of Police (DGP) Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, a 1989 batch IPS officer, who is also serving as the Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC),.will retire on January 31 next year, as per a Government Orders (G.O.) issued by Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad. Another senior IPS officer, Harish Kumar Gupta, will retire later on August 31.

Dwaraka Tirumala Rao assumed the position of DGP on June 21 this year under the current TDP-led NDA government, succeeding KV Rajendranath Reddy, who was replaced during the general elections by the Election Commission of India with Harish Kumar Gupta, a 1992 batch IPS officer.

Continued on Page 2

HC Bench in Kurnool in six months: Bharat

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA



Bharat stressed that the YSRCP government had misled the public by claiming to set up a judicial capital in Kurnool. "The YSRCP government deceived the people in the name of the judicial capital.

Industries Minister TG Bharat has confirmed that the process of establishing a High Court Bench in Kurnool is underway. The Minister assured that the process will be completed as quickly as possible, with a goal of finishing it within the next six months.

Speaking to the media, Bharat stressed that the YSRCP government had misled the public by claiming to set up a judicial capital in Kurnool. "The YSRCP government deceived the people in the name of the judicial capital. We only promised to establish a High Court Bench in Kurnool during the elections, and we have already initiated the process of setting up the Bench even before making any official announcement in the Assembly," said the Minister.

He explained that while the construction of a permanent building for the High Court Bench could take around a year and a half, the establishment of the Bench itself is expected to be completed within six months.

Besides, the Minister clarified that Kurnool will also host offices of the Lokayukta and the Human Rights Commission (HRC). "The transfer of these offices from Kurnool is merely a part of the false propaganda spread by the YSRCP," Bharat added.

"The establishment of the High Court Bench in Kurnool is part of the government's commitment to ensuring that the region receives the necessary judicial infrastructure and services," the Minister said.

Will fight for the country: Priyanka



TAKES OATH AS LS MP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Holding up a copy of the Constitution, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Thursday took oath as a Lok Sabha MP to begin her journey as an elected representative of the people five years after she joined active politics.

The debutant MP, whose entry into Parliament has long been a subject of speculation, said her priority would be to raise important issues concerning the nation and fight for the country and her party.

The 52-year-old, who joins her mother Sonia and brother Rahul as an MP in what is a rare instance of three members of a family together in Parliament, took affirmation in Hindi.

Continued on Page 2



Rs 50K fine slapped on Vijayababu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP High Court has expressed its anger at Pola Vijayababu, former president of the Official Languages Commission, who filed a petition questioning the police's registering of cases against persons over social media posts.

The court accused Vijaybabu of filing the petition with political motives and imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on him. The High Court directed that the fine be paid to the Legal Services Authority within 30 days.

Vijaybabu, a known supporter of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP), has frequently participated in TV debates in support of the party. During the hearing, the High Court made key observations, questioning the actions of social media users who were posting abusive and inappropriate content, targeting around 2,000 people.

Continued on Page 2

GO issued for setting up EAGLE taskforce

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh State government has issued orders to establish the Elite Anti-Narcotics Group for Law Enforcement (EAGLE) to control the distribution and trafficking of cannabis and other drugs. The headquarters of EAGLE will be located in Amaravati, with unit offices in various districts. In this regard, GO Ms 145 was issued by Home Department Principal Secretary Kumar Vishwajit on Thursday.

The initiative includes setting up a dedicated narcotics police station in Amaravati and district narcotics cells in all 26 districts. The EAGLE task force will focus on controlling the supply and transportation of drugs, investigating crimes, and conducting inquiries related to narcotics.

The government plans to recruit personnel for EAGLE on deputation, offering a 30 per cent special allowance to uniformed service officers who join the force.

Additionally, the State has proposed establishing five fast-track courts in Visakhapatnam, Rajamahendravaram, Vijayawada, Guntur, and Tirupati to handle narcotics-related cases.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court has been informed of this decision. An initial budget of ?8.59 crore has been allocated for the EAGLE force, according to directives issued by the Home Department.

POWER-SHARING PACT

Mahayuti leaders in huddle with Amit Shah

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra's outgoing Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, his deputies Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar met Union Home Minister Amit Shah here on Thursday night to thrash out a power-sharing pact in the state where the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance romped home to a landslide victory in the assembly elections.

Fadnavis, a former chief minister under whose leadership the BJP crossed the 100-seat mark for the third consecutive time in the 288-member state assembly, is considered the frontrunner for the top executive post in Maharashtra.

NCP chief and Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said a decision on ministerial berths for the alliance partners -- BJP, Shiv Sena and NCP -- will be decided at the meeting with Shah on Thursday night.

Leaders of the alliance said a new government could be in place in Maharashtra latest by December 2.

Shinde reached the national capital along with senior party leaders Uday Samant and Shambhuraj Desai. Earlier, Fadnavis held a meeting with Ajit Pawar at the residence of NCP leader Sunil Tatkare.

Outgoing Chief Minister Shinde met Shah in Delhi separately ahead of the meeting of the Mahayuti coalition.

The Shiv Sena leader, who arrived from Mumbai, drove straight to Shah's Krishna Menon Marg residence, where BJP president J P Nadda was already present.

Shinde told reporters here that he would not be an obstacle in the government formation in the state and abide by the decision taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah. This cleared the decks for the BJP to have its nominee as the next chief minister in Maharashtra.



Continued on Page 2

Bleak prospects for the INDIA bloc!

Will it be a one-man show or a one-coalition rule for India? Indicative of it, the political scenario is unfolding, and there are no upcoming elections or by-elections any time soon. The ruling and opposition parties have realized what is in store for them. The outcomes of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections have confirmed the relative strengths of various political parties.

The present political realities make it clear who is getting weaker with each passing election and who is gaining ground massively. In politics, sustenance matters and patience fetches. Grabbing the chance is one thing and rising to the occasion is another. While the former shows haphazardness, the latter mirrors foresightedness.

The Congress party has been facing a crisis-like situation ever since Narendra Modi's era in Indian politics made a mark for itself. For the Bharatiya Janata Party this has not been the case. It assembled the National Democratic Alliance and continued with it for decades despite many ups and downs. It never changed the name of the NDA and continued to boost it with pragmatic assessment and making it ever ready to face any kind of political debacles and onslaughts. This kind of sustenance is very much required in politics, particularly in the Indian context. This explains the BJP-led NDA's success and the Congress-led INDI bloc's failure.

In politics, sustenance matters and patience fetches. Grabbing the chance is one thing and rising to the occasion is another. While the former shows haphazardness, the latter mirrors foresightedness.

Change is permanent in politics any leader or, for that matter, any party has to adapt to the changing situations by accommodating new ideas and required policy changes. Any party or any coalition bloc needs to be practical enough to adapt to the mood of the people and fulfill their aspirations. This is where success and sustenance lie; otherwise, it will be an invitation to doom and loss of political ground and base as well. The Congress, the grand old Indian political party as it is being called, ruled the nation for decades together without any iota of opposition. But with the advent of regional



BUDDHAVARAPU RAJESWARA PRASAD
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parties, the reality changed and the dominance of the Congress, hitherto taken for granted, hit a political roadblock. Realising the changing ground realities, it formed the United Progressive Alliance by inviting parties that subscribed to its ideology. The UPA episode did not last long and the Congress had to look for another stronger political bloc. And hence, the INDIA bloc emerged. As the regional parties' domination persisted, the party that once dominated coalition politics had to become part of it rather than leading it. The Congress faced the same during the UPA regime also wherein its partners dominated the formation of the government by demanding important ministries and the Congress had to accept their demands for the survival of the coalition government.

The scene upended for the party after Modi started dominating the national political arena. The Congress successively lost election after election till the Telangana and Karnataka Assembly elections gave it a big boost. However, the Lok Sabha elections did not give it a big solace even after forming INDIA bloc with like-minded parties. The recent Assembly election results also did not give the Opposition bloc the much-needed morale boost. Though the INDIA bloc won the Jharkhand Assembly election, the Congress is a minor partner. The Congress cannot claim full credit for the victory. The victory of the BJP-led NDA alliance in the Maharashtra Assembly and the complete rout of the INDIA bloc is an indication of the emerging political realities.

A constructive assessment of the overall political situation and the ground realities speak a lot about the pathetic state of the INDIA bloc. It needs urgent remedial measures to make it a viable alternative to the surging NDA. Just changing the name of the bloc does not give it any credence. It is credible leadership that matters a lot, which is what the bloc is lacking. Until and unless the leadership recognizes the realities, we cannot expect the Opposition alliance to stand as a solid and viable political force to face the NDA.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

RTC VC&MD visits Zonal workshop in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, Vice Chairman and Managing Director and State DGP visited the RTC Zonal Workshop in Vijayawada on Thursday. In a first in RTC's history, he initiated the construction of a new bus coach on a serviceable chassis. During his visit, he reviewed the advanced operations being carried out in each section of the workshop and assessed the post-flood restoration of all machinery to operational status.



He observed various key processes such as engine replacement, fitness testing, and the replacement of major components like front axles, gearboxes, and drive heads. He commended the efficiency and outcomes of these activities.

While addressing the employees, Tirumala Rao stressed the need for collective efforts to enhance the RTC growth and deliver improved services to passengers. He outlined the steps being taken for the welfare and development of employees, including the phased release of pending dues. He encouraged workshop staff to strive for excellence, ensuring that the Vijayawada workshop serves as a model for others across the state.

Vijayawada Zone EDs Gopinath Reddy, Ravi Varma, Appalaraju, Chengal Reddy, and Sudhakar (FA & CAO), along with Head Office CME Vijaya Ratnam, Deputy CMEs Vimala and Neelima, Vigilance AD Shobha Manjari, Senior Law Officer Padmaja Vani, Executive Engineer Rajasekhar, Works Manager Satyanarayana, and COS Usharani, other officers, employees, supervisors, and security personnel were present.

CM, Lokesh, family members pay homage to Rammurthy Naidu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, along with his wife Bhuvaneswari, Minister Lokesh and other family members, attended the rituals (Pedda Karma) of former MLA and late Nara Rammurthy Naidu at Naravari Palli of Chandragiri mandal, Tirupati district, on Thursday.



The ceremony was attended by several other prominent leaders, including ministers, MLAs, and MPs, who paid floral tributes to the portrait of Nara Rammurthy Naidu.

The traditional Pedda Karma ceremony was conducted by the Nara family in the presence of local villagers. Chandrababu Naidu, along with other leaders, participated in the rituals following the customs.

Deputy Speaker Raghu Ramakrishna Raju, BJP State president and MP Purandeswari, Home Minister Vengalapudi Anitha, Ministers Kollu Ravindra, S Savitha, Ramprasad Reddy, Atchannaidu, BC Janardhan Reddy, Anagani Sathya Prasad, MLAs Pulivarthi Nani, Adimulam, Kishore Kumar Reddy, Amarnath Reddy, Dr Muralimohan, Dhoolipala Narendra, MLC G Dorababu, SAAP Chairman Ravi Naidu, former MLA Mohan, TDP State president Palla Srinivas Rao, former minister Devineni Uma, Chittoor MLA Gurajala Jaganmohan, Kalahasti MLA Bojjala Sudheer Reddy, Gudur MLA VM Thomas, Nagari MLA Gali Bhanu Prakash, former MLA Buddha Venkanna, and several party leaders and workers were present on the occasion.

After the ceremony, Chandrababu visited the dining area where he engaged in conversation with the leaders and party leaders who were having lunch. He spent some time interacting with many TDP leaders and workers before joining local leaders in his home. The ceremony was attended by a large number of TDP leaders, family members, and supporters who paid their respects to Nara Rammurthy Naidu.

Jagan pays tributes to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSR Congress Party president and former Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy paid floral tributes to the portrait of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule on his death anniversary at his residence. He praised the contributions of the great social reformer, who championed social justice and women's education, leaving a lasting legacy of equality and empowerment.

Taking to X, he wrote, "At a time when people questioned, 'Why should women be educated?' the great social reformer Jyotirao Phule established schools for women and imparted education to them. On the occasion of the death anniversary of this visionary who initiated reforms in education, we pay our heartfelt tributes."

YSRCP central office In-charge and MLC Lella Appireddy, MLC R. Ramesh Yadav, former ministers Jogi Ramesh and Vidadala Rajini, former MLA Chevireddy Bhaskar Reddy, and State secretary Ankamreddy Narayanamurthy were present during the event.

Jyoti Ba Phule's contributions invaluable: Neerabh Kumar Prasad

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Secretary Neerabh Kumar Prasad has praised the immeasurable contributions of Mahatma Jyoti Ba Phule to society, particularly in the areas of caste abolition and the promotion of women's education. Speaking at a programme held at the State Secretariat on Thursday to commemorate the death anniversary of Jyoti Ba Phule, he paid tributes to the portrait of Phule.



He highlighted the significant efforts made by Phule in eradicating untouchability and the caste system, as well as in advocating for the education of women and marginalized communities. He noted that Phule was against child marriages and supported the right of widows to remarry, aiming for social equality and uniting the lower classes to dismantle the socio-economic barriers created by the caste system.

Recalling Phule's founding of the 'Satyashodhak Samaj' (Truth Seekers Society) in 1873, the Chief Secretary stressed Phule's role in challenging societal inequalities and striving for social reforms.

He also praised Phule's literary contributions, including plays like Trithiyaratna and the book Gulamgiri, which highlighted the exploitation faced by lower classes due to religious hatred and caste discrimination.

The CS acknowledged Phule's humanitarian work, noting that he established shelters for widows, orphaned women, and children, providing them with support and protection.

CM Principal Secretary M Ravichandra, CMO Secretaries AV Rajamouli and Pradyumna, GAD (Political) Secretary S Suresh Kumar, and Services Secretary P Bhaskar and others were present.

Stage II online application: Deadline extended again

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State Level Police Recruitment Board (SLPRB) of Andhra Pradesh has once again extended the deadline for submission of Stage II online application forms by one week, till December 6.

On Thursday, the SLPRB announced the extension of the deadline for submission of Stage II online applications for the recruitment of SCT Police Constables (Civil) and SCT Police Constables (AIISP).

In a press release, the SLPRB stated that the deadline, previously extended to November 28, has now been further extended to 5 PM on December 6. Candidates seeking assistance with their applications can reach out to the helpline numbers 91141450639 and 9100203323, during office hours. For further details and updates, applicants may visit the SLPRB official website.

Set up 10-bed maternal and child care units in PHCs: MP

Seeks allocation of funds under National Health Mission

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

MP Kesineni Sivanath (Chinni) has stressed the need to establish additional 10-bed maternal and child care units in rural Primary Health Centers (PHCs) within the Vijayawada parliamentary constituency. Raising the matter under Rule 377 in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, he requested the allocation of funds for this purpose through the National Health Mission (NHM).

The MP highlighted the necessity of improving healthcare services for pregnant women and infants by increasing medical staff and enhancing infrastructure in six PHCs in the constituency. He called for immediate approval of funds for this.

Kesineni Sivanath referred to observations made during a review meeting with the Health and Medical Department in NTR district on November 5. According to him, the six PHCs cater to a total population of 11,35,129 including 17,624 pregnant women and 15,247 registered infants. He stressed the importance of ensuring safe and efficient institutional deliveries in these hospitals to improve healthcare outcomes.

The MP appealed to Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda to expedite the approval of these proposals to provide 100 per cent improved healthcare services to the people of the Vijayawada constituency.

Will fight for...

Continued from Page 1

The MP from Wayanad in Kerala held up a red and black copy of the Constitution, which Rahul Gandhi has been displaying at his public meetings, as she took her oath.

Dressed in a cream Kasavu saree from Kerala, Priyanka Gandhi rose to take oath amid cheers of 'Jodo Jodo, Bharat Jodo' from the Congress benches. She took the oath with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, her mother and Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) chief Sonia Gandhi, husband Robert Vadra, son Raihan and daughter Miraya watching from the galleries.

Congress MPs earlier met at the CPP office in the Parliament premises where Priyanka Gandhi was greeted and congratulated by leaders.

After taking oath, Priyanka Gandhi completed the formalities and then shared a warm hug with her brother and Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Trayodashi:	Nov 28 06:24 AM to Nov 29 08:40 AM
Chaturdashi:	Nov 29 08:40 AM to Nov 30 10:30 AM
Nakshatram:	
Swati:	Nov 28 07:36 AM to Nov 29 10:18 AM
Vishaka:	Nov 29 10:18 AM to Nov 30 12:34 PM
Rahukalam:	10:41 AM to 12:04 PM
Yamagandam:	2:50 PM to 4:13 PM
Varjyam:	04:25 PM to 06:11 PM
Gulika:	7:55 AM to 9:18 AM
Amritakalam:	02:56 AM to 04:41 AM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:42 AM to 12:26 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy
Temp: 30°c
Humidity: 62%
Sunrise: 6:19 AM
Sunset: 5:33 PM

Updated: November 28, 2024 5:00 PM

Youth waylaid, stabbed to death in Bhupalapally district

PNS ■ BHUPALPALLY

On Wednesday evening, a 25-year-old man was fatally stabbed by unidentified assailants at Chandrupalli village under Mahadevapur mandal in the district Wednesday. The deceased has been identified as Mutyala Srikanth, hailing from Kommera village.

According to police, Srikanth had been operating a crushing machine in Chandrupalli village for the past three days. He used to arrive at his office in a car accompanied by his driver, Pradeep, and work until evening before returning to his village.

Minister urges farmers...

Continued from Page 1

Also, he encouraged farmers to fully utilise these facilities for better economic benefits and to support government efforts to streamline the procurement process.

Furthermore, the Minister stated that the State government had brought reforms in the paddy procurement process. Farmers can sell their produce as per their wish to any rice mills and there are no restrictions in this regard, he said. Also, he said as per the rules, the permitted moisture content is 17 per cent. However, exemption up to 24 per cent of moisture is allowed by decreasing five kg depreciation.

Manohar said that if GPS vehicles are not available, the paddy can be transported by tractors and even it would be permitted to other districts. As per the instructions from Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan, the paddy procurement is being expedited across the State. Also, the government disburses the bills within 24 hours after selling the paddy, he said. Meanwhile, the Minister warned of strict action against the millers if they do not pay MSP. Krishna District Agriculture Officer N Padmavathi, Vuyyuru RDO BS Hela Sharone, Civil Supplies Officer V Parvathi, District Manager Srijana and others were present.

Dwaraka Tirumala Rao to retire...

Continued from Page 1

At present, Gupta serves as the Principal Secretary of the Home Department. The State government has expressed its preference to retain Dwaraka Tirumala Rao as DGP beyond his retirement date and is planning to seek Union Government approval for this extension. Should the Union Government deny the State's representation, the government will need to appoint a new DGP.

In such a scenario, the State will submit a panel of three senior IPS officers' names to the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which will then recommend candidates. From this list, the State will appoint the next head of the police force.

Rs 50K fine slapped on...

Continued from Page 1

The court stressed that if such individuals were facing police action under the law, it was necessary to ensure accountability. The court criticised the petition, highlighting that numerous people were posting objectionable content with the same intent, and questioned why the government would not take action against them. The judges noted that the police were acting in a uniform manner, treating social media posts made with malicious intent as a threat to public order.

Mahayuti leaders...

Continued from Page 1

"This 'ladka bhau' (beloved brother) has arrived in Delhi and the 'ladka bhau' designation is higher than anything else for me," he said.

Political circles were abuzz about the central BJP leadership considering the social equations in Maharashtra before taking a decision on the chief minister's post. This throws open the chief ministerial race for leaders from the OBC and Maratha communities within the BJP. Shiv Sena leaders were pitching for the continuance of Shinde as the chief minister, citing the success of the Ladki Bahin initiative and his approach of taking governance to the doorstep of the citizens.

Caste dynamics have assumed a greater role in the chief minister choice as an overwhelming 288 MLAs from all parties are from the Maratha community.

Fadnavis, a Brahmin, first became Maharashtra chief minister in 2014 and again for a brief while in 2019. "If the writ of RSS prevails, the chances of Fadnavis becoming CM are bright," a source said.

A close aide of Shinde said that the caretaker chief minister is unlikely to accept the post of deputy CM in the new dispensation.

Sanjay Shirsat, an MLA and spokesperson of the Shiv Sena, however, said Shinde would be a part of the cabinet. "He is unlikely to be a deputy chief minister. It does not befit a person who has already served as chief minister," Shirsatsaid.

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Collector urges farmers to insure crops

SPECIAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGN PLANNED FOR FARMERS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha held the District-Level Monitoring Committee and Joint Committee meetings for the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) at the collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday. During the meeting, the Collector unveiled the poster for Crop Insurance for the Rabi season 2024-25. NTR District Agriculture Officer DMF Vijaya Kumari, Horticulture Officer P Balaji Kumar, and several farmers attended the meeting.


NTR District Collector Dr Lakshmisha releasing the poster for crop insurance at the Collectorate in Vijayawada on Thursday

Lakhsmisha said that the crop insurance would help the farmers if they lost their crops in natural calamities. The State and Central governments are implementing the PMFBY scheme to protect the farmers' income. The crop insurance is optional, he added. He urged the relevant officials to raise awareness among farmers about the benefits of the crop insurance scheme. Farmers need to understand the total sum insured, the premium, and how these amounts are calculated. To facilitate this, he instructed the agricultural and horticultural officials to conduct a special campaign throughout the district encouraging farmers to register for the crop insurance scheme.

Meanwhile, he informed that the Tata AIG General Insurance Company is the implementing agency in the NTR district. However, farmers have to pay Rs.126 premium for the sum assured amount of Rs.42,000 per acre to paddy and maize, he added.

Further, he said that all farmers should pay their premiums for the crop insurance scheme by December 15. On the other hand, farmers could pay their premium amounts through online, digital payments and the National Crop Insurance Portal website, he said. Later, Collector Lakshmisha and Joint Collector Dr Nidhi Meena released the poster for natural farming and booklets regarding pest management.

Chief Planning Officer Y Srilatha, KVK Scientist Siva Prasad, Irrigation Department DSE Krishna Prasad, Tata AIG General Insurance Company representative U Satish, progressive farmers S Sambasiva Rao and U Madhava Rao attended the meeting.

67 packets of Ganja seized near Aganampudi; two arrested

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major crackdown on drug trafficking, the Task Force Police, in coordination with Duvvada Police, seized 67 packets of ganja and 2 kg of cannabis oil near the Aganampudi Toll Gate on Thursday. Acting on prior intelligence, the police intercepted a vehicle, AP39UU4750, around 10 AM, travelling from Visakhapatnam to Anakapalli.

During questioning, the two suspects in the vehicle admitted to transporting ganja purchased from a supplier in Paderu. The contraband, valued at Rs 5 lakh, was concealed in the vehicle and was being transported to Chennai via Madugula, Chodavaram, Sabbavaram, and Pendurthi. The suspects disclosed that the ganja was intended for sale to a buyer in Chennai.

"This seizure is part of our ongoing efforts to eliminate the illegal drug trade in the region," said a senior Task Force officer. "We are committed to cracking down on the transportation and sale of ganja and other narcotics." Police have appealed to citizens to report individuals involved in drug trafficking or consumption. "We request public cooperation in identifying and stopping such activities," the officer added.

Special teams and checkpoints have been set up across key locations to intensify monitoring. "Strict action will be taken against those selling or consuming marijuana," a Duvvada Police official assured.

Floating Sea Bridge to make a comeback at Rushikonda

Rushikonda offers a more suitable location for the ambitious project

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM



The "Jewel of the East Coast" is set to shine brighter as the much-debated Floating Sea Bridge (FSB) project is making a comeback, this time at Rushikonda beach. After its earlier failure at RK Beach, stakeholders believe that the scenic Rushikonda offers a more suitable location for the ambitious project. The Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region Development Authority (VMRDA) is planning a trial run of the FSB during the ongoing tourist season, with a tentative operational period extending until Sankranti next year. A multidisciplinary team, including experts from VMRDA, the Tourism Department, and the National Institute of Oceanography (NIO), recently conducted a site visit to Rushikonda to finalise the base for the bridge and ensure adherence to technical guidelines. A senior VMRDA official confirmed the development. "We have explored various sites along the coast after the initial setback at RK Beach. Rushikonda emerged as the most promising option based on expert recommendations. A final decision will be made by higher authorities."

The initial FSB project, inaugurated on February 25, at RK Beach, faced significant criticism and was eventually dismantled due to safety concerns. The coalition government aims to re-launch the project with improved planning and execution, addressing the shortcomings of the previous attempt.

Sohan Hatangadi, vice-president of the Greater Visakha Citizens' Forum, expressed support for the move to explore the northern part of the city's coastline for such projects. He highlighted the overcrowding at RK Beach and the need to focus on developing underutilised areas like Rushikonda. The upcoming trial run at Rushikonda will serve as a crucial test for the FSB's feasibility and potential to attract tourists.

3-day Police Sports and Games Meet kicks off

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR District Police Commissionerate Annual Sports and Games Meet-2024 began at the City Armed Reserve Ground, located adjacent to Mahatma Gandhi Road in Vijayawada, on Thursday. A total of seven police teams, along with individual players, participated enthusiastically in the event. Police Commissioner SV Rajasekhar Babu officially inaugurated the sports and games meet, receiving a guard of honour from the police teams prior to the ceremony.

This three-day sports and games meet will conclude on November 30. To commemorate the event, international sports medalists, including V Srinivasa Rao, M Tualasi Chaitanya, D Naresh Babu, G Sambasiva Rao, Srinivas Naik, and K Lakhsmi Prasanna, participated in the torch rally.

In his address to the gathering, CP Rajasekhar Babu acknowledged that the police department faced significant stress in 2024. He highlighted the increasing expectations from the public and emphasised the importance of adaptability and evolution within the police force. He pointed out that many cases are resolved through the use of technology, which he described as a crucial resource for the police.



Police personnel in action during a kabaddi match at the Police Annual Sports & Games Meet-2024 in Vijayawada on Thursday (Photo: Ch.Vijaya Bhaskar)

Furthermore, he stressed the importance of physical fitness, urging everyone to engage in regular exercise to maintain enthusiasm. He noted that while the police's primary mission is to protect the public, their health is equally important. He commended the women police for their active roles in handling high-profile cases and mentioned that participating in sports and games would help officers stay active in their duties.

Deputy Commissioners of Police Tirumaleswara Reddy, Uma Maheswara Raju, ABTS Udaya Rani, Krishna Murthy, SVD Prasad, G Anand Babu, and others attended the event.

RTC VC&MD visits Zonal Workshop in Vijayawada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Ch Dwaraka Tirumala Rao, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of APRTC and State DGP, visited the RTC Zonal Workshop in Vijayawada on Thursday. In a first in RTC's history, he initiated the construction of a new bus coach on a serviceable chassis. During his visit, he reviewed the advanced operations being carried out in each section of the workshop and assessed the post-flood restoration of all machinery to operational status.

He observed various processes such as engine replacement, fitness testing, and the replacement of major components like front axles, gearboxes, and drive heads. He commended the efficiency and outcomes of these activities.

While addressing the employees, Tirumala Rao stressed the need for collective efforts to enhance the RTC growth and deliver improved services to passengers. He outlined the steps being taken for the welfare and development of employees, including the phased release of pending dues. He encouraged workshop staff to strive for excellence, ensuring that the Vijayawada workshop serves as a model for others across the State.

Vijayawada Zone EDs Gopinath Reddy, Ravi Varma, Appalaraju, Chengal Reddy, and Sudhakar (FA & CAO), along with Head Office CME Vijaya Ratnam, Deputy CMEs Vimala and Neelima, Vigilance AD Shobha Manjari, Senior Law Officer Padmaja Vani, Executive Engineer Rajasekhar, Works Manager Satyanarayana, and COS Usharani, other officers, employees, supervisors, and security personnel were present.



Strengthening public education collective goal: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Dr G Lakshmisha, the newly appointed Collector of NTR district, has emphasised the need for a collective goal of strengthening the public education system, which serves the underprivileged and marginalised sections of society. He made these remarks during a courtesy visit by representatives of the Democratic Progressive Recognised Teachers Union led by State president Dr D Srinu.

The teacher's union leaders met the Collector at his office on Thursday. During the meeting, Dr Srinu highlighted the various voluntary educational and social service activities undertaken by their Teachers Service Wing. These include flood relief camps, medical camps, COVID-19 service camps, blood donation drives, scholarships, free study material for underprivileged students, and awards. The organisation has also conducted environmental awareness campaigns, such as "No Plastic" initiative.

Dr Srinu also informed the Collector about the collaborative efforts in educational and social service activities conducted in the past along with previous district collectors. He extended an invitation to Dr Lakshmisha to participate as the chief guest in upcoming service initiatives organised by them. The Collector accepted the invitation.

Union general secretaries M Prabhakar and P Nagaraju, senior leaders D Srinivasa Rao, and others were present.

SERP signs MoUs with industry leaders

MoUs signed with Hambie Bee, Industree Foundation, Uday Aqua Connects

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant development to boost livelihoods and sustainable practices in Andhra Pradesh, the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with leading organisations. The MoU exchange ceremony was held here on Thursday in the presence of Kondapalli Srinivas, Minister for MSME, SERP, and NRI Empowerment and Relations. G Veerapandyan CEO of SERP represented the organisation, while senior representatives from various industry partners participated in the landmark event. The MoUs were signed with Hambie Bee, Industree Foundation and Uday Aqua Connects Pvt. Ltd.

The Hambie Bee focussed on transforming beekeeping into a sustainable livelihood for 5,000 households, empowering women, and supporting climate resilience and food security. The Industree Foundation aimed at the development of a bamboo value chain to support 1,00,000 households, fostering sustainable cultivation practices and creating industrial linkages. The MoU with Uday Aqua Connects Pvt. Ltd. focussed on promoting fisheries and integrated farming practices to enhance farmer incomes through innovative systems like aquaculture clusters and integrated ponds.

Minister Srinivas commended the efforts of SERP and its partners, emphasising the importance of collaboration to create scalable and impactful solutions.

Strict action against child trafficking, illegal adoptions: Minister

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Strict measures will be implemented against individuals involved in the sale or employment of children as labourers, declared State Minister for Women, Child Welfare, and Tribal Welfare, Gummadi Sandhyarani. "Children are not commodities to be bought or sold. Those who wish to adopt children must follow the legal process," she stated during a one-day awareness programme on foster adoption. The event, held at VUDA Children's Theater, was organised by the State Women, Child Welfare, and Tribal Welfare Department.

Highlighting the importance of the programme, the Minister said, "The primary goal is to educate people about preventing illegal adoptions and child trafficking while promoting legal adoption practices." She also pointed out the critical role of 27 orphanages established under the Women Development and Child Welfare Department. "These orphanages provide care and protection to children aged 0-6 who are orphaned, abandoned, or destitute," she added. According to the Minister, 108 children are currently housed in these orphanages. "So far, 473 children have been adopted domestically, and 114 have found families abroad. We will not tolerate any misuse of adoption procedures or exploitation of children overseas," she warned.

The Minister detailed various adoption policies, highlighting domestic and foreign adoption processes, adoption from relatives, and the provisions for foster care and foster adoption, emphasising their role in ensuring the welfare and legal protection of children. District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad underlined the necessity of preparing foster and adoptive parents to ensure the proper growth and well-being of children aged 6 to 18. "Parents must be educated about the responsibilities of adoption. Additionally, awareness campaigns are crucial, especially in rural areas, to guide people about adoption processes and whom to approach."



Visakhapatnam set to have world-class infrastructure: CREDAI

10th PROPERTY EXPO FROM NOVEMBER 29-DECEMBER 1

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Visakhapatnam is on the cusp of transformation into one of India's most happening cities, equipped with world-class infrastructure, according to KSRK Raju (Sai), Chairman of CREDAI Visakhapatnam Chapter. Speaking to the media on Thursday, Raju applauded the State government's proactive initiatives, particularly the introduction of a single-window system for building approvals.

"The government's decision to implement time-bound building approvals from December 31 is a commendable step that will significantly accelerate the pace of business in the real estate sector," he said. This, coupled with other policy reforms, is expected to attract substantial investments and fuel rapid urban development, solidifying Visakhapatnam's position as a leading city in infrastructure.

Besides, CREDAI Visakhapatnam is gearing up to host its 10th Property Expo, scheduled from November 29 to December 1. This annual event aims to provide a comprehensive platform for prospective homebuyers and real estate investors to explore a wide range of options.

E. Ashok Kumar, vice-president of CREDAI Visakhapatnam, emphasised the expo's role in empowering buyers to make informed decisions. "Our primary goal is to create a unified platform where homebuyers can explore a wide range of properties, including apartments, villas, and flats," he said.

Ashok Kumar also commended the government's development-oriented approach, particularly the focus on infrastructure development. "With robust infrastructure projects in the pipeline, including the upcoming Bhogapuram International Greenfield Airport, Visakhapatnam is poised to become a leading city in terms of connectivity," he added.

Ch. Govinda Raju, expo convener, revealed that all 71 stalls for the Property Expo have been fully booked, with participation from leading builders, developers, and interior design firms. Additionally, major banks will be present to offer on-site loan approvals, making homeownership more accessible.

VIGNAN UNIVERSITY

Convocation for Online, Open and Distance Education graduates

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vignan University will organise the second convocation ceremony to celebrate the achievements of students who have completed their MBA and MCA programmes through the university's Online Learning, Open, and Distance Education platforms, on December 7. Prof Srikrishna Deva Rao, Vice-Chancellor of NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, will be the chief guest.

The announcement was made by the university's Vice-Chancellor Col Prof P Nagabhushan during a special event held on the campus on Wednesday. In the presence of university officials, including Registrar Dr MS Raghunathan, deans, and department heads, the convocation invitation was unveiled.

Prof Nagabhushan shared that the convocation will honour 858 students, 668 from the MBA programme and 190 from the MCA programme who have successfully completed their degrees through Vignan's online education offerings.

Dr Lavu Rathaiah, Chairman and Chancellor of Vignan Educational Institutions, and Lavu Srikrishna Devarayalu, Vice-Chairman are expected to attend the event, along with Dr MS Raghunathan, Registrar, along with members of the Executive Council, Academic Council, faculty, students, and their families.

Road repairing works taken up with Rs 38 cr outlay in Kadapa district

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Minister for R&B BC Janardhan Reddy has reiterated that road repairing works have been taken up in the State at a cost of Rs 861 crore and road repairing works are being carried out in a big way in the district.

The Minister during his district visit, participated in the road repairing works at Mallakatipalle village in Vontimitta mandal on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister asserted that the government is committed to reconstruct and carry out needed repairs to highways and all roads connecting to the rural areas. He highlighted that the government had allocated Rs 861 crore for road repairing works in the State.

"As many as 269 road repairing workers have been taken up in Kadapa district at a cost of Rs 38.53 crore. The government is determined to complete the road repairing works by Sankranthi festival. The government has taken all steps to make the State a pothole-free Road State," he noted, adding that he is inspecting the road repairing works at the ground level at various places to expedite the process.

"The issue of upgrading 10,000 KMs of highways in the State as 'National Highways' and the issue has been brought to the notice of the Prime Minister. We anticipate that a positive decision will be taken by the Central government in this regard," the R&B Minister acknowledged. The Minister highlighted that Rs 75,000 crore worth highway works in the State would be completed by two or three years.

Taking a dig at the previous YSRCP regime, Minister Janardhan Reddy regretted that the erstwhile government had left all roads in the state in a pathetic condition. That is why, the Chandrababu Naidu headed government now is giving priority for the repairing and reconstructing of roads despite financial constraints, he observed.

The Minister stated that he reviews the road repairing works with the officials concerned every week and committed to complete the works by the prescribed time. The previous YSRCP regime crippled many lift irrigation schemes during their rule and the people of the State understood the misadministration and taught them a lesson in the last election, the Minister lashed out.

Minister, Collector pay tributes to Jyothi Ba Phule

PNS ■ ONGOLE



Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy and Collector Tameem Ansariya paid tributes to social reformer Jyothi Ba Phule on the occasion of his death anniversary here on Thursday.

The Minister, the Collector, AP Tourism Corporation chairman Nukasani Balaji and Mayor Gangada Sujaya garlanded the statue of Jyothi Ba Phule at vegetable market. Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Minster Bala Veeranjaneya Swamy recalled the efforts made by Jyothi Ba Phule to eradicate caste evil from the society and bring reforms in the society. His services to the society are invaluable, he stated.

Jyothi Ba Pule encouraged and promoted women education and had striven for their uplift. He exhorted people to draw inspiration from Jyothi Ba Phule and Dr. BR Ambedkar to remove social disparities. Collector Ahameem Ansariya recalled that Jyothi Ba Phule recognized the need for women's education and worked towards women's education by establishing schools specifically for women. Similarly, he fought against caste discrimination and superstitions prevalent in the society of that time. AP Tourism Development Corporation chairman Nukasani Balaji also spoke.

Officials told to complete construction of houses by Dec 10



PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam district Collector Thameem Ansariya directed the officials concerned to complete the construction of houses by December 10.

The Collector held a video conference with Mandal Special Officers, Municipal Commissioners, MPDOs, APDs and APOs on the progress of housing construction, survey related to MSME (establishment of micro, small and medium enterprises), and construction of individual toilets, inspection of school toilets and other issues.

Speaking on this occasion, the Collector directed the officials to work in coordination to achieve the targets and to expedite the construction of houses for poor families in the district. As the inauguration ceremonies of one lakh houses are being held across the State on December 12, the target of construction of 3,800 houses in the district and so far the construction of 1436 hours has been completed.

The Collector instructed the officials to take steps to complete the construction of the remaining houses by December 10 by setting daily targets. Collector Thameem Ansariya ordered the officials to conduct a survey related to MSME (establishment of micro, small and medium enterprises) in the district. The commercial, business, service sector institutions and manufacturers in the district should be fully aware of the MSME survey, she told them.

"As part of the survey, the staff of the Gram Panchayat Secretariat and Ward Secretariat will have to conduct a survey at the field level through a mobile app," the Collector said. She ordered that during the survey process, details related to employment generation, turnover, current bank loan facilities and subsidies related to the respective industry should be included through the survey app. Housing PD Srinivas Prasad, Industrial GM Srinivasa Rao and ZP CEO Chiranjeevi DWAMA PD Joseph Kumar and other officials were present.



Services of specialist doctors should be made available in GGHs

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari district Collector Chadalavada Nagarani directed the officials to take steps to ensure that services of specialist doctors are available in the Government General Hospitals in the district. The Collector, flanked by Joint Collector T Rahul Kumar Reddy, held a video conference with the specialist doctors, government hospital superintendents and RDOs here on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, she regretted that complaints were received that services of specialist doctors were not available in the GGHs, especially afternoon, in the district.

The Collector said that there is one district hospital and there are 4 Area Hospital, 3 Community health centres, 34 Primary Health Centres and 18 Urban Health Centres in the district for which 64 special officials were appointed to supervise the medical services.

The Collector instructed the special officers to conduct a complete study of the performance, deliveries, and medical services being provided to the out-patients and the in-patients in the respective hospitals every day. The issues that need to be addressed to ensure good progress in the hospitals should be addressed and a complete report should be submitted to the district office by evening.

The Collector told the officials that the government's idea and ambition are to transform the government hospitals into medical centers for the poor and middle-class families. She directed that primary health centers should work from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, urban health centers from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and district hospitals, area hospitals and community health centers should work 24 hours in three shifts.

The Collector ordered the officials to ensure that from the lowest level employee to the specialist doctors, it is mandatory to give attendance through the FRAS three times a day and the attendance should be monitored by the district office three times.

Collector Nagarani advised the officials to purchase the required medical equipment for the respective hospitals, availing the hospital development fund. DRO M Venkateswarulu, DMHO Dr. D Maheswar Rao and ICDS officer B Sujata Rani were among those who attended the meeting.

Minister presents silk robes to Goddess Padmavati at Tiruchanoor temple

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Minister for Endowments Anam Ram Narayana Reddy on Thursday presented silk robes to Goddess Padmavati Ammavaru at Tiruchanoor temple near here on the occasion of annual Brahmotsavam.

Usually, it is a tradition to present silk vastrams on behalf of the state government to the Tiruchanoor temple during the annual brahmotsavam.

The annual Brahmotsavam of Padmavati ammavari temple began today and will continue till December 6. Speaking to the media, the Minister thanked Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu for the divine opportunity. TTD has made elaborate arrangements to the devotees participating in the mega religious festival.

Earlier, TTD Executive officer Syamala Rao, JEOs Goutami, Veerabrahmam, Chief vigilance and Security officer Sridhar and other officers welcomed the dignitary in a traditional manner.After the darshan of Ammavaru, the Minister was offered Vedasirvachanam and Prasadam.



YSRCP social media activist Ravindra Reddy taken to Bapatla

PNS ■ KADAPA



YSRCP social media activist, Varra Ravindra Reddy, who was in the Kadapa central prison, was taken by the Bapatla police on PT warrant to Bapatla on Thursday. Varraa Ravindra Reddy was arrested for uploading abusive and objectionable postings on social media against the TDP and JSP leaders including Chandrababu Naidu, Nara Lokesh and Pawan Kalyan.

A case was registered against Ravindra Reddy in Pedanandipadu police station for uploading abusive postings on social media. As part of investigation, the Bapatla district police came here and filed a petition in the court to take him to Bapatla on the PT warrant and the court granted the same. The Bapatla police shifted him to Bapatla and produced him before the Junior Civil Judge.

25 KGs OF CANNABIS SEIZED, TWO PEDDLERS ARRESTED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The police seized 25 KGs of ganja and arrested two peddlers including a minor boy, at Donkarayi village in Chintur mandal on Thursday. Police said that on a tip off that ganja was being transported illegally, a police team conducted checking of vehicles. The police found 25 KGs of ganja being taken on two motorcycles illegally. The police held two peddlers and one of them was found to be a minor boy. The minor boy was sent to the juvenile home. The drug peddlers lifted the two motorcycles in Vijayawada to use them in the illegal transport of Ganja.

KTR would have been in jail if BJP had joined hands with Cong

PNS ■ HYDERABAD



Criticising BRS Working President KT Rama Rao's statement that the BJP and the Congress are one, the BJP's Medak MP, M. Raghunandan Rao, said that KTR would have eaten Cherlapally Jail food if the BJP had joined hands with the Congress.

Raghunandan re-posted KTR's post on Thursday and said that KTR's posts reveal that he has not only lost power but also his sense. He said that KTR destroyed all admin systems like finance, education and the healthcare system by interfering recklessly. The BJP has no need to learn politics from leaders like KTR, Raghunandan said.

"The BRS would not have lost power if KTR knew politics and how to solve the public's problems. Your father is now confined to his farmhouse as he entrusted party responsibilities to you," Raghunandan said. It may be recalled that KTR had posted on the Internet that BJP leaders have joined hands with the Congress.

Students exhorted to take part and excel in sports



PNS ■ ELURU

State Social Welfare Residential Education Society Secretary V Prasanna Venkatesh exhorted the students to give equal importance to participate in sports and excel in sport. Prasanna Venkatesh inaugurated the State-level sports meet on the premises of BR Ambedkar residential school at Pedavegi on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, Prasanna Venkatesh said that participating in sports provides not only physical health but also mental health, adding that success in sports is possible with continuous practice. The teachers should identify students who are interested in sports and take steps to encourage them further, he told the teachers.

Prasanna Venkatesh highlighted that the State Government is giving equal importance to sports along with education. The Government is providing shoes and sports equipment required for practicing sports to every interested student.

He informed that the details of the students who participated in State-level sports and the teachers who encouraged them would be published in a magazine published by their department along with their photos to further encourage them.

Prasanna Venkatesh recalled that the Caronavirus pandemic had inculcated health consciousness among people and observed that health could not be bought with money. He lamented that due to clinging to the TVs, Videogames and smart phones the physical activity comes down among people. He appreciated the students of Gurukula school for not using smart phones.

APSWREI Academic monitoring officer N Sanjeeva Rao, A Mulla Krishna and other officials participated in the programme.

the pioneer

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VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 29, 2024

ACROSS THE STATES



Pollution complaints in Delhi-NCR surged by 33%

Reflecting a growing public frustration over environmental degradation, pollution-related complaints in Delhi-NCR have seen a spike of 33 per cent this year as compared to previous years, according to data shared by CPCB. During a period between October 2021 and September 2023, a total of 9,345 complaints were registered on social media platforms against pollution in Delhi-NCR. In stark contrast, the figure rose to 12,456 by September 2024, marking a sharp increase of nearly 33 per cent, according to data shared by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in response to an RTI query filed by activist Amit Gupta. Despite the rise in complaints, resolution rates have only slightly improved. In the earlier period, 40 per cent of grievances were resolved, compared to 43 per cent in 2024. However, 57 per cent of complaints were unresolved, the CPCB data showed. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) topped the list of complaints, receiving 3,238 grievances in 2024-an almost fourfold increase from 905 last year, the report said, highlighting that 88 per cent of these complaints remain unresolved.



Odisha declares 'The Sabarmati Report' tax free

The Odisha government on Thursday announced that Hindi film 'The Sabarmati Report', based on the 2002 Godhra train burning incident in Gujarat, will be tax-free in the state. Odisha Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mukesh Mahaling announced this in the Assembly here. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi in a post on X said, "People's government in the state has decided to make the film 'Sabarmati Report' based on a true incident tax-free in Odisha. The film shows how 'Karsevak' were burnt alive in the Godhra fire to fulfil their own interests and create unrest. This film will bring to the people such a hair-raising, heart-wrenching truth of the past and make the general public more aware". Odisha became the seventh BJP-ruled state, after Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat, to exempt entertainment tax on 'The Sabarmati Report'.



IAF begins white water rafting expedition

The Indian Air Force on Thursday started a white water rafting expedition in the Alaknanda river in Uttarakhand's Chamoli district. The expedition, led by IAF Wing Commander Vijay Bhatt, will conclude in Rishikesh on December 3. It is being organised by IAF headquarters Adventure Cell, Delhi. Fourteen IAF personnel and two rafting guides are part of the expedition team. The Alaknanda river valley is considered the most challenging for white water rafting. Wing Commander Bhatt said such programmes are organised by the IAF from time to time to train its personnel in adventure activities. Such programmes inspire the youth to join the armed forces, besides boosting local tourism.

Parliament washed out again over Adani, Sambhal issues

PNS ■ NEW DELHI





Proceedings in Parliament were on Thursday washed out for the third day since the beginning of the Winter Session following disruptions by the opposition over the Adani issue and violence in Manipur and Sambhal.

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were adjourned within minutes of convening.

The Houses were first adjourned shortly after they met on Thursday and were later adjourned for the day soon after reconvening at 12 noon amid the opposition parties' protests.

Before being adjourned, the Lok Sabha adopted a resolution granting extension to the Joint Committee on the Waqf Amendment Bill till the last day of the Budget Session next year.

The Lok Sabha witnessed disruptions during Question Hour, shortly after Congress leaders Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Ravindra Chavan took oath as members of the Lower House.

Opposition members gathered in the Well, raising slogans for action against the perpetrators of the violence in Sambhal during a court-ordered survey of a Mughal-era mosque.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju flayed the protests, saying, "I condemn the attempts by the Congress and its allies in disrupting the House proceedings."

As the opposition protests continued, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MP Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the chair, adjourned the proceedings for the day.

In the Rajya Sabha, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar's appeals that Parliamentary disruption was not a remedy but a malady which weakened the foundation of India's democracy went unheeded as the opposition members protested.

The proceedings of the Upper House were adjourned within minutes after it met at 12 noon, following one adjournment shortly after 11 am.



Recalling that Wednesday marked a historic milestone -- the beginning of the final quarter-century before India's Constitution turned 100 -- Dhankhar lamented that the House members missed the opportunity to engage in productive dialogue.

'Be ready to tackle cyber warfare, climate change'

PNS ■ UDHAGAMANDALAM (TAMIL NADU)



"Geopolitical dynamics have changed the security landscape and there's a need to develop a deep understanding of national and global issues. We not only have to secure our national interest but also prepare for new national security challenges like cyber warfare and terrorism."

India should be prepared to tackle any situation in a fast-changing geopolitical environment, including national security challenges like cyber warfare and terrorism, President Droupadi Murmu said here on Thursday.

Also, she stressed the need to develop a deep understanding of national and global scenarios as the geopolitical dynamics have changed the security landscape.

"The issue of climate change is acquiring a new dimension which needs to be understood and managed. Updated knowledge and cutting-edge technology, based on research, need to be applied. I am confident that our armed personnel officers will rise to the future challenges," the President said in her address at the Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, in Nilgiris district.

"In a fast-changing geopolitical environment, we need to be prepared to tackle any situation," Murmu stressed.

"Geopolitical dynamics have changed the security landscape and there's a need to develop a deep understanding of national and global issues. We not only have to secure our national interest but also prepare for new national security challenges like cyber warfare and terrorism," the President said.

India, she said, was rising and the world was acknowledging the country's role in various sectors, including defence. The country was moving towards indigenisation and self-reliance to keep the armed forces in a position to meet the needs and challenges.

Police hold flag march in Sambhal

Watertight security in place for Friday prayers

PNS ■ SAMBHAL



Police held a flag march in areas near the Shahi Jama Masjid on Thursday, a day before Friday prayers, with top officials saying watertight security was put in place to prevent untoward incidents.

The flag march was led by Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Srish Chandra. The police team marched through the busy markets that partially reopened on Thursday.

Most of the shops opened for the first time on Thursday since the November 24 violence over a court-ordered survey of the Mughal-era mosque that left four persons dead and several other injured.

"The situation is completely peaceful and normal," ASP Chandra told PTI Videos.

Asked about the Friday prayers, he added, "Sufficient police force has been deployed and we are prepared to tackle any situation."

The local police and the district administration has called a meeting with local Muslim clerics regarding the prayers.

Tension has been brewing in Sambhal since November 19 when a court-ordered survey of the mosque was carried out following claims that a Harihar temple previously stood at the site.

Gender budget allocation sees 128% rise

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's gender budget has witnessed a substantial 128 per cent increase over the past five years, rising from Rs 1.43 lakh crore in FY 2020-21 to Rs 3.27 lakh crore in FY 2024-25, according to official data.

Women and Child Development Minister of State Savitri Thakur informed the Rajya Sabha in a written response that a significant allocation has been reported in the Gender Budget Statement for FY 2024-25 by 43 ministries, departments and Union Territories (UTs), reflecting a 37.3 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year's allocation.

Key contributors to the gender budget include the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, and the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Kidnapped at 7, UP man reunites with family after three decades

PNS ■ GHAZIABAD (UP)



In a miraculous turn of events, a seven-year-old boy who was kidnapped from Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad district more than 30 years ago has reunited with his family.

Now 38, Raju shared his ordeal and said that after being abducted in September 1993, he was handed over to a truck driver who took him to Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. "The kidnappers kept me in a room located in the middle of a barren area, where I was forced to take care of sheep and goats. Each night, I was chained and locked in the room," he said.

According to his father Tula Ram, the kidnapping took place when Raju and his sister were returning home from Deen Bandhu Public School in Sahibabad. After an argument with his sister, Raju sat by the roadside when three people arrived in a tempo and abducted him, Tula Ram, a retired Delhi government employee, said. An FIR was lodged at Sahibabad police station. Despite extensive searches, police could not recover Raju, and Tula Ram later received a ransom letter demanding Rs 8 lakh. Unable to pay the amount, Tula Ram left the matter in the hands of fate, and the investigation eventually went cold.

For three decades, Tula Ram lived in uncertainty over his son's fate. But on November 27, the family's nightmare came to an end as Raju returned home.

After initial reluctance, Raju's mother and sisters identified him by a mole on his chest and a depression in his skull.

Sharing his ordeal, Raju said he was given only one roti and tea as meal twice a day. However, he said he was hopeful that one day he would reunite with his family.

Punjab, Haryana govts slow in acting against farmers burning stubble: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Supreme Court on Thursday said the Punjab and Haryana governments have been slow in taking action against farmers burning stubble and a mechanism was required to be devised for a long-term solution to the problem.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih said a machinery had to be set in motion to ensure 24/7 data was available.

"We propose to hear all the parties exhaustively. It is because of sowing done belatedly all this problem is happening. We want to go to the root of the matter and issue directions. Something needs to be done. Every year this problem cannot arise. From the data available, we can say both states are very slow in taking action against farmers," the bench remarked.

The apex court said everyone was "smart enough" to understand during certain times data was collected and they did not burn stubble at that time.

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, representing the Centre, said ISRO was working on the protocol.

The bench took note of a media report related to Punjab wherein a land record officer and president of the Sangrur Block Patwari Union, reportedly admitted to advising farmers to burn stubble after 4 PM to avoid satellite detection.

Calling it "very serious" if the media report was to be believed, the court directed Punjab state officials to not permit farmers to take advantage of the fact that activities were being detected during the particular few hours of the day.

"The Punjab government should immediately issue instructions to all officers not to indulge in any such activities," it said.

India, Russia decide to expand joint military exercises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Russia have decided to expand joint military exercises to further solidify the operational synergy.

The decision was taken at a meeting this week of the working group on military cooperation under the India-Russia Inter Governmental Commission on Military and Military-Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC).

The defence ministry said the meeting "marked a significant milestone in advancing the long standing strategic partnership between the two countries".

"It also agreed upon expanding joint exercises to further solidifying the operational synergy between the two forces," it said.

Ajit Pawar sets eyes on Delhi polls; eyes national party tag for NCP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



"There is no truth to their allegations. They are blaming EVMs because they did not get a favourable result in the assembly elections."

After tasting success in the Maharashtra elections, NCP chief Ajit Pawar on Thursday declared his party will contest the Delhi assembly elections in its bid to regain the national party status.

Addressing a felicitation ceremony at the NCP's office in the national capital, he also dismissed the opposition allegations of misuse of EVMs in the Maharashtra elections and asserted that the MahaYuti alliance was united and will form government soon.

Pawar said the leaders of the Mahayuti alliance were meeting for the first time on Thursday evening after the election results were announced.

"We are united... There are no differences," he said.

Pawar also said the opposition MVA coalition were blaming the EVMS as they did not get the desired results in the assembly elections.

"There is no truth to their allegations. They are blaming EVMs because they did not get a favourable result in the assembly elections," Pawar told reporters here.

The Congress and NCP-SP have raised doubts over the use of EVMs in the conduct of assembly elections and demanded a return to the practice of using ballot paper for polling.

Pawar pointed out that the opposition parties have won elections in Punjab, Delhi, Karnataka, Telangana, West Bengal and Kerala using EVMS.

"In the parliament elections also, EVMs were fine because the result was in their (Maha Vikas Aghadi) favour. In assembly elections, the result is different and they are now finding fault with the EVMs."

Asked about his plans for the future of the NCP, Pawar said his party enjoyed the status of a national party and would work to regain that tag.

"We need to work more now, we will fight and we will achieve success," Pawar said. The NCP lost the national party tag in April last year.

"Our next target is the Delhi assembly elections. We will soon hold the national convention of the NCP in the national capital," he said.

'Feel bad when someone refers to us as Chinese'

PNS ■ AALO (ARUNACHAL)



In the quaint village of Darka, nestled amidst the rugged beauty of Arunachal Pradesh, 62-year-old Medam Ete speaks with pride about his heritage and unwavering love for the tricolour.

However, he gets hurt each time if someone in other part of the country, unknowingly or carelessly, refers to him or people of his village as Chinese.

"We are Indians, and proud to be Indians. We feel bad when people in some parts of the country refer to us as Chinese. If China enters India then we will fight them first," says Medam Ete.

Medam Ete is Gaon Boodha (village headman) of Darka with a population of 3,000 in remote Aalo town of West Siang district of Arunachal, which is known as the 'land of rising sun'.

Gaon Boodhas, established during the British era, are the most important village-level functionaries notified by the state government and are responsible for administrative tasks such as the maintenance of law and order and the resolution of civil disputes in the village. Like any other citizen of the country, Medam Ete says that everyone wants better roads, health services, education.

"Who does not want development? If we develop then only the country will progress. Slowly and gradually, government schemes are reaching us," he says.

He further says that after the BJP came to power at the Centre, the working pattern of the government has changed. "Now, we get more funds (for development schemes) from the government," he says.

Darka village Sarpanch Kemba Ete says that due to the support of the Centre and with the help of Indian Army, several developmental works are taking place in their village. "We are getting funds under MGNREGA for various works. The people are getting free ration under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. Roads have been made in the villages," says Kemba Ete.

He also says that the Army has friendly relations with the villagers.

"They always stand by us in tough times. Whether it is renovation of schools or building community halls, they have contributed significantly in various developmental works," he says.

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 29, 2024

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Opinion 06

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PAPER WITH PASSION

One nation, one subscription

While heralded as a potential game-changer for academia, the ONOS has ignited intense debate among scholars and researchers

In the series of 'one nation' comes yet another addition and this time it is about subscription of academic journals. The Indian government's recent approval of the 'One Nation, One Subscription' (ONOS) scheme has sparked considerable debate within academic and research communities. Touted as a transformative step for Indian academia, the scheme seeks to centralise access to academic journals and publications for higher education and research institutions across the country. While the initiative promises benefits such as cost efficiency and wider access to resources, concerns about its implementation, implications for academic freedom and necessity remain significant. Under the ONOS scheme, managed by the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET), over 6,300 institutions will have access to 13,000 e-journals from 30 major international publishers through a unified digital portal. With a budget allocation of Rs 6,000 crore for its first three years, the government aims to empower approximately 1.8 crore students, researchers and faculty members. This move could enhance India's standing in the global research ecosystem, reducing resource disparities across institutions. The ONOS scheme could democratise access to academic knowledge.



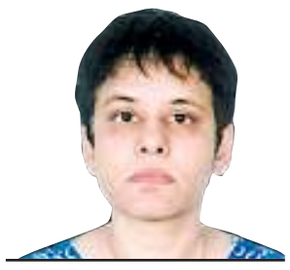
Smaller institutions, often constrained by limited budgets, could benefit immensely from comprehensive access to high-quality publications. Students and researchers in remote or underfunded regions may now have the same access as those in premier institutions, fostering equity in education and research. Centralising subscriptions could also significantly reduce costs. A unified portal ensures that these resources are optimised, potentially freeing budgets for other academic priorities. This could encourage more efficient and effective research practices. Despite its potential benefits, the ONOS scheme has raised several concerns. One major issue is the lack of clarity on how journals will be selected. Academic needs are diverse, varying by discipline, institution and research focus. Centralising the decision-making process risks overlooking specific requirements, leading to an inadequate or unbalanced collection of resources. Critics argue that the government could limit access to publications or perspectives it disagrees with, thereby influencing academic discourse. Another critique is that the scheme might disrupt established systems that currently work well. Many institutions already have mechanisms to access journals through collaborations, institutional networks like the Developing Library Network (DELNET), and platforms like JSTOR. Moreover, the scheme's centralised approach risks reducing the autonomy of academic institutions. Faculty members, who currently play a significant role in determining which journals their institutions need, might find themselves sidelined. This loss of autonomy could hinder academic innovation and responsiveness to emerging research trends. It would be hasty to implement the scheme which has advantages for sure, but the concerns of academicians must be addressed.

PICTALK



Visitors at the Istanbul stall on the last day of the India International Trade Fair, in New Delhi PTI

Countering China's African influence



PARUL **CHANDRA**

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Nigeria highlights India's bid to rejuvenate ties with the African nation and counter China's growing influence through partnerships



A little over two months after China's assiduous wooing of Nigeria, India sought to do the same during PM Narendra Modi's recent visit to the African nation. The prime ministerial visit, coming after a gap of 17 years, should inject fresh momentum into bilateral ties. It should also, hopefully, help a bit in countering Beijing's growing influence in Nigeria, a country with whom India has enjoyed close and robust ties for decades but now finds itself in competition with China.

While India and Nigeria have 'a strategic partnership', the African nation and China elevated their ties to 'a comprehensive strategic partnership' this year. The courting of Nigeria as well as dozens of other African countries was done bilaterally as well collectively at the ninth Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in early September in Beijing. These summits have been held regularly since the first one in 2006, with one even being held virtually during the Covid-19 pandemic. India, however, has floundered in not being able to organise an African summit since the last one in 2015, ostensibly due to the pandemic and geopolitical tensions, but amounts to a lack of strategic foresight.

China is making deeper inroads into the African continent for both strategic as well as economic reasons. Strategically, it can project itself as a geopolitical force countering arch foe US. Moreover, strengthening its foothold in the world's second most populous continent comes with the lucrative advantage of having access to the huge market as well as the rich mineral resources there. For many cash-strapped African nations, China has been a pivotal lender of loans for much-needed infrastructure construction, but it comes with the perils of running up huge debts.

Africa is a vital part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with 53 nations having signed onto the endeavour that India views with deep suspicion given Beijing's hegemonic intentions. Under the BRI, China is assisting Nigeria in its connectivity efforts by building railway lines and a deep sea port in Lagos.

China is also Nigeria's biggest bilateral lender and the two sides decided to forge close economic ties when Chinese President Xi Jinping and Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu met in Beijing ahead of the FOCAC Summit. It's in the backdrop of all this that PM Modi's recent visit to Nigeria assumes even greater significance. While he made it clear that India gives "high priority" to its strategic partnership with Nigeria, the visit yielded only three pacts – on survey cooperation, cooperation in customs matters and culture exchange programmes.

India will have to do some real heavy lifting in the coming years if the 14 areas of bilateral cooperation identified in the joint statement are to come to fruition. Among these are the Bilateral Investment Treaty, the Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty and the Agreement on repurposed Line of Credits. India's outreach to Nigeria at the highest level was required given that Africa's most populous nation enjoys much heft in the region and beyond. It's a founding member of the African Union (AU), which India helped bring into the G-20's fold last year. Nigeria is now also a BRICS partner state. The country is also a member of OPEC, with President Tinubu also being the current chair of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States). A fresh push to boost bilateral trade and investments by Indian companies in Nigeria is imperative.

> AFRICA IS A VITAL PART OF CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI), WITH 53 NATIONS HAVING SIGNED ONTO THE ENDEAVOUR THAT INDIA VIEWS WITH DEEP SUSPICION GIVEN BEIJING'S HEGEMONIC INTENTIONS

There are already over 200 Indian companies in the manufacturing sector with investments worth $27 billion in Nigeria. While India remains among the top 5 trading partners of Nigeria, bilateral trade unfortunately decreased to $7.89 billion in 2023-24 from $14.95 billion in 2021-22.

This is attributed to a reduction in Indian oil imports from Nigeria as it chose to import oil from Russia, taking advantage of the cheaper rates being offered due to the conflict with Ukraine.

With the joint statement with Nigeria talking about India's willingness to go in for long-term contracts for crude and LNG purchases, bilateral trade might pick up once again. Significantly, India has also evinced interest in investing in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. Terrorism and piracy also figured as areas of cooperation in the joint statement. Nigeria for many years has been battling the Islamic radical group Boko Haram, which has also been attacking oil and gas infrastructure in the country. India, interestingly, has offered technical know-how on security for pipelines in Nigeria.

Maritime domain cooperation is also of crucial importance to combat piracy. Nigeria abuts the Gulf of Guinea through which passes crucial sea lanes for transporting crude oil. India had deployed at least two warships, INS Sumedha in 2023 and INS Tarkash in 2022, in the piracy-prone Gulf of Guinea. With Chinese vessels on the prowl across the oceans, these deployments were not without strategic significance.

Overall, India needs to move and move fast, delivering on its promises made during PM Modi's visit to Nigeria. It has no time to lose in majorly upscaling its traditional robust ties with African nations, especially with China increasingly grabbing strategic space in the continent.The writer is a senior journalist who writes on foreign affairs.

(The writer is a senior journalist who writes on strategic affairs; views are personal)

Unpaid care workers: The neglected workforce



SHAHNAZ **RAFIQUE**

These workers, predominantly women, form the invisible backbone of families and communities, shouldering critical responsibilities without recognition or compensation

Unpaid care workers play a crucial yet often overlooked role in sustaining families and communities. These individuals, typically family members and predominantly women, take on essential caregiving and household tasks without formal salaries or wages. Their contributions range from managing daily domestic duties to supporting vulnerable family members and even volunteering in community-based activities. Despite the significant value they provide, their work remains largely unrecognised, unregulated, and uncompensated, often leaving them economically insecure and lacking social protections.

This group includes several key roles. Household caregivers provide daily care for children, elderly relatives, or family members with disabilities, handling tasks like cooking, cleaning and offering emotional support. Childcare providers, especially in low-income families, often include mothers or grandmothers who look after young children, offering informal education and supervision. In some communities, individuals volunteer for communal care tasks such as organising child care or assisting with health-related services out of a sense of responsibility rather than financial motivation.



Family health caregivers manage tasks such as administering medication, assisting with mobility, and caring for chronically ill relatives. In rural areas, unpaid care work often extends to agricultural labor, including farming, collecting water, and gathering firewood, which are essential for household survival but remain uncompensated.

The economic contributions of unpaid care work are immense, supporting families and enabling formal economic activities by ensuring the wellbeing of individuals. However, the lack of formal recognition and compensation leaves these workers vulnerable to financial instability and limits access to social protections.

A related but distinct category includes 'Anganwadi' workers, who occupy a middle ground between unpaid and paid care work. Employed under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) programme, they receive a modest honorarium rather than a formal wage. This compensation is often irregular, lacks benefits like retirement or health insurance and fails to provide the stability of formal employment. Consequently, while Anganwadi workers are technically paid, their financial insecurity mirrors the challenges faced by unpaid care workers.

Despite their critical contributions to the care economy, Anganwadi workers remain undervalued and undercompensated. Many are forced to take on additional jobs to make ends meet. Their situation highlights the broader societal neglect of care work, where contributions—paid or unpaid—are undervalued and often relegated to the margins of economic discourse. Addressing these issues requires recognising care work's essential role in social and economic systems and implementing policies that ensure fair compensation and protection for all care workers.

(The writer is Secretary, Indian Trade Union Congress (INTUC); views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SIDHU SPARKS CONTROVERSY

Madam — The former cricketer and commentator Navjot Singh Sidhu, whose wife is suffering from cancer has come out with propaganda on social media that neem leaves, lemon juice, turmeric, and cinnamon helped cure his wife's breast cancer and started advocating it as a simple remedy for those who have been suffering from it. As a celebrity, Sidhu should have advised the people to ensure good health with a periodical medical checkup since the dreaded disease affects lakhs every year in India. His irresponsible statement, while taking into account the false claims that celebrities used to promote wrong products by endorsing commercials for their self-promotion, as well as to claim the fat check, calls for a stringent warning. Sidhu's experience on his wife's issue shouldn't deviate people who are already suffering and availing treatment in their case.

Tall claims in social media need strong rebuttal with penalisation for their unemotional behaviour. In 2019 the BJP leader Pragya Singh Thakur had similarly claimed that Gau Mutra (cow urine) had cured her of cancer, whereas she was operated on for tumour removal in 2008 at JJ Hospital in Mumbai as reported by Dr Rajput. When the flashback runs like this, Sidhu's claim at these advanced medical times has been thoroughly misled while the global research has not yet found anything concrete to counter cancer to date is the reality. Controlling the growth and extending longevity by itself can be considered to be a miracle and we can only seek blessings for the safe health of Sidhu's wife and thousands in the need of this hour.

A P Thiruvadi | *Chennai*

MINORITIES RAISE CONCERNS

Madam — Minorities are making so much noise ever since the NDA came to power for the third time running. They could not digest the defeat of the forces working against the government. Enjoying all benefits as an Indian citizen while still blaming the government is the order of the day. Without knowing the ins and outs of the political formula, they pass hate comments against the government. They get solace by abusing the government after losing the elections in Maharashtra. The myth of the model minority is based in stereotypes. It perpetuates a narrative in which they want to get prominence. In reality, the twenty-first century has so far been one of bewildering change accompanied by the destruction of certainties, among them that of the inevitable rise of human rights. It is clear that gains that were once thought permanent can quickly be lost. A real danger of lack of certainty is that the resultant fear leads to a backlash, which is likely to be directed against those seen as a threat or who are easily used as scapegoats.

Jayanthy Subramaniam | *Mumbai*

GANGA UNSAFE FOR BATHING

Madam —The water in the holy Ganga is unsuitable for bathing. A few days ago, an exasperated Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi of the National Green Tribunal, while hearing a case related to the tributaries Assi and Varuna, told the Varanasi District Magistrate to "just put up a sign" and "make it clear the Ganga here isn't for a holy splash." The river flows for about 2500 kilometres from the southern great Himalayas before it empties into the Bay of Bengal. The Namami Gange Programme (NGP), launched in 2014-15 to cleanse the Ganga and its tributaries, was originally scheduled to be completed by March 2021. It has now been extended until March 2026.

The Central Government has released ₹16,012 crore from FY2014-15 until October 2023 under the NGP-I of ₹20,000 crore and NGP-II of ₹22,500 crore. In the 30 years prior to the launch of the NGP, various governments had spent ₹4000 crore to clean the river. Despite spending more than ₹20,000 crore, the water in the Ganga is still not clean enough to take a dip. One is compelled to conclude the NGP is equally polluted with corruption and inefficiency.

Haridasan Rajan | *Kozhikode*

Protecting mental health of Children



Australia will ban children from using social media with a minimum age limit as high as 16 to get kids off their devices and onto the footy fields. The initiative is taken to make kids play in the grounds and experience the loss and victory in the field and have real experiences with real people and teammates because, as we know that social media is causing social harm to the GenZ at large. After passing with 103 votes in favour to 13 votes against, the bill will move to the Senate, where it is also expected to pass with the majority. This law will help in curbing the social media menace over the children and its threatening impact that may cause stress, impatience among kids, feelings of insecurity, and obesity, as well as mental health disorders.

The authorities have taken welcoming decisions in favour of parents and children against internet safety. An integrated mechanism could only beat the detrimental effects of social media. Although with the advent of AI (artificial intelligence), the spread of misinformation and false news has become the trend. The incidence of deepfakes can mislead the students, kids and children.

Dimple Wadhawan | *Kanpur Nagar*

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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FIRST COLUMN

TRUMP 2.0: STEEP TARIFFS ON CARDS

Trump's policies are likely to create ripples across economies, including India



KUMARDEEP **BANARJEE**

The fireworks have started, even before people across the globe have ushered in Christmas and New Year's festivities. The Trump presidency 2.0 could be a game changer, potentially recalibrating several global geopolitical and economic partnerships. First, the Biden era days of strategic partnership with nations worldwide would be replaced with a more transactional approach which President Trump in his second stint is likely to institutionalise. Even before taking charge, President-elect Donald Trump has vociferously spelt out his tariff-based external affairs policy.

He had during campaigning talked about imposing nearly 60 per cent tariffs on China imports. Recently he has said that one of the first executive orders, he is likely to sign after assuming office on January 20, would be to impose tariffs on Canada, Mexico and China imports. Of course, the caveat is, unless, they stop sending illegal immigrants and ban drugs across to the US. Donald Trump knows his tariff-based foreign policy approach has bipartisan support among Democrats and Republicans. It feeds well into his Made in America, local job creation narrative which catapulted him back to the White House in a non-consecutive term. India is overseeing this space, as it knows very well that even though the first tariff bullets may not be fired at India, eventually many will. Mr Trump has already spoken about India's high tariffs in his election rallies and notwithstanding the amount of good, the Indian IT services sector has done for the US, he needs to send home hard messages. The only saving grace in the upcoming US-India bilateral relationship, under President Trump 2.0 would be the personal equation, the



president-elect has with Prime Minister Modi. Knowing each other for a long period and having observed each other's style of governing, can be an initial advantage but not a long-term solution. Key Indian trade interlocutors are in high demand, especially those who have been in government during Trump's first presidency.

At some point in time, the issue of tariffs would come up in the bilateral conversations, where hard-nosed negotiations may be required. India and US under the Biden administration managed to establish a formal institutional framework for settling trade and tariff issues in the form of a Trade Policy Forum (TPF). The TPF platform provides trade representatives from the US and India to meet regularly to discuss and find solutions to mutual areas of concern. To be sure the TPF mechanism existed even under the Trump administration, but with one meeting and a new Indian government under Prime Minister Modi (with less focus on trade and external affairs policy), it served little purpose. Chances are, given Donald Trump's style of functioning, the TPF may be relegated to the background and several transactional bilateral meetings would be formatted to, minimise the friction in the trade relations.

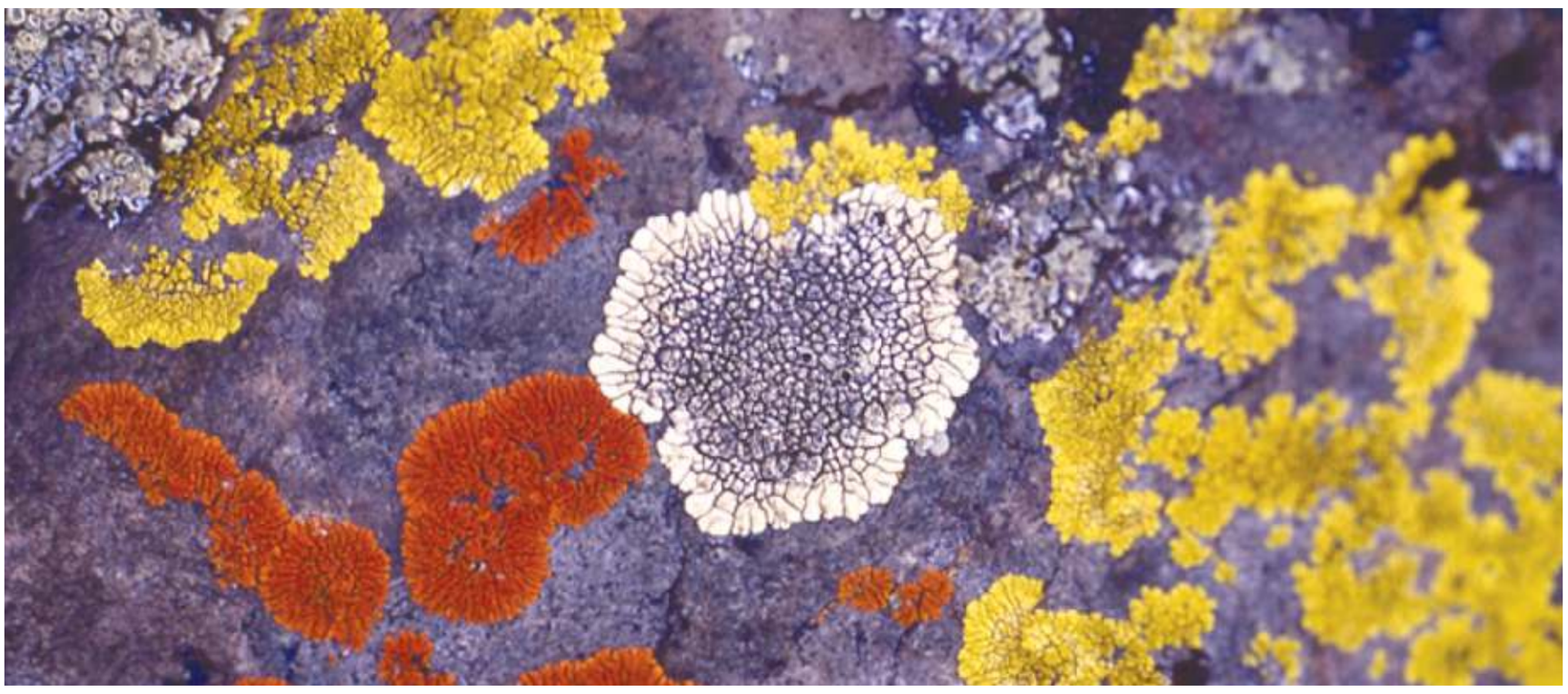
It may be worth noting that India has a trade surplus with the US, a point Mr Trump will keep in mind to extract his side of the deal. Meanwhile, the expected tightening of the trade environment between the US and China would have a significant impact on the global economy. China would have to find newer markets to push some of the goods, which could be too expensive to export to the US. India and its neighbouring nations would have to brace up. Prices of items in the US, most of which are imported from China could add an extra burden on household budgets, which in turn could push rate hikes.

These global headwinds will shape, the narratives for a long time to come. It could have an inflationary impact on global oil prices and growth of the several global economies. India's Reserve Bank has already cautioned that the slowdown in the global economy, protectionism, and tariffs are three key factors that will shape India's economy next year. It would be another tightrope with clever hands of the juggler on rope which can carry India for the next few years.

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

Climate change and Lichens: The tiny titans of nature

Lichens, the silent guardians of our ecosystem, are under threat from climate change and need to be saved, write BKP SINHA and ARVIND KUMAR JHA



Vibrant patches of colour adorning some tree trunks and rocks may draw your attention as you move in the forest. Although they appear as mere stains or growths; they are intricate organisms called lichens, a product of a mutualistic alliance between fungus and algae. Making it a unique creation of nature, the fungus absorbs water and nutrients from the air while an organic compound is generated by the photosynthetic partner. Thus while fungi build a house; its algal partner supplies food as the breadwinner. Similarly, if fungi did not provide a secure structure, the algae would die homeless in harsh places.

The absence of cuticles and roots and their direct reliance on the atmosphere for nutrients, however, makes lichens highly vulnerable to pollutants. Found in a variety of shapes and colours, ranging from delicate leafy structures to crusty patches, they thrive in diverse habitats, from rocky mountainsides to rain forests and deserts. They can grow on soil, humus, stones, rocks, bricks, plaster, leaves, tree trunks, decaying wood and even on glass. Overtly so simple and insignificant in the face of the dominant bias of human beings that often considers a forest just as an assemblage of trees and vegetation mix, lichens play an extremely vital role in ecosystems. Lichens are known to play a crucial role in soil formation, breaking down rocks through biogeochemical and biochemical weathering and creating nutrient-rich soil paving the way for other plants to grow. They produce unique compounds with potential medicinal properties, such as antibiotics and antifungals.

They are used in medicine, food, fodder, perfume, spices, and dyes. Researchers are exploring these compounds to develop new drugs and sustainable materials. By understanding the adaptations and biochemical properties of lichens, one can unlock new possibilities and contribute to a more sustainable future. Lichens can survive at extreme temperatures and altitudes in which no creatures can survive. One can see more lichen on the edge of the forest than deep in the forest. They will be lesser near the towns as the air quality deteriorates Many lichens are incredibly sensitive to air pollution, particularly due to sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, as also to the level of heavy metal pollution. All lichens, however, are not equally sensitive to air pollutants. Different lichen species exhibit different sensitivity to specific air pollutants. Consequently, lichens are well-suited as biological indicators for monitoring environmental quality.

> LICHENS ARE KNOWN TO PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN SOIL FORMATION, BREAKING DOWN ROCKS THROUGH BIOGEOCHEMICAL AND BIOCHEMICAL WEATHERING AND CREATING NUTRIENT-RICH SOIL PAVING THE WAY FOR OTHER PLANTS TO GROW

More than seventeen thousand species of lichens are reported to cover around seven per cent of the world's surface. India, a land of diverse landscapes and climatic conditions, is home to rich biodiversity and harbours about 3,000 fascinating species of lichens. Some European countries like Germany, Italy, Portugal and Slovenia; considering lichen's response to pollution; have positioned them as bio-monitors and bio-indicators and included them in their air-pollution-related policy documents. Much of India's lichen diversity, however, remains relatively unexplored as regards their ecological significance and potential applications.Yet another crucial issue in the Indian context is the undervaluation of lichens in India.

When the diversion of forest land for rainforest purposes is proposed, the net present value (NPV) of the forest is calculated and the amount is recovered from the project proponents. Calculation of NPV does not consider the aspect of the immense value that lichens have from ecological as well as economic points of view. This is evident from the fact that the per hectare NPV of forests of Eco-class-I and Eco-class-II categories that have forests of types Tropical Wet-Evergreen/Semi-Evergreen/Moist-Deciduous/Littoral and Swamp have been assigned the same value. It is essential that realistic values are assigned to the forests of different types and the monetised value of lichens and their services are duly incorporated therein.

Climate change has serious implications for the lichens. Higher temperatures can disrupt the delicate balance between the fungal and algal partners. Extreme heat can lead to desiccation and reduced growth rates. Altered rainfall patterns can affect the availability of water, which is crucial for lichen growth and reproduction. Further, climate change can exacerbate air pollution, harming lichens.

A rise in pollution load in the air breaks the lichen cell resulting in bleaching of the organism, and the same is followed by its demise. Again, acid rain, caused by releasing sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides, can damage lichen tissues. Climate change-induced alterations in habitats may result in the loss of suitable environments for their growth while fragmentation of habitats can critically limit dispersal and gene flow. The importance of exploring the roles of different organisms involved in the complex eco-processes in the context of global changes cannot be overestimated.

In this context, lichen is increasingly being recognised globally as a bio-indicator of 'Global Change Drivers' that are seen as interconnected stressors like climate change, pollution, land use change, and loss of biodiversity contributing to large-scale environmental impacts. The mapping of epiphytic lichen diversity to assess ecological changes has emerged as a popular bio-monitoring approach in Europe and a European standard has been adopted under the Committee European d Normalisation (CEN) framework. It aims to provide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to ensure reliability, consistency and objectivity while simultaneously improving data quality and comparability across space and time.

Needless to say, it is high time that India, possessing almost eighteen per cent of the world's lichen species and being globally the third-highest air-polluted country only after Bangla Desh and Pakistan, prioritises her efforts in this direction. Detailed exploration and study of lichens can also yield many more useful species for an unexpectedly wide variety of ecological as well as human needs and pursuits including their widespread use as bio-prospecting agents.

An extremely valuable natural resource the lichens are, they are reportedly in a losing evolutionary race against climate change. A 2022 study reveals that it could need more than one million years to adjust to the ecological crisis created due to just one degree Celsius of warming.

With the unabated pace of global warming, lichens, considered one of the most unique and hardy species and a bio-monitoring tool, are facing the danger of getting obliterated from the face of our planet.

Well, the next time you encounter a tree or rock adorned with colourful lichens, take a moment to appreciate these remarkable organisms. Let us work towards their conservation as their beauty and ecological significance make them an integral part of our natural world.

(The writers are Former PCCFs of UP and Maharashtra; views are personal)

Educate. Advocate. Act Now: Confronting antimicrobial resistance

Awareness is crucial to stop misuse of antibiotics to stop antimicrobial resistance and its harmful side-effects

As we observe 'World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) 2024' under the theme 'Educate. Advocate. Act Now,' we are reminded of both the remarkable achievements of antimicrobial medicine and the escalating threat posed by antimicrobial resistance (AMR). This year's theme serves as a clarion call for individuals, healthcare providers and policymakers to unite in protecting these life-saving drugs. Through education, advocacy and immediate action, we can address the growing crisis and secure a healthier future for all.



SANGEETA **SHARMA**

Life Before Antibiotics: A Fragile Existence

For much of human history, infections posed a dire threat to survival. Minor injuries, routine childbirth, or surgical procedures often led to fatal outcomes due to the lack of effective treatments. Ancient civilisations turned to natural remedies such as herbs, honey and garlic, but these measures were often inadequate. The concept of microbes and the role of hygiene were poorly understood, enabling infectious diseases to spread rapidly with devastating results.

The Antibiotic Revolution: A New Era of Medicine

The discovery of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1928 marked a turning point in medical history. By the 1940s, penicillin was widely used to treat infections during World War II, saving countless lives. This success ushered in the "golden age" of antibiotics, spanning the 1940s to the 1960s, with groundbreaking drugs like streptomycin and tetracycline offering solutions to diseases once thought incurable.

These "miracle drugs" revolutionised healthcare, enabling complex surgeries, cancer therapies, and organ transplants that depended on effective infection control. Antibiotics became synonymous with progress and hope, reshaping our approach to health and longevity.

AMR: A Global Crisis in the Making

While antimicrobials transformed healthcare, their misuse and overuse have driven the global crisis of antimicrobial resistance. Mismanagement of these drugs has undermined their effectiveness, allowing resistant strains of bacteria to flourish.

Misuse and Overuse : Antibiotics are frequently prescribed for conditions like viral infections (e.g., the common cold), where they have no effect. In agriculture, antimicrobials are



used excessively, often to promote animal growth rather than treat illness. This practice creates resistant bacteria that can transfer to humans through the food chain.

Underuse : Failing to complete prescribed antibiotic courses, skipping doses, or using leftover medications allows bacteria to survive and develop resistance. Examples such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) highlight the danger of resistance. Once easily treatable, infections like MRSA now require last-resort drugs, which are often more toxic, expensive, and less effective.

The Innovation Gap:

Despite the urgent need for new treatments, the development of antibiotics has stagnated. No new classes of antibiotics have been discovered in recent decades, leaving humanity vulnerable to resistant pathogens. Developing antibiotics is an expensive and time-consuming process and limited financial incentives deter pharmaceutical companies from pursuing research in this field. As a result, existing drugs are our most critical line of defense, underscoring the need to use them responsibly.

Educate:

Public education is a powerful tool in combating AMR. Raising awareness about the proper use of antibiotics is crucial to reducing unnecessary prescriptions. Antibiotics are effective only against bacterial infections, not viruses. Simple practices, such as completing prescribed courses and avoiding sharing or stockpiling antibiotics, can significantly reduce resistance. Community outreach programs and health campaigns are essential in promoting a deeper understanding of AMR and fostering responsible antimicrobial use.

Advocate:

Governments, healthcare organisations, and advocacy groups play a pivotal role in addressing AMR. Policies that regulate antimicrobial use in agriculture, improve prescribing practices, and promote the use of diagnostics can help mitigate resistance. Antimicrobial Stewardship Programmes in hospitals encourage responsible antibiotic use, ensuring patients receive appropriate treatment while minimising unnecessary exposure.

(The writer is Neuropsychopharmacology Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences & President, DSPRUD; views are personal)

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Money 08

VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 29, 2024

IN BRIEF



Reliance acquires 21 pc stake in Wavetech Helium

Reliance Industries Ltd on Thursday said it has acquired a 21 per cent stake in US helium gas exploration and production company Wavetech Helium Inc for USD 12 million. "Reliance Finance and Investments USA LLC, a step-down wholly owned subsidiary of the company, has on November 27, 2024 entered into a stock purchase agreement with Wavetech Helium Inc (WHI) and subscribed to 21 per cent stake of WHI for an aggregate consideration of USD 12 million," the firm said in a stock exchange filing. WHI was incorporated on July 2, 2021 in the US and started commercial operations in 2024. WHI is a US helium gas exploration and production company engaged in the acquisition, exploration, and development of properties to produce helium gas from underground reservoirs. Helium is used in medical applications, scientific research, aerospace and aeronautics, electronics, and fibre optics. Given the growth expected in AI and data centres, helium demand for semiconductor manufacturing is expected to increase.



India's iron ore production rises 4 per cent

Iron ore production in the country rose 4.1 per cent to 158.4 million tonnes (MT) in the April-October period of the ongoing fiscal year, the government said on Thursday.
As per provisional data, iron ore production was 152.1 MT in the year-ago period. Continued growth in production of iron ore in the current financial year shows the robust demand conditions in the user industry. Coupled with growth in aluminium and copper, these growth trends point towards continued strong economic activity in user sectors such as energy, infrastructure, construction, automotive and machinery. Production of manganese ore rose 11.1 per cent to 2 MT in the April-October period of the ongoing fiscal year from 1.8 MT during the corresponding period last year. Production of bauxite rose 11.3 per cent to 13.8 MT in the April-October period from 12.4 MT in the year-ago period, the mines ministry said in a statement. In the non-ferrous metal sector, primary aluminium production grew 1.2 per cent to 24.46 lakh tonne (LT) during the period under review from 24.17 LT a year ago, it said.



Audi expects 8-10 pc growth in 2025

Luxury carmaker Audi India expects sales to be back on track next year after witnessing supply chain disruptions that hampered its performance in 2024, a top company executive said on Thursday. The German carmaker, which on Thursday introduced a new version of its flagship SUV Q7, expects its sales to grow by 8-10 per cent next calender year, recovering from supply chain challenges it faced in the first two quarters of this calender year. "We anticipate luxury car industry growth next year to be in the range of 8-10 per cent. For Audi also we expect similar kind of growth," Audi India Head Balbir Singh Dhillon told PTI in an interaction.
He noted that the industry sales growth has tapered down after witnessing huge growth in the last three years.
In January-September this year the industry growth has been around 5 per cent, down from over 30 per cent year-on-year growth witnessed in the last three years.
"Still we believe that the luxury car industry will cross the 50,000 unit-mark this year, its highest ever annual sales mark ever," Dhillon said.

No talks yet on investments by Tesla, Starlink in India: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



It was anticipated that he would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments of billions of dollars, and the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday said that no discussion has taken place with regard to investments by American tech billionaire Elon Musk-owned Tesla and Starlink.

Goyal, who was addressing a press conference here in the Capital, stated that as both issues were handled by different ministries, he had no personal knowledge of what was happening.

"We haven't had any discussions to the best of my knowledge...," the minister said while responding to a query regarding any update on possible investment by Tesla and Starlink.

Goyal further said, "...but both these subjects are handled in different ministries. The Heavy Industries Ministry looks after automobiles and Starlink will be handled by the Space Department. So, I don't have personal knowledge of what is happening ..."

Earlier in April, Musk had pulled out from a much-hyped planned visit to India, including a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the last moment citing "very heavy Tesla obligations".

It was anticipated that he would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments of billions of dollars, and the way forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest.

Not just the electric cars, he was also eyeing the Indian market for his satellite internet business Starlink.

Starlink will have to comply with all norms to get a licence for services in India, Union Telecom Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said earlier this month.

The minister had said the satellite internet services provider is in the process of completing all the requirements and they will get a licence once they complete the process.

Besides, in March this year, the government approved an electric-vehicle policy providing import duty concessions to companies setting up manufacturing units in India with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like US-based Tesla.

As per the policy, the companies that would set up manufacturing facilities for EV passenger cars will be allowed to import a limited number of cars at lower customs/ import duty of 15 per cent on vehicles costing USD 35,000 and above for a period of five years from the date of issuance of the approval letter by the government.

'Air India transformation is Test match, not T20'

More work to do: Campbell Wilson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Air India's transformation journey is a cricket Test match and not a T20, and currently, it is like lunch on the third day of a Test match, the airline's Chief Campbell Wilson said on Thursday.

Tata Group-owned Air India has embarked on an ambitious five-year transformation plan 'Vihaan.AI' and little over two years of the programme has been completed.

"I acknowledge that we are not ultimately where we aspire to be and we have some work to do... There is a reason why Vihaan.AI programme is for five years... We are little over two years... the first years have been a good start," Wilson, who was born in New Zealand and took over the reins of Air India in 2022, said.

"It is a Test match and not a T20, we are at about lunch on Day 3," Wilson, the CEO and MD of Air India, said during a select media briefing.

A Test match is for five days while a T20 gets completed in less than four hours.

Since Tatas took over Air India in January 2022, it has consolidated the airline business -- Air India has merged Vistara with itself and Air India Express has integrated AIX Connect.

"A lot of heavy lifting for Air India transformation has been done, merger of airlines, establishment of new premises... 2025 is about bringing all of the pieces to a level of efficiency, consistency and performance that ultimately Air India wants to be known for," Wilson said.

Now, Air India Group operates a combined fleet of 300 aircraft covering 55 domestic and 48 international destinations, with 312 routes and 8,300 flights per week. The collective staff strength stands at over 30,000.

Vihaan.AI has seen commitment to more than 500 new aircraft and the commencement of a USD 400-million interior retrofit programme for legacy aircraft, among others.

BSNL installs 50,708 4G sites; 41,957 sites on-air

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The supply of equipment for Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL's) 4G rollout began in September last year, and by October-end this year 50,708 4G sites have been installed while 41,957 sites are on-air, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

The equipment is 5G upgradable, Minister of State for Comm unications Pemmasani Chandra Sekhar said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

To a question seeking specific timelines set for BSNL's 4G and 5G rollout across various states and Union Territories, the minister said that in line with the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, the state-owned telecom firm has placed a purchase order for indigenously developed 4G sites for pan India deployment. "Supply of 4G equipment has started from September 2023, and as on October 31, 2024, a total of 50,708 4G sites have been installed and 41,957 sites are on air. The equipment is 5G upgradable," he said.

To another question on whether BSNL-appointed Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has recommended strategies for the revival of the state-owned telecom corporation, including accelerating the 4G rollout, enhancing service quality, and introducing a generative AI chatbot for consumer support, the minister replied that the interim report has been submitted by BCG to BSNL management. "Boston Consulting Group (BCG) has submitted an interim report to BSNL management," the minister added.

Govt to sell 25 lakh ton FCI wheat under OMSS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday announced the sale of 25 lakh tonne of FCI wheat till March 2025 to bulk domestic consumers to check the "inflationary trend in the food economy".

Wheat will be sold under the government's Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) initiative, managed by the state-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) to regulate the supply and prices. The nodal Food Ministry, in a statement, said a reserve price for wheat under OMSS is fixed at Rs 2,325 per quintal for fair and average quality (FAQ) grain and Rs 2,300 per quintal for URS (Under Reduced Specifications) grain. Wheat will be sold until March 31, 2025, through e-auction to private parties, including flour mills, manufacturers of wheat products, processors and end users.

'UNFAIR BIZ IN GAMING APPS'

CCI orders probe against Google, affiliates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Fair trade regulator CCI on Thursday ordered a probe against Google and its affiliates for alleged unfair business practices with respect to listing of real money gaming apps on Play Store.

While passing the order, CCI said the "the Commission directs the Director General ('DG') to cause an investigation to be made into the matter under the provisions of Section 26(1) of the Act".

The Commission also directed the DG to complete the investigation and submit a consolidated report within 60 days.

The probe follows a complaint by Winzo Games, accusing Google of abusing its dominant position and unfairly favouring select gaming categories, thereby distorting competition.

In its 24-page order, the regulator noted that the selective inclusion of DFS and Rummy apps gives them an undue competitive advantage.

"Direct access to end-users via the dominant Play Store provides a significant edge to DFS and Rummy apps, potentially disadvantaging other RMG applications," the Commission said in its order.

CCI also flagged concerns regarding Google's sideloading warnings displayed when users attempt to download RMG apps.

These warnings, Winzo claimed, tarnish its reputation and discourage potential users from accessing its app.

Winzo also alleged that warnings on sideloading and payments were standard security measures aimed at safeguarding users.

The regulator also found that Google's justifications for its pilot programme and advertising policies were inconsistent and ambiguous.

"The long duration of Google's pilot programme, risks perpetuating the advantages conferred upon selected participants, such as DFS and Rummy apps.

New framework to ensure seamless trading

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday came out with measures to ensure seamless trading during technical outages, particularly in interoperable segments like equities, derivatives, and currency markets on stock exchanges.

The measures are aimed at strengthening the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery mechanisms at stock exchanges. Under these measures, Sebi said that for identical or correlated products-- single stock derivatives, index derivatives -- participants can hedge their positions on another exchange during an outage. Margins for such positions will be netted off. Also, exchanges must create "reserve contracts" for stocks or derivatives exclusively listed on one exchange to ensure continuity during outages.

'Need to make quality seeds available at affordable rate'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday stressed the need to boost the availability of quality seeds to farmers at an affordable rate through public-private partnerships.

The minister inaugurated the 13th National Seed Congress (NSC) 2024 virtually.

The three-day Congress is being held at the International Rice Research Institute South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) in Varanasi. Over 700 delegates, including experts, policymakers, industry leaders, research scholars, and farmers, are attending the event to deliberate on key issues and advancements in the seed sector.

According to an official statement, Chouhan highlighted India's growing leadership in the global seed sector. He emphasised the importance of leveraging India's biodiversity, research capacity, and innovative technologies to meet the challenges posed by climate change and food security.

The National Seed Congress provides a vital platform for exchanging knowledge, fostering partnerships, and driving innovation to strengthen seed systems, he said, adding that the event reflects India's commitment to ensuring food security, addressing climate challenges, and empowering smallholder farmers with access to quality seeds.

"I encourage the experts and participants to develop actionable strategies to make seeds more accessible, affordable, and impactful through strengthened public-private partnerships," Chouhan said.

Surya Pratap Shahi, Agriculture Minister of Uttar Pradesh, highlighted the achievement of the farm sector in his state.

"Uttar Pradesh has a rich tradition of advancing agriculture and is honoured to host this Congress in Varanasi. This event allows us to align with cutting-edge innovations and promote sustainable practices that reach every farmer," Shahi said.

"Our plans for 200 seed parks, alongside increased oilseed and millet cultivation, will bolster Uttar Pradesh's agricultural leadership," he added.

Silver prices crash yet again, slip back to Rs 90,000-mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Silver prices tumbled to a three-week low by losing Rs 4,900 to Rs 90,900 per kg, while gold slipped Rs 100 to Rs 78,700 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday on frantic selling by stockists and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity declined Rs 400 to Rs 78,300 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Price of gold of 99.9 per cent and 99.5 per cent purity closed higher at Rs 78,800 and Rs 78,700 per 10 grams, respectively, on Wednesday.

Silver also dropped Rs 4,900 to trade at Rs 90,900 per kg, marking a steepest fall on poor offtake by jewellers and coin makers.

Earlier, the white metal had slumped Rs 4,600 on November 4. On Wednesday, silver saw its steepest single-day jump of Rs 5,200 and regained the Rs 95,000 per kg level after a gap of two-weeks in the national capital.

Traders said the sentiment was downbeat largely in sync with a firm trend overseas amid uncertainty over the implications of US President-elect Donald Trump's tariff plans on economic prospects and the Federal Reserve's (Fed) interest rate outlook.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery rose Rs 167, or 0.22 per cent, to trade at Rs 75,927 per 10 grams on Thursday.

"Gold prices exhibited significant volatility, starting on a weaker note but quickly finding support amid renewed geopolitical tensions between Russia and Ukraine, which continue to bolster safe-haven buying.

Entry-level workforce to earn better salaries: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Entry-level jobs, which were witnessing a slowdown, are getting a boost as freshers are offered competitive salaries across key sectors, led by Global Capability Centres (GCCs) and non-tech sectors, a report said on Thursday.

The software development and engineering domain, which focuses on coding, designing, and maintaining software applications, is poised to offer lucrative opportunities, the report by TeamLease Digital said.

It said the increasing demand for Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) skills in software development to enhance productivity, accuracy, and innovation is further driving this trend.

As a result, entry-level positions in this domain are expected to see an average salary of Rs 9.37 lakh per annum in GCCs, followed by Rs 6.23 LPA in IT products and services, and Rs 6 LPA in non-tech sectors by the end of 2024-25, the report added.

The report by TeamLease is Digital is based on primary data from 15,000 job roles across GCCs, IT services, and non-tech sectors.



The report said, in cybersecurity and network administration domain, GCCs are expected to lead with an average salary of Rs 9.57 LPA, which is 40.12 per cent higher than their IT counterparts, showcasing the critical need for expertise in identifying vulnerabilities and mitigating risk exposure, while IT products and services may offer Rs 6.83 LPA, and non-tech sectors Rs 5.17 LPA.

The data management and analytics domain, which includes collecting, storing and analysing data to support decision-making, is projected to see average salaries of Rs 8.73 LPA in GCCs, Rs 7.07 LPA in IT products and services, and Rs 6.37 LPA in non-tech sectors, in FY25, said the report.

The Cloud Solutions and Enterprise Applications Management domain, focusing on scalability and cost-efficiency through cloud platforms and ERP systems, is set to offer entry-level salaries of Rs 7.67 LPA in GCCs, and Rs 6.07 LPA in IT products and services, it stated.

The non-tech industry is poised to offer an average salary of Rs 6.53 LPA for cloud solution roles, approximately 8 per cent higher than the IT sector, driven by the strong adoption of cloud technology across key sectors like BFSI, healthcare, and manufacturing, it added.

the pioneer
Vijayawada | Friday November 29, 2024

what's brewing?

APEKSHA PORWAL: MY SKIN TONE ISN'T SOMETHING I NEED TO OVERCOME!



Apeksha Porwal speaks openly about embracing her dusky skin tone as an essential part of her identity.

"For me, my skin tone isn't something I need to overcome—it's part of who I am," Apeksha shares. "I think it's important for women, especially in an industry like ours, to own and celebrate their individuality."

While many actors shy away from discussing beauty norms, Apeksha's candid take highlights the need for broader representation in Indian cinema. She notes, "What matters is the connection we create with audiences, and that comes from authenticity, not fitting into a box." Through her choices, Apeksha Porwal is not just carving a niche for herself but also encouraging others to redefine beauty on their own terms.

Samarth Jurel's dramatic transformation in *Kandhaar*



Samarth Jurel never fails to impress audiences with her acting skills. The actor has now revealed that he will soon be seen in a web series titled *Kandhaar*. Samarth released his first look from the show and left his fans super excited. In the poster, he was seen in his intense avatar with long hair and kholed eyes.

While not a lot is known about Samarth's character as of now, we know that he will be playing the powerful role of Masood Afgani in the show.

Directed by Shahid Kazmi, *Kandhaar's* shoot is currently underway in Kashmir. Later, the team will also travel to Kargil for another shoot schedule of the show. Besides Samarth, the show will also star Ishita Raj. Her first look from the series was recently at IFFI Goa 2024.

Samarth Jurel is known for shows like *Udaariyaan*. He was last seen in *Bigg Boss 17*. He will soon also be seen in a mythological web series with 22 episodes, *Buddh Dev*, streaming on Hari Om.

Recently, Samarth talked about playing the role of Buddh Dev in the show when he said, "Buddhadev refers to the planet Mercury. This project explores how the planet was formed, focusing on Buddhadev's life, his birth and his parents—Brihaspati Dev and Chandra Dev. It delves into his journey of gaining knowledge and the importance of planets like Buddha in maintaining the stability of the solar system. The story also highlights his love story and deep affection for his mother."



Tabu unleashes her inner warrior as Sister Francesca in *Dune: Prophecy*

With the launch of *Dune: Prophecy*, Tabu is taking on the global stage as a recurring character in the series. Indian fans are in for a surprise as a new still of Tabu as Sister Francesca has been unveiled. The makers also announced that the actress' episode will air on JioCinema Premium in India, on December 16.

Taking to their social media handles, the makers released a fresh still of Tabu as Sister Francesca. The caption read, "Prepare for a new Sister to show her strength. The #*DuneProphecy* episode featuring Tabu premieres December 15 on @streamonmax and December 16 in India on @officialjiocinema."

Tabu as Sister Francesca looks intriguing in the new still released from *Dune: Prophecy*. Dressed in all-black, Tabu looks intense and ready to take on any odds against her, in the still. Set 10,000 years before Paul Atreides' rise to power, *Dune: Prophecy* chronicles the journey of two Harkonnen sisters as they battle forces endangering humanity's future.



Diving back into world of *Moana* with Jason Hand and David G Derrick Jr

Directors Jason Hand and David G Derrick Jr are no strangers to the magical world of animation. Having worked on numerous projects, they have now joined forces to bring to life the highly anticipated sequel, *Moana 2*. In an exclusive conversation, they open up about their experiences working on the film and what makes this project so special to them.

For Jason Hand, working on the first *Moana* was a dream come true. "It was my favourite assignment, because the film is just so magical," he says. "It's also the film that I've watched with my family more than any other." When David Derrick asked him to join him in directing *Moana 2*, Hand didn't hesitate for a second.

David Derrick, on the other hand, has a deep personal connection with *Moana*. "I felt like I was on the journey with *Moana*," he reveals. "I have ancestors from Samoa and just as *Moana* comes to understand her heritage, working on and researching this film brought me closer to my own." Derrick's connection to the story goes beyond just direction – he has a familial tie to the culture that *Moana* represents. Derrick's experience working on *Moana* was not just about directing a film; it was also about reconnecting with his roots. He recalls traveling with his brothers and sisters to learn more about their Samoan heritage. "We learned how to husk and crack a coconut without any tools," he shares. "We cooked our dinner in a traditional Samoan oven called an umu."

As for what audiences can expect from *Moana 2*, Hand promises that the film will be just as magical as the first. "This all-new adventure brings back those characters that everyone loves with new songs and great storytelling," he says. "It's a very powerful thing to have everyone at the studio—both in Vancouver and in Burbank—coming together to make this film something incredibly special."

Aamir Khan credits Salman Khan for helping him with *Dangal's* title

There have been numerous examples of Salman's generosity and another instance came to light when Aamir Khan revealed how Salman Khan helped him secure the title for his film *Dangal*.

When superstar Aamir Khan attended a press conference, he shared an incident about how Salman Khan was the reason he managed to get the title for his film *Dangal*. He said, "There's another thing I need to thank Salman for, is the title *Dangal*. I don't know do you know that? Because *Dangal* title was written in the script. But when we came to know then the rights were with Puneet. I knew that Salman is very close to Puneet and I called up Salman on Monday and said, 'Yaar, I want the *Dangal* title, can you request, can you arrange a meeting between Puneet and Me?' Actually Salman called Puneet and said that he wanted the title, whereas he was making *Sultan* and people say that we are fighting with each other, it is the same wrestling film. But it is not like that, Salman actually helped us, Salman has a big hand in getting the *Dangal* title and he called up Puneet. Puneet and I met and Puneet was very sweet. He said that he wasn't using the title and asked us to use it. That's how we got the title *Dangal*."



Meanwhile, on the work front, Salman Khan is set to return on Eid 2025 with *Sikandar*, produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and directed by AR Murugadoss.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

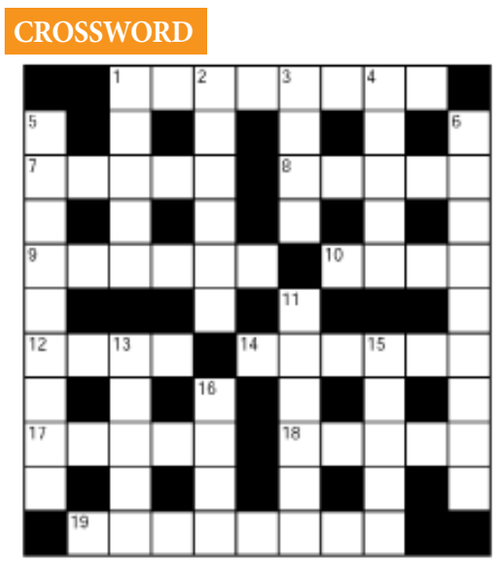
Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Tiniest
7 A fish in rivers and lakes
8 Stick this on an envelope
9 Having a meal
10 Shout
12 Seeds in an apple
14 Opposite of weak
17 Precise
18 Nips with the teeth
19 Half of twenty-eight
6 Say you are sorry
11 A building where a horse is kept
13 A keyboard instrument
15 Frequently
16 A light in the night sky

DOWN

1 Fire a gun
2 Pretending
3 Mislaid
4 Frighten
5 Tried

SOLUTION

T	A	D	P	O	L	E	S	I
R	R	■	■	E	T	■	I	■
A	W	A	Y	■	S	T	U	P	I	D
V	■	K	■	■	S	■	D	■	A	■
E	L	E	C	T	■	S	E	V	E	N
L	■	U	■	■	N	■	■	G	■	■
L	E	A	R	N	■	S	T	A	G	E
E	■	I	Ç	■	■	C	■	R	■	■
R	E	M	O	V	E	■	Y	O	Y	O
N	■	U	■	I	■	R	■	U	■	■
D	■	S	U	I	T	A	N	A	S	■

the pioneer
Vijayawada

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ROCK COLLECTION, GANGES ZEN AND IN-FLIGHT HACKS WITH ADAH SHARMA

TRAVELOGUE

From her earliest travel memories to her most recent escapades, Adah takes *The Pioneer* on a journey that's as much about exploring new destinations as it is about exploring the human spirit. Be it the spiritual retreats in Haridwar to hilarious encounters in Bangkok, she's got it all







AARTI SREENATH
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Adah Sharma's travels are less about "tourist spots" and more about uncharted territory, where even the air feels different, like a soft whispering secret only she's been entrusted to hear. Her latest trip to Haridwar, for example, wasn't a luxury hotel getaway but an ashram retreat by the mighty Ganges, where she and her mother slept under a roof woven from simplicity, not silk sheets. The magic? It wasn't in the amenities or the itinerary, but in the stillness of the river, the temple chants floating through the air and the warmth of the people who didn't need to speak to make you feel at home. It's this kind of unassuming beauty that the *1920* fame chases on her travels, a pure connection with the land, the culture and the very essence of the place.

But her sense of travel isn't limited to spiritual epiphanies or quiet walks by the riverbank. Her adventures come with delightful twists of chaos, comic relief and moments that belong in a reality show of their own. Imagine a plane ride where a woman sitting behind her delivers a one-woman performance, shifting her voice from calm to loudspeaker-level dramatic in a matter of seconds.

The Kerela Story star's love for travel comes with an air of spontaneity and a deep connection to culture. The actress, who had embarked on a soul-stirring trip to Haridwar, shares, "I stayed with my mother at the ashram instead of a hotel. The warmth of the people there and the spiritual vibe made the experience unforgettable. Every evening, we sat by the river, soaking in the tranquility and meditating. It was a simple yet profoundly beautiful experience."

Comfort and mindfulness define her travel style. As an actor, she always makes an effort to show that it's okay to not be fashionable when you're having fun. "Enjoying the moment is the most fashionable thing you can do," she emphasises. Her footwear of choice? Grass chappals. "We walked a lot and visited temples, so I wanted something easy to slip on—definitely not sneakers for this trip!"

True to her adventurous spirit, the *Commando 2* actress prefers wandering without a strict itinerary. "I love travelling without a map. Getting lost helps you discover places you wouldn't find otherwise. I don't like ticking off checklists or saying I have to visit four spots in a day. Zero agenda is the best agenda," she says with a laugh.

Her admiration for India's diversity shines through as she talks about the country's unique charm. "India is incredible. From the snow-capped mountains of Kashmir to the beaches of Kerala and the sand dunes of Rajasthan, we have it all in one country. It's rare to find such varied terrains in one place."

Surprisingly, for someone who travels extensively for work, her favourite vacation spot is her own home. "Honestly, after all the travel, my bed feels like the best destination. I work a lot, so when I get a day off, I cherish my space at home."

For the *Hasee toh Phasee* fame, home isn't just where the heart is—it's her ultimate vacation spot. "I have a music room at home where I play the piano and guitar," she shares with a smile. "I interact with the birds and squirrels who visit regularly—they're like old friends now. There's a special corner where I curl up with a book. It's my sanctuary, especially after long stretches of work and travel."

Whether at home or by the banks of the Ganges, her idea of a perfect retreat is all about embracing the moment, finding peace, and reconnecting with herself.

For her, travel often comes with its share of unexpected adventures. Recalling one such quirky incident during a flight, she says, "My mom, my hairdresser and I were seated together, and there was this girl right behind us. At first glance, she looked perfectly normal, but then she started speaking like she had a loudspeaker in her throat. She was arguing with someone and her tone kept changing—one moment she was completely calm, and the next, she'd burst into dramatic voices. It was like watching a live masterclass in acting!" Adah laughs, adding, "She kept it up for the entire flight. It was unexpected and entertaining, but also a little eerie."

Flights seem to bring their own set of recurring challenges for her. "I have this uncanny knack for always being seated near a crying baby," she jokes. "It's like a given—every flight, there's one within earshot. And no, they're not crying because of me!"

Amid these amusing adventures, she finds moments of focus, even during her travels. Ahead of starting her show, Reeta Sanyal took her script along on her latest trip. "I remember sitting with my mother every evening, practicing my lines. We stayed at an ashram that had a gaushala, so sometimes I even rehearsed with the cows as my audience!" From sky-high dramas to impromptu rehearsals in serene surroundings, her travel stories are as vibrant and spontaneous as the actress herself.

Her earliest travel memory is one she cherishes deeply—a family trip to Hawaii when she was just three and a half years old. "We stayed there for eight months and I absolutely loved it! I used to hit the beach almost twice a day," she recalls with nostalgia. As a self-proclaimed music experimenter, her travels often inspire her to explore new melodies. "Just like people experiment with food, I experiment with music. Whenever I'm travelling, I ask those around me about their favorite songs. It's such an amazing way to discover music I wouldn't otherwise know," she explains.

Her openness extends to local commutes. "When using local transport, I let people play whatever music they're listening to in their language. It's like a cultural exchange, but with songs!"

Her knack for finding humour in cultural nuances shines through when recounting a funny episode from Bangkok. "I went to this restaurant and they told me they didn't serve vegetarian food. But the menu had burgers and pizzas! So, I asked if they could make me a pizza without the meat. They refused, saying they'd only serve it with the non-veg toppings and I could just pick them off. I was shocked!" she laughs.

Determined, the *Bastar* fame tried another approach. "I asked if they could give me just the plain pizza base—no toppings. But they kept insisting, 'No have, no give.' They said it would ruin the taste of the dish. It became this hilarious back-and-forth with hand gestures. Eventually, I was so hungry I even made growling stomach sounds to plead for bread. But they didn't budge!"

For her, travel is as much about collecting memories as it is about picking up tangible keepsakes—sometimes quite literally. "I don't know if it's strange, but I love collecting rocks or shells from wherever I stay. If it's a beach trip, I get carried away," she shares, grinning. The result? "My luggage often ends up 4-5 kilos overweight because of these treasures. But it's worth it! Once home, I paint on them. It's like taking a piece of the place with me and turning it into art."

Her creative streak doesn't stop there. She's also mastered the art of inflight entertainment. "We all love watching movies or shows on flights, but holding a phone for hours hurts your hands, and tilting your neck to look at it on the tray table isn't ideal either," she notes. Her solution? Pure genius.

"At the back of the tray table, there's that little hook for the paper vomit bag. I loop the bag around the hook like a noose, then attach my phone cover to it from underneath. The phone hangs perfectly at eye level, so you can watch in peace—no neck pain, no hand strain!" she explains enthusiastically.

From collecting beach souvenirs to inventing travel hacks, her adventures are as innovative as they are personal. "It's these little things that make every journey unique and fun," she says with a smile.

Tuning in emotions into every note

With a voice that weaves a spell of serenity and a repertoire that boasts of versatility, Aanchal Tyagi is steadily carving a niche for herself in the Indian music scene. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, she unravels the threads of her musical journey and her latest release, *Doob Rahe*



SHIKHA DUGGAL
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From Indore, Aanchal Tyagi is a multilingual singer and performer. Her song *Kojagiri* from the critically acclaimed movie *Godavari* marked her playback singing debut in 2022! Step into the spotlight with the captivating singer as we delve into the melodies, inspirations and passions that fuel her music. With a voice that can soothe, inspire and uplift, she has captured the hearts of fans everywhere. From the heart to the mic, she pours her soul into every performance and we are thrilled to sit down with this artist to uncover the secrets behind her musical magic!

Doob Rahe marks her latest release. Speaking about the feelings she wanted to arouse in listeners and the idea behind this song, she said, "The song I worked on was always supposed to be cheerful and have that quirky quality. The idea was to have that youthful vibe so listeners and the current generation could connect with the music. We were brainstorming even during the production process with the concept that it should have those beats. You would want to groove to it as you listen to it as well. As one listens to the song, I wanted them to feel as though it's something new in the indie music scene and want to dance."

Aanchal's versatile vocal talent has also been featured in several standout projects, including Abhijeet Srivastava's captivating *Fungeet-Najariya*, Shashwat Sachdev's nationally acclaimed composition *Paris London Amsterdam* and her latest energetic collaboration *Jhoome Re* for Hyundai Spotlight, alongside the talented Benny Dayal. "Whenever we plan a new song, we make sure the words are simple yet leave an impact on the listener's mind," she stated in this interview. "I always work with Shahira & Poorva on the lyrics. Although there isn't any particular inspiration, we make sure the song fits the melody and the message it conveys. Therefore, the melody of the song is more significant to me than the lyrics and the emotions it arouses in me after listening to it are what inspire me to write lyrics that complement the tune."

Her artistic growth has been profoundly influenced by her rigorous training in Indian classical music, which began at the tender age of six. She is an All India Radio-rated artist! Woohoo! But there's a catch.

"This is my first song with Shashwat and I had a great time during our sessions. It's a fun song, which is exactly what I wanted it to be. I always aspired to create humorous songs as an artist and this undoubtedly aided in the development of my musical foundation. The experience of working with Benny for the second time was unique. I had the chance to work on both the audio and video fronts thanks to Ranveer Singh."

She also mentioned how, since the age of six, she has been schooled in Indian classical music. Regarding how this early training shaped her current vocals, she stated, "It was more akin to a rudimentary music lesson than a full-fledged one. My parents urged me to concentrate on my education because I was also a good student. I'll give that training all the credit it deserves for helping me develop my foundation because classical training strengthens it and makes it simple to sing a variety of songs. The subtleties of the semi-classical melody, particularly in *Doob Rahe,* may sound like pop, but if you listen closely, you'll hear the semi-classical touch. Thus, I can say that the training has improved my vocals."

"I prioritise becoming a vocalist over everything else. I therefore make every effort to try new things. Whether you listen to *Paris London Amsterdam, Lifafe, or Doob Rahe*, each song is unique in its own manner. This is my attempt to make each song versatile in its own way. My goal is to give every song my best effort, so when a new genre presents itself, I make sure to master the fundamentals before adding my own flair. This keeps me loyal to my music and supports the new genre at the same time," added the singer.

Later, listening to her work on international platforms, Aanchal said to fans, "I love that music is so accessible to listeners and that they have the freedom to listen to whoever they like. They can play whatever they want and continue without having to go out and buy cassettes to listen to them. With more listeners and chances, these platforms have also provided a path forward for Indian musicians seeking international fame and access. Working together is crucial as you grow each other's fan base. The best thing is that you may experiment, discover each other's strengths, and bring out the best in one another. Collaborations also help in getting the individual flavour to it and talking about *Doob Rahe*, it is composed by Abhijeet Shrivasta, written by Shahira and I have sung it with Varun Jain, who is a commendable vocalist, so overall this collaboration is where four good artists come together and try and bring something good to the table, adding to the value of the song."

Bringing taste of Bihar's rich culinary heritage to Hyderabad



Driven by his passion for cooking and desire to make Bihar's regional cuisine known worldwide, Raju has defeated all odds to set up his culinary empire, Champaran Meat House, across India. A few years ago, Raju, who hails from a small village in Motihari, Bihar, was struggling to make ends meet. With all means nearly exhausted, he got a new lease on life when he saw his neighbor cooking chicken in a handi, inspiring him to sell handi mutton. Turning his passion for cooking and knowledge of regional cuisine into a flourishing business, Raju now proudly owns outlets in various cities, including Patna, Kolkata and Delhi. With plans to expand his footprint across the country, he is gearing up to launch new outlets in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

"When I started, it was a difficult time for me as I was the only earning member in my family," Raju recalled. "I had no means left and was desperate to find sources of income. Our house needed repairing and I had no money to fix the walls and roof. It was getting tougher for me to survive in a city like Patna. That's when I went back to my village and saw an acquaintance cooking chicken. I wasn't convinced with the preparation and decided to try my own recipe with mutton. The idea clicked and *Ahuna Handi Mutton* was started in a small cart."

Champaran Meat House has gained fame for its unique dish, *Champaran mutton curry*, also known as *Ahuna mutton*, cooked in earthen pots in dum style. This dish has captured the hearts of food lovers and Raju attributes its success to the use of mustard oil, which lends a richness to the dish. The 1-hour-10-minute cooking time allows the moisture and aroma to stay in the handi, making it flavourful.

What sets its apart is the use of onions and a string of spices with high nutritional value. The preparations, which present a unique blend of spices, have been endorsed by celebrities like Bipasha Basu and Akshay Kumar.

"It's essential to preserve our culinary heritage, which has been passed down through generations," Raju emphasised. "I use traditional spices like laung and javitri to maintain the flavors. The slow cooking style in an earthen pot enhances the taste and presents a unique blend of tradition and flavours."

Raju's journey from a small cart to owning multiple restaurants is a testament to his hard work and dedication. He now employs hundreds of people and consumes 8-9 quintals of mutton daily across his outlets. With plans to build a food mall in Bihar, Raju remains committed to promoting the state's culinary legacy.

"Hyderabadi Biryani became famous first in Hyderabad and then across the country," Raju noted. "Similarly, it was vital for *Ahuna Handi Mutton* to become popular first in Bihar and then nationwide. I believe that those who work hard never lose."

the pioneer
VIJAYAWADA | FRIDAY | NOVEMBER 29, 2024

Hybrid model for Champions Trophy not acceptable: PCB tells ICC

PTI ■ KARACHI



The Pakistan Cricket Board informed the International Cricket Council on Thursday that it will not accept the Hybrid model for the Champions Trophy, and asked the global governing body not to discuss the option in Friday's board meeting.

The ICC has convened a meeting of the executive members virtually to resolve the scheduling imbroglio surrounding the marquee event after India's refusal to send the team across the border.

"I can confirm that PCB has a few hours back told the ICC that a Hybrid Model is not acceptable to them," a source told PTI.

The PCB has been rigid in its opposition to the hybrid model and had advised the ICC to look at other options to stage the Champions Trophy.

The Pakistan board maintained that having a Hybrid model would mean giving preferential treatment to India.

"I can confirm initially the PCB had looked at the possibility of a Hybrid model on the condition that if India can't play in Pakistan, then in future there would be Hybrid models in all ICC events in India right until 2031 (ODI World Cup in India and Bangladesh) as Pakistan would not go and play in India," the source said.

Another source confirmed that PCB has also reminded the ICC to inform whether the BCCI had submitted a letter in writing from their government stating that clearance was not given to the Indian team to play in Pakistan.

"Under ICC regulations if any team says its government is not allowing it to play in another nation on whatever grounds that board has to submit their government's directives in writing which we have not seen so far," the source said.

He said the PCB had acknowledged the contribution of the BCCI and Indian market in ICC's income generation but reminded the ICC that as per numbers from the last few global events Pakistan also played a major part in ensuring the revenues through their matches against India.

He said the ICC has yet to confirm the timing of the virtual meeting.



East Bengal seek first win of season in clash against NorthEast United

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Bottom-placed East Bengal FC will make one more attempt to notch their first win of the season when they take on NorthEast United FC in their eighth match of the Indian Super League (ISL) season here on Friday.

After losing six straight matches, East Bengal opened their account with a goalless draw against Mohammedan Sporting on November 9 in a Kolkata Derby. They will now want to take one step forward and clinch all three points in front of their home crowd at the Yuba Bharati Krirangan.

The Highlanders, on the other hand, have been in an impressive form this season, as they are currently placed at third with 15 points from nine games, thanks to four wins and three draws.

They have scored 21 goals, conceding only 15, and have lost merely once in their previous five matches. They trail the top-placed Bengaluru FC (20) by five points -- a gap they will be confident of bridging, given how they have been managing to put the pieces of their jigsaw together of late.

The two sides have faced each other eight times, with NorthEast United and East Bengal FC emerging victorious in four and two matches respectively. A couple of fixtures have resulted in a draw.

NorthEast United have been on an unbelievable run recently, winning thrice and drawing once in their previous four encounters. Avoiding a defeat in Friday's clash will make it their longest-ever unbeaten sequence since going 11 matches without a loss from January-March 2021.

East Bengal FC head coach Oscar Bruzon acknowledged that NorthEast United will play on the frontfoot in this fixture, but assured that the home team has done its homework properly.

"I don't think NorthEast United FC is going to come here to neutralise our attacking power, but they are coming to try and score more goals themselves," Burzon said.

"That's what I know from what they have been doing in the last games with their frontline. We will try to play our best game, and win the match," he added.

NorthEast United head coach Juan Pedro Benali mentioned that maintaining a fine balance between their offensive instincts and defensive discipline will be critical in this match.

"Each game is a different story. We need to make big chances to score and at the same time make it equally difficult for them to do so. That's our objective, because we know we can score and that's a very important part (of our gameplay)," Benali said.

India can reach top-50 of FIFA rankings in next 10 years: Mandaviya



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India can break into the top-50 in the FIFA rankings, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Thursday, according to a release issued by All India Football Federation (AIFF).

The top brass of the AIFF, including its president Kalyan Chaubey, met Mandaviya on Thursday to brief him on the existing AIFF-FIFA Academy in Odisha and the plan to build additional four such facilities in different zones.

"An elaborate plan has to be chalked out and put in place for execution so that India can reach a FIFA ranking below 50 in the next ten years," Mandaviya was quoted as saying in the AIFF release.

"India boasts one of the largest pools of young talent globally. The focus should be on grassroots, talent identification. They should be nurtured along with coach development which will be pivotal for the sports growth."

The FIFA rankings began in 1992 and the Indian men's football team's best ranking has been 94, achieved in February 1996. The team has broken into the top-100 on a very few occasions.

In the latest FIFA chart issued on Thursday, the Indian football team is ranked 127th, two spots down from the earlier October list. Japan, Iran, Korea and Australia, the regular Asian countries in the World Cup, are ranked at 15th, 18th, 23rd and 26th respectively in the latest rankings.

After the meeting, which also discussed the importance of coach development, the minister assured the AIFF of all possible support for the development of the sport in India.

"Rapid economic growth and an expanding middle class are reshaping attitudes towards sports. Parents are now encouraging children to balance academics with sports unlike earlier times," the minister pointed out.

"The Government is committed to providing comprehensive support for sports development in India. Initiatives like new training centres and partnerships with international bodies will drive progress."

Chaubey said the AIFF has presented a detailed plan to Mandaviya.

"Given the size and population of a vast country like India, one AIFF-FIFA academy in Odisha is not enough. So, we proposed to have four more regional academies with the same technical supports from FIFA."

"Presently in India, there are 25 fully professional clubs in the ISL and the I-League. In addition to that, there are 80 AIFF-accredited academies, all these teams are having under-13 age group category teams, the details have been presented to the ministry."

FIFA Talent Development Scheme (TDS) Project Director Ged Roddy, who is currently on a visit to India, was also present at the meeting, along with AIFF Secretary General Anilkumar.

The AIFF-FIFA Academy was launched in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, after a visit of world renowned coach Arsene Wenger, who is the FIFA Chief of Global Football Development.

Australia add uncapped all-rounder Beau Webster to squad as cover for Mitchell Marsh

PTI ■ SYDNEY



Australia have added uncapped all-rounder Beau Webster to their squad for the second Test against India as cover for Mitchell Marsh, whose fitness remains a concern.

Marsh had pulled up "sore" following Australia's 295-run hammering in the series opener in Perth earlier this week.

Webster, also a right-hand pace all-rounder like Marsh, has been the stand out performer in the Sheffield Shield over the past two years. The 30-year-old has collected 1788 runs including five hundreds and nine fifties.

He starred in Tasmania's Sheffield Shield match against New South Wales earlier this week, striking a 61 and 49 besides taking five wickets.

He also impressed in the A series against India earlier this month, becoming the the second highest run-getter for Australia A behind compatriot Nathan McSweeney, collecting 145 runs across four innings at an impressive average of 72.50.

With the ball, he became the joint-leading wicket-taker alongside Brendan Doggett both taking seven scalps each.

"To get a few runs and wickets (for Australia A) was pleasing against a strong Indian side," Webster was quoted as saying by cricket.Com.Au ahead of the announcement on Thursday.

"Any time you're playing 'A' cricket, it's the one step below Test level, so it does hold you in good stead. To get the call from 'Bails' (men's selection chair George Bailey) at the end of the NSW game was a really proud moment and I can't wait to get stuck in."

Webster will join the Australian squad in Adelaide next week.

"There's a tight turnaround between the Adelaide and Gabba Test so I think (I'm there) just to have some cover there for that middle-order role, whichever way they go," Webster added.

Apart from his explosive batting, Webster has added seam-bowling to his abilities, a skill he added to his repertoire just four years ago.

Despite the disappointing show in the series-opener, coach Andrew McDonald had asserted that there will be no changes in the home team for the pink ball Test in Adelaide, starting on December 6.

India to send 68-member team for Asia-Pacific Deaf Games



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A 68-member Indian team will take part in the Asia-Pacific Deaf Games to be held in Kuala Lumpur from December 1 to 8.

The tournament is at par with the Asian Games for individuals with speech and hearing impairment and also serves as a precursor to the Deaflympics, which will be held in Japan next year.

The India will have representation in seven disciplines including athletics, badminton, chess, judo, table tennis, taekwondo and wrestling. A send-off ceremony was organised for the touring party by the Sports Authority of India here at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium ahead of their departure on Friday.

National camps were organised by SAI in Sonepat for wrestling and in the national capital for badminton and judo from November 15 to 30.

The camps for chess, athletics and table tennis were held at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, while the SAI regional centre in Lucknow conducted the taekwondo camp on the same dates.

India's overall contingent is of 92 members including 24 coaches, support staff and officials and SAI has spent close to Rs 3 crore for travel, accommodation, training, equipment and team kits etc.

The Asia-Pacific Games were held last in 2015 at Taiwan where Indian athletes won three gold and two silver medals.

Among those who are expected to clinch medals include double Deaflympics gold medallist Abhinav Sharma, 2022 Deaflympics champion shuttler Jerlin Anika and Amit, who won the bronze in 86kg category wrestling.

Chess has been included in the program for the first time. Mallika Handa will lead the seven-member Indian team.

Sri Lanka all out for record-low 42 in Durban cricket test

AP ■ DURBAN



Sri Lanka was bowled out by South Africa for 42 at Kingsmead on Thursday, its lowest total in test cricket.

Sri Lanka's previous worst was 71 just over 20 years ago in Kandy against Pakistan.

South Africa needed only 83 legal deliveries — 13.5 overs — to rout the Sri Lankans in their first innings. That's the lowest number of deliveries in 100 years. England routed South Africa in 75 balls in 1924.

The 42 was also a record low for a test at Kingsmead, and the record low against South Africa, eclipsing New Zealand's 45 in 2013 in Cape Town.

The pitch was considered batting friendly on day two of the first test, as South Africa scored 111 runs in an extended morning session, resuming on 80-4 and being dismissed for 191. Kamindu Mendis top-scored with 13 in a Sri Lanka lineup which featured four ducks. Medium-pacer Marco Jansen took a career-best 7-13 in 6.5 overs.

Jansen was only the second player after Hugh Trumble of Australia, in 1904 against England, to take seven wickets inside seven overs of a test innings.

Mbappe needs 'support' Real Madrid coach Ancelotti says after 2-0 loss to Liverpool

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Kylian Mbappe hoped his move to Real Madrid would finally end his wait to win the Champions League.

That felt a long way off on Wednesday after a 2-0 defeat to Liverpool left the defending champion in danger of being eliminated from European club soccer's elite tournament at the first stage and in a fight just to make the playoffs for the next round.

If Madrid does make an early exit, Mbappe may look back on a miserable night at Anfield where he was humbled by a young defender and then missed a penalty that would have leveled the score.

Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said afterward the star forward was going through a "difficult moment" just months after he joined the record 15-time European champion.

"We've got to give him our support and love and he will soon be fine," Ancelotti said as he faced multiple questions from Spanish reporters about Mbappe's form. "It could be lack of confidence maybe. Sometimes when moments in the game and things are not working out, the idea is to keep things simple. Don't complicate things.

"He's going through that moment now. You get through them. Don't blame him for missing a penalty. People miss penalties. We can't put too much grief on him for that."

World Cup winner Mbappe looked a shadow of himself against a Liverpool team that leads the way in the Premier League and the Champions League this season.

He was brought crashing down by a crunching tackle from 21-year-old right back Conor Bradley when threatening to burst through on goal in the first half — sparking a huge cheer from the home crowd.

And it got worse for Mbappe in the second half when he had the chance to make it 1-1 from the penalty spot after Alexis Mac Allister had given six-time European champion Liverpool the lead. But with Caoimhin Kelleher to beat, he saw his effort pushed away by Liverpool's back-up goalkeeper.

Mbappe has scored nine goals in 18 appearances for Madrid since leaving Paris Saint-Germain as a free agent at the end of last season. But he has only one goal in the Champions League for his new club, which has lost three of its five games in the revamped competition.



"Things are not running for him. We've got to be patient. He is an extraordinary player — a fantastic player," Ancelotti said.

Madrid is 24th in the new-look 36-team league phase of the competition. The top eight teams advance to the round of 16, while those ranked ninth to 24th go into a playoff.

Mbappe wasn't the only player to fail to score a penalty in the match, with Mohamed Salah also missing a spot kick of his own. But substitute Cody Gakpo doubled Liverpool's advantage.

Victory saw new Liverpool head coach Arne Slot manage something his predecessor Jurgen Klopp never could by beating Real in the Champions League. Klopp lost five and drew once in six games against Madrid — including two defeats in the final.

Liverpool extended its perfect record in the Champions League this season and is top of the standings after five games.

Each team plays eight games in the opening phase.

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Nostalgic drama meets heart-pumping thrills in *Vikkatakavi*

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REVIEW

Cast: Naresh Agastya, Megha Akash, Raghu Kunche, Shiju Abdul Rasheed, Ramya Durga, Ashok Kumar, Tarak Ponnappa, Mukthar Khan, Amit and others

Music director: Ajay Arasada

Cinematography: Shoeb Siddiquie

Producer: Raj Talluri **Writer:** Teja Deshraj

Director: Pradeep Maddali **Streaming OTT:** Zee5

Rating: 3/5

The Telugu web series is growing in popularity and has become a significant platform for new directors, technicians and actors. *Vikkatakavi*, the first detective web series set in Telangana, is now streaming on Zee5. Directed by Pradeep Maddali and produced by Raj Talluri, the series has an interesting backstory. Teja Deshraj, who worked with director Prashanth Varma, provided the story for this web series. Naresh Agastya, known for his roles in films like *Mathu Vadalara*, *Senapathi* and *Panchatantram,* as well as the web series *Paruvu*, plays the lead role, while Megha Akash is the female lead. The series also features actors from other industries.

PLOT

Ramakrishna (Naresh Agastya), a private detective in Hyderabad, is often sought out by the police for his expertise in solving cases. He is exceptionally sharp, intelligent, and accurate. When Professor Venugopal (Rama Rao Jadhav) requests his assistance in investigating strange occurrences near Devathala Gutta in Amaragiri Estate, Ramakrishna accepts the challenge. His motivation is personal: his mother (Ramya Durga) suffers from a peculiar disease, and he needs money for her treatment. In Amaragiri, he meets the estate's king, Raja Narasimha (Shiju Abdul Rasheed), to gather information. Raja's son-in-law, Raghupathi (Raghu Kunche), is an MLA and his daughter is Lakshmi (Megha Akash). Villagers who visit Devathala Gutta mysteriously lose their memory and are confined to a room. As Ramakrishna delves deeper into the mystery, he uncovers many surprising elements. What happens to those who visit Devathala Gutta? What befell Raja Narasimha's son, Mahadev (Tarak Ponnappa)? How do Ramakrishna and Lakshmi fall in love and why does Lakshmi visit Devathala Gutta? The web series *Vikkatakavi* holds the answers to these questions, and more.

ANALYSIS

The web series *Vikkatakavi* begins in Hyderabad, showcasing detective Ramakrishna's exceptional skills in apprehending culprits. The story then shifts to Amaragiri Estates and director Pradeep Maddali masterfully maintains suspense at the end of each episode, keeping viewers engaged and eager to continue watching. Teja Deshraj's story gives equal importance to each character and the series is set in the late 1940s and 1970s. The art director deserves credit for creating an authentic periodic atmosphere. Although the graphics may not be up to par, likely due to budget constraints, the series is made with authenticity and suspense that continues until the very end. While the story starts off normally, it takes an interesting turn towards the end, linking to Pakistan, Razakar and other unexpected elements. The director and writer have combined their efforts to create this engaging web series.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

Cinematography is a highlight, capturing the period atmosphere, greenery, village ambiance and forest settings. Music by Ajay Arasada complements the story and is a notable aspect. As a Telangana backdrop detective web series, the slang is also well-suited. While some scenes are unnecessarily dragged out, fans of the thriller genre will enjoy *Vikkatakavi*. The series has six episodes, each approximately 35 minutes long.

PERFORMANCES

Naresh Agastya delivers a solid performance as detective Ramakrishna, carrying the burden of the role with ease. Megha Akash plays the female lead, but her character lacks depth. Shiju Abdul Rasheed, Raghu Kunche, Amit, Tarak Ponnappa, Mukthar Khan, Ashok Kumar, Ramya Durga, Giridhar, Ravi Teja and others support the story well in their respective roles.

VERDICT

Overall, *Vikkatakavi* is a thriller web series worth watching. Director Pradeep Maddali deserves credit for maintaining suspense until the end, supported by the art and music directors. Although there are some minor flaws, the series keeps viewers engaged till the end.

Roti Kapada Romance is 'kiraak' youthful entertainer

PNS|HYDERABAD

Producer Bekkem Venugopal, known for films like *Husharu*, *Nenu Local* and *Cinema Choopista Mava*, is now presenting *Roti Kapada Romance* with a cast of young actors. Directed by debutant Vikram Reddy, the film also introduces new talent. After facing several postponements, *Roti Kapada Romance* finally hit theatres on Thursday.

PLOT

The story revolves around four friends and their respective love stories. Rahul (played by Sandeep Saroj), a software employee, falls in love with his boss Priya (played by Sonia Thakur). However, Priya wants to get married within a week, but Rahul is unprepared. Harsha (played by Harsha Narra), an event planner, meets Sonia (played by Khushboo Chowdhury) regularly, and they develop a physical relationship. When Sonia becomes pregnant, they must decide their next steps. Surya (played by Tarun Ponuganthi), a popular RJ, is proposed to by Divya (Nuveksha), and they start living together. However, Divya is also seeing another guy, while Surya genuinely loves her. Vikram alias Vicky (played by Supraj Ranga), a Telangana boy, falls in love with Swetha (played by Meghalekha), a new girl in town. He helps her get a job, but she changes completely after starting work. What happened to their lives and how they take their relationship is the crux of the story.

REVIEW

Cast: Harsha Narra, Sandeep Saroj, Supraj Ranga, Tarun, Sonu Thakur, Nuveksha, Megha Lekha, Khushboo Chaudhary

Music: Harshavardhan Rameshwar, R R Dhruvan, Vasanth G and Sunny MR

Cinematography: Santosh Reddy

Producer: Bekkem Venugopal, Srujan Kumar Bojjam

Writer and Director: Vikram Reddy

Rating: 2.5/5

ANALYSIS

Roti Kapada Romance is another addition to the list of youthful comedies in Telugu cinema. Director Vikram Reddy narrates the four boys' stories in a humorous and entertaining way, primarily targeting the youth. The dialogues and language used are realistic, making the film relatable. The first half of the film focuses on the friends and their love stories, which are narrated separately but blend seamlessly together. The director showcases the friends' camaraderie and their realistic portrayal of youth.

Of the four stories, Vikram's love story is the most hilarious and entertaining one. The scenes between him and his father is also very interesting. Then comes RJ Surya and Divya's episodes. The best part of the film is that all the actors performed well and they perfectly fit into their roles. Also, their comedy timing and punch dialogues match perfectly.

While the first half portrays love, the second half goes in a different way. The climax is pretty interesting. But as a first time director Vikram Reddy has done a tremendous job narrating a youthful entertainer with a message in the climax. Though there are a few flaws, curse words and weak points in the film, you still can watch this one.

PERFORMANCES

The cast, including Supraj Ranga, Harsha Narra, Sandeep Saroj, and Tarun, deliver impressive performances. The actresses, Sonu Thakur, Nuveksha, Megha Lekha and Khushboo Chaudhary, also play their parts well. Four music directors worked and they provided good music and background score. The cinematography is good. Though this is a small film, technically, the movie is looking very good. The dialogues are effective and some of them are punch ones and definitely get clapped.

VERDICT

Roti Kapada Romance is primarily aimed at the youth, and director Vikram Reddy successfully delivers a good film. Despite some loopholes, the film is entertaining and the director extracts good performances from the relatively new cast.

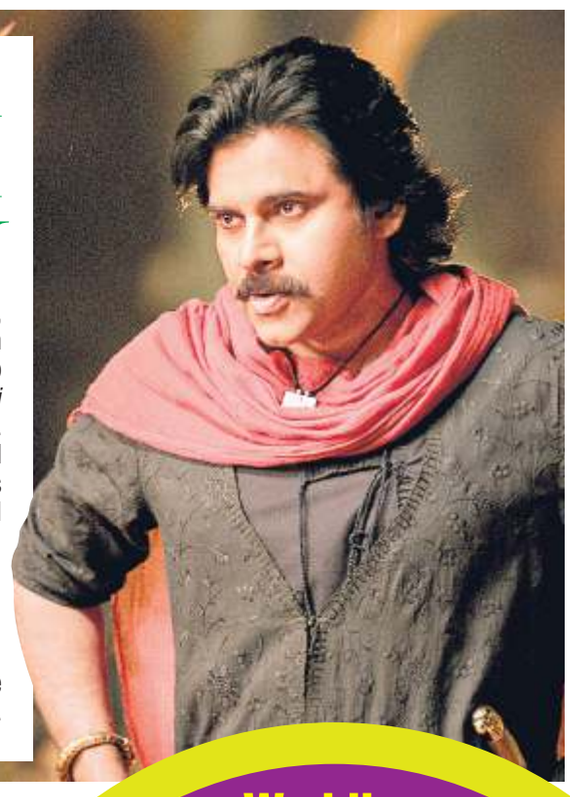


Pawan Kalyan allocates fresh dates for *HHVM*

Pawan Kalyan, the Deputy Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, has been juggling his political responsibilities with his film commitments. After spending a few days in Delhi, he returned to Vijayawada on Thursday morning and asked the makers of *Hari Hara Veera Mallu* to prepare for a shoot this weekend.

The film, a period action drama, is being made in two parts and features Pawan Kalyan in a *Robin Hood*-like role. The movie has entered its final leg of shooting and the last schedule will commence in Vijayawada this weekend. A massive sequence featuring Pawan Kalyan and 200 artistes will be shot, marking the conclusion of the film's shoot.

Hari Hara Veera Mallu boasts an impressive cast, including Bollywood actor Bobby Deol, Niddhi Agerwal, Anupam Kher, Nasser, Raghu Babu, and others. Jyothi Krisna is directing the film, which is scheduled to release on March 28, 2025.



Telugu girl Ananya Nagalla is on rise



Ananya Nagalla, who delivered a notable performance in her last film *Pottel*, is now set to play the lead actress in *Srikakulam Sherlock Home*. Directed by writer-turned-director Mohan, the film is scheduled to release on December 25.

"I am very happy that I got another good character in this film," said Ananya. She added that she can't reveal much about her role, but definitely an impressive one.

As the title suggests, the film's story is set against the backdrop of Srikakulam. "But I didn't speak the slang of that particular area, because in the film my role comes from Visakhapatnam," said Nagalla. The actress mentioned that Vamsi Nandipati acquiring the distribution rights is a positive sign. "We got confidence after he bought the film. This is a good film and I assure you all that it is like full Andhra meals," said the actress.

Ananya is one of the few Telugu actresses making a mark in the industry. She draws inspiration from Chiranjeevi and Nani, who achieved success without any background or godfather. "Without any background or godfather they entered into the industry and became on top, they are an inspiration for me," she said. She added that she is lucky that some good scripts are coming to her.

The film also features Vennela Kishore and Ravi Teja Mahadasyam in important roles. Vennapusa Ramana Reddy is the producer. Vamsi Nandipati, who recently acquired the rights to films like *Committee Kurrollu* and *Ka*, has also bought *Srikakulam Sherlock Homes*. He is confident that the film will be another success for him and the team. The teaser of the film was released on Thursday at a function.

'We make too much of nepotism, ultimately talent speaks'

Rakul Preet Singh is one of the most beloved actresses in Bollywood and South Indian cinema, captivating audiences with her enchanting charm and compelling performances.

Despite a back muscle injury that required bed rest, Rakul has made a strong recovery and was seen attending the International Film Festival of India (IFFI). During the event, she shared her thoughts on nepotism, offering a thoughtful perspective on the often-debated topic.

During a masterclass session at IFFI, Rakul Preet responded to a question on nepotism and said, "We make too much of it. Today if you have worked for so many years and tomorrow for my kids, will I not give them that access. It's like saying, that my dad is a top surgeon.. but he is like, *mai tumko bikul nahi batauga ki tumhe mbbs me kese padhai karna hai* (I won't tell you at all how to study in MMBS). I mean No. That goes on In the country.. one generation works and the other generation definately benefits from it, but will they last well.. they will last only if they work hard enough.. which is why coming back to what he was saying… I feel like we make too much of it.. ultimately you will last only if you deliver."

Her grounded and balanced perspective resonated with the audience, highlighting her belief in merit and hard work as the ultimate measures of success.

On the work front, Rakul will be seen in *De De Pyar De 2* alongside Ajay Devgn and R Madhavan. The film is a sequel to *De De Pyar De* which released in 2019. Following this, she will appear in *Mere Husband Ki Biwi* and is set for the gripping drama *Ameeri*.



Wedding on OTT? Chaitanya team denies



From the last few days onwards there is this news doing rounds. The wedding of Akkineni Naga Chaitanya with actress Sobhitha Dhulipala, which was held at Annapurna Studios, on December 4, is streaming on an OTT. The report says that they sold the rights of this wedding for a whopping price for exclusive streaming. But the team close to the couple denies all these reports and says it is fake news.

"There is NO truth to reports claiming Chay Akkineni and Sobhita wedding will be sold to an OTT platform. A source close to the couple clarifies the rumors are completely baseless. They are committed to keeping this joyous occasion private and personal," said the team of Chaitanya. The Akkineni family is busy making arrangements at the Annapurna studio for this wedding with a huge set. On the other hand, Nagarjuna announced his younger son Akhil's engagement a couple of days back. Another report says that Akhil is going to wed his fiancé at the same time of Chaitanya's wedding. The team also denies these reports.