

ANALYSIS 7
DEVELOPMENT TURNS
AN EMOTIVE ISSUE

MONEY 8
WILL CREATE A LEVEL-PLAYING FIELD
FOR INDIAN HOME TEXTILE EXPORTERS

SPORTS 11
INDIA FACE SOUTHERN
STARS IN 1ST T20I

VIJAYAWADA, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

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'I WILL NOT SHY AWAY,
IF I'M ASKED TO
PLAY A TERRORIST'

Page 12

KCR poised to pull off a hat trick

Swatantra TV opinion poll across Telangana indicate that KCR's image would prop TRS party in the upcoming Assembly elections

KCR's approval rating

Good **58%**
Satisfactory **24%**
Bad **18%**

How the parties fare

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Regardless of the headwinds, TRS supremo K. Chandrasekhara Rao is poised to pull off a hat-trick for the TRS in the next Assembly elections.

The TRS can win 59 Assembly seats out of a total of 119, should elections be held now, says a state-wide opinion poll conducted by Swatantra TV.

The results of the survey titled 'Telangana Naadi' (Pulse of Telangana), which was conducted in November covering 119 constituencies in 33 districts with a sample size of

The survey found that 48% of Telangana is with the TRS, 28% with the Congress, 18% with the BJP and six per cent with the AIMIM and other parties.

around 1 lakh, were telecast on Swatantra TV on Thursday.

The survey says that the Congress will win 31 seats, the BJP 16 seats, and the AIMIM seven seats. There is a tough contest for six seats among the TRS, the BJP and the Congress.

The survey reveals that people definitely want Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao, though they are somewhat upset with his MLAs. Voters have sent clear signals that they want changes in the way the party has been functioning with regard to welfare schemes, approaches of MLAs, and development in constituencies.

Sample size

97,284 Voters

33 Districts,

119 Constituencies

Average sample size 818

Male 53,226,

Female 44,058

SC/ST Participants 21.3%

BC Participants 46.6%

Minorities 8.4%

Other Participants 23.7

PERFORMANCE OF MLAS

Good - 32%

Bad-38%

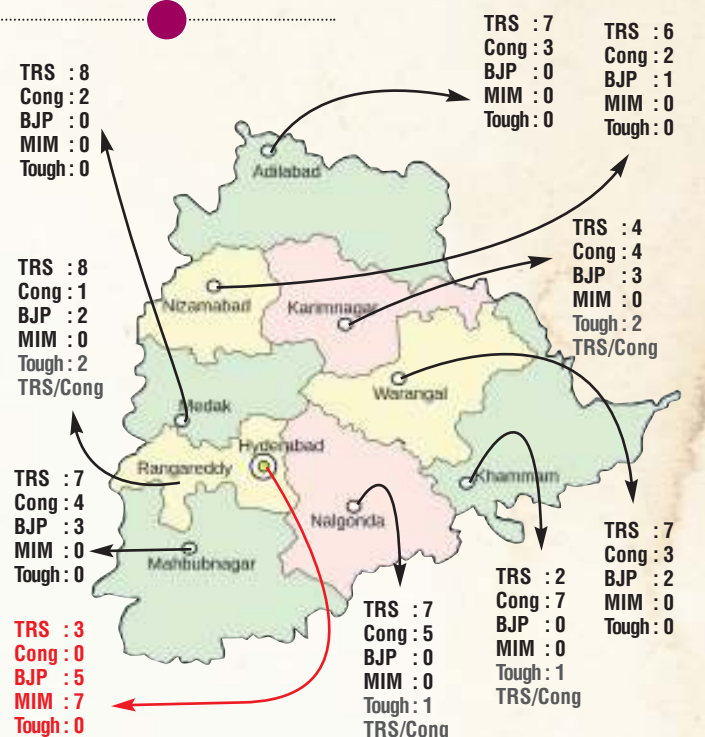
Satisfactory- 30

CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT

Good - 35%

Bad - 29%

Satisfactory- 36%



SIX QUESTIONS

- How is the performance of your MLA?
Good / Satisfactory / Bad
- Has there been development in your village?
Yes/ No/ Satisfactory
- Is Chandrasekhara Rao doing well as Chief Minister? Yes/ No/ Satisfactory
- Did you get help from government?
Yes / No
- Do you think that family rule is going on in Telangana? Yes / No
- Which do you like in TRS, Congress, BJP?
TRS / Congress / BJP

Now it its Bharat Rashtra Samithi Election Commission accepts name change of TRS

TRS Supremo Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhara Rao received an official letter from the Election Commission of India approving the move to change the name of Telangana Rashtra Samiti to Bharat Rashtra Samiti. BRS President KCR decided to organise a formation programme of the Bharat Rashtra Samiti at the auspicious time of 1.20 pm on December 9 and commence party programmes. KCR will sign the official reply to the EC letter at 1.20 pm and send it to the Election Commission. Later, KCR will hoist the BRS flag. There will also be an inaugural ceremony. The Chief Minister has asked state Executive Committee Members, district Presidents, Ministers, MPs, MLAs, and MLCs to attend the programme at the Telangana Bhavan. KCR said that Zilla Parishad Chairmen, Corporation Chairmen, DCCB Presidents, and DCMS Presidents should reach the Telangana Bhavan before noon.



Only KCR's charisma can save TRS MLAs

Even though the people are still voting for the TRS, most voters are dissatisfied with the performance of their MLAs. Swatantra TV tried to assess the performance of MLAs through the Telangana Voter Pulse programme. One of the questions was "How is the performance of your MLA?" People are more dissatisfied with TRS MLAs. They don't expect much when an opposition MLA is elected, but voters have more hopes on an incumbent MLA. The survey also revealed that people are angry with more than half of the MLAs. - Page:2

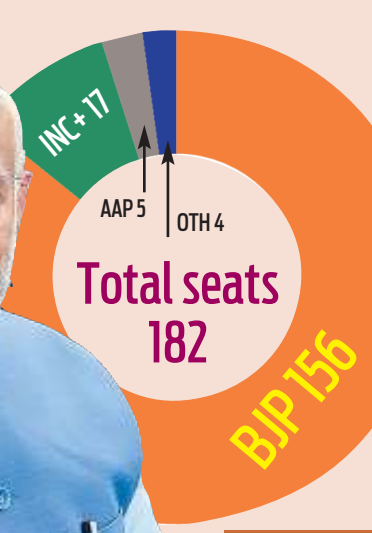
Sajjala hails any move to reunite Andhra, Telangana

VIJAYAWADA: Triggering an intense political debate in both Telugu sibling states, Advisor to the Government of AP (Public Affairs), Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy, has said that the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) welcomes any initiative for the reunification of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. "Our policy is to keep Andhra Pradesh together, if possible," he added. He was reacting to the comments made by former MP Undavalli Arun Kumar at a press conference here on Thursday on the reunification of AP and Telangana States. Undavalli's comments went viral in both the sibling states. Sajjala said that the Jagan Mohan Reddy government continues to fight for the implementation of bifurcation commitments given to AP State. - Page:2



Historic win for BJP in Gujarat

Congress posts worst performance as AAP plays spoilsport



PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party on Thursday posted a historic victory in Gujarat, winning 150 seats and leading in another 6 in the 182-member state assembly.

The Congress party finished second, winning 17 seats, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) that made its debut with a high-decibel campaign won 5 seats. Independents won three

seats and the Samajwadi Party picked up one.

The BJP improved its vote share to 53 per cent from 49 per cent last time, while the Congress party's vote share fell sharply from 42 per cent to 27 per cent, as a good chunk of its voters appeared to have switched to AAP, which secured 13 per cent of the votes counted.

The BJP not only beat its best showing till date - 127 seats in 2002, but also surpassed the record set by the Congress party in 1985, when it won 149

seats under the leadership of late Madhavsinh Solanki.

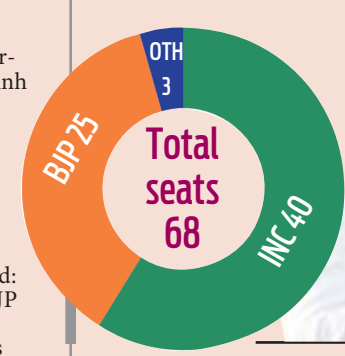
In winning a seventh term, the BJP also matched the Left Front's feat in West Bengal.

Commenting on the results, Modi said: "Gujarat's love for BJP despite it being in power for 25 years is unprecedented, they have broken all records, written history."

Crediting Modi with the party's stupendous performance, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel said the people of Gujarat had reposed their faith in him.

Congress wrests Himachal from BJP

Wins 40 of 68 seats, BJP gets 25



PNS ■ SHIMLA

The Congress on Thursday wrested Himachal Pradesh from the BJP winning 40 seats in the 68-member Assembly in the hill state which maintained its tradition of not voting any incumbent government to power since 1985. According to the results declared by the Election Commission, the BJP won 25 seats, while eight state ministers including Suresh Bhardwaj, Ram Lal Markanda and Surveen Chaudhary lost. The Independents won from three constituencies and the Aam Aadmi Party, which had contested from 67 seats, failed to open its account. - Page:2



TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Krishna Paksha
Tithi: Pratipada: Dec 08 09:38 AM
to Dec 09 11:34 AM
Dvitya: Dec 09 11:34 AM
to Dec 10 01:48 PM

Nakshatram: Mrgashirsha: Dec 08 12:33 PM
to Dec 09 02:59 PM
Dec 09 02:59 PM
to Dec 10 05:42 PM
Ardra:

Rahukalam: 10:45 AM to 12:08 PM
Yamagandam: 2:53 PM to 4:15 PM
Varjyam: 12:20 AM to 02:07 AM
Gulika: 8:00 AM to 9:23 AM
Amritakalam: None

Abhijit Muhurtham: 11:46 AM to 12:30 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly cloudy
Temp: 27°C
Humidity: 57%
Sunrise: 6:24 am
Sunset: 5:35 PM

Updated: DECEMBER 8, 2022 5:00 PM

Nunna panchayat violates Jal Jeevan Mission rules

○ Gives pipeline connection worth Rs.30 lakh to pvt real estate venture

DASARI SRINIVASA RAO
■ VIJAYAWADA

In a brazen violation of rules, the Nunna gram panchayat of Vijayawada Rural mandal is learnt to have been diverting the funds of the Central government scheme Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) to benefit realtors instead of the targeted groups. Due to political pressure, the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWS&S) Department, which is the JJM implementing agency, has chosen a private real estate venture for the laying of pipelines.

The main objective of the scheme is to provide safe and adequate drinking water, along with a tap connection, to each household. But, the gram panchayat has violated the rules and regulations by providing a pipeline connection to a private real estate venture. The JJM pipeline works have become a talking point among political circles. Even the ruling YSRCP leaders have criticised the gram panchayat.

Jal Jeevan Mission is envisioned to provide safe and adequate drinking water through individual household tap connections by 2024 to all households in rural India. The programme will also implement source sustainability measures as mandatory elements, such as recharge and reuse through greywater management, water conservation, and rainwater



harvesting.

According to the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Department, about Rs.1.30 crore was sanctioned for implementing the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme in Nunna village, where about 25,000 to 30,000 people are residing. Of that, the gram panchayat has spent Rs 30 lakh for pipeline works at a private venture, which belongs to YSRCP leaders.

The sources said that the total number of households in the NTR district was 2,67,792, of which 77,226 households have tap water connections as on August 2019, that is 28.84 per cent. Jal Jeevan Mission scheme was started in March this year and as many as 1,50,428 households have got the tap connections so far, the sources added.



As many as 73,202 (38.41 per cent) households have been provided with tap water connections since the launch of the Mission.

Meanwhile, higher authorities had no information about the laying of JJM pipeline at a private real estate venture in Nunna. Without informing the officials concerned, the work agency laid a JJM pipeline at an unauthorised layout, the sources said. There public alleged that the pipeline work was done in the interest of some of the ruling party leaders, who laid the layout near the Polavaram Right Main Canal at Nunna.

Nunna gram panchayat secretary GTV Ramana said that he had no idea about the laying of the JJM pipeline at a private real estate venture. He added that the

real estate venture in question was unauthorised and that the JJM pipeline shouldn't have been laid there. Also, he said he could pursue the work.

RWS&S Department's NTR District Superintending Engineer (SE) G Venkata Ramana, speaking to 'The Pioneer', said that there was no provision either to lay a pipeline or to give tap connections to private ventures.

"However, if the gram panchayat passes a resolution and it is approved by the Mandal Parishad, the district-level committee may sanction tap connections to private ventures. But they have to pay an amount for the tap connection," he said. As of now, no gram panchayat has sent such proposals to the department, he added.

Vijayasai's name missing in list of RS vice chairpersons

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a big surprise to YSRC general secretary and parliamentary party leader V Vijayasai Reddy's name disappeared from the list of Rajya Sabha panel vice-chairpersons on Wednesday. On Monday, the office of Vice-President of India and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar released the list of eight panel vice-chairpersons of Rajya Sabha, including Vijayasai Reddy. Along with him, the list comprised the names of other members, including Bhuvaneshwar Kalita, Dr L Hanumanthaiah, Tiruchi Siva, Sukhendu Sekhar Ray, Dr Sasmit Patra, Saroj Pandey and Surendra Singh Nagar.

Vijayasai Reddy even tweeted thanking the Vice President for nominating him as the panel vice-chairmen and assured his fullest cooperation in the functioning of the house. But on Wednesday, when Dhankar took over as the RS Chairman, he announced the re-constituted list of panel vice-chairpersons of only seven members and Vijayasai Reddy's name was missing.

CYCLONE THREAT

Be vigilant, CM tells Collectors

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has directed the Collectors of various districts to be vigilant in view of the cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal.

The Chief Minister reviewed the cyclone situation in the Bay of Bengal at a meeting here on Thursday. He said that adequate precautions should be taken by the authorities reviewing the impact of the storm from time to time.

The officials informed the Chief Minister that due to the impact of the storm, rain is forecast in Nellore, Tirupati, Chittoor, and other districts. In return, he asked the officials of the Agriculture department to create awareness about the precautions to be taken by the farmers and to be helpful to them.

Our hard work will yield good results, says Jagan

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy held a meeting with the constituency observers, district presidents, and regional coordinators at his camp office here on Thursday.

The meeting was called for an orientation to explain the action plan on how the regional coordinators, district party presidents, and constituency observers should work in coordination to strengthen the party cadre from grass root levels. Such a network will ensure a target of 175 out of 175 seats. This network should be strengthened and conveners should be appointed up to village and ward secretariat level, he said.

The procedures will be prescribed to the General Coordinators, Party Presidents, and Observers while the MLAs are already participating in the door-to-door campaign to reach out to the public and ensure the implementation of welfare schemes, he said, adding that they are also visiting at least 4



to 5 secretariats per month. Along with the door-to-door campaign initiated by the government, the party activities should continue in the village and ward secretariats. A programme has been designed to meet 1.66 crore families on behalf of the party in 10-15 days. For this 50 families will be mapped and a male and a female cadre will be in charge to carry the party message besides providing publicity materials.

Under village and ward secretariats there will also be three

conveners for the party and at least one of them should be a woman. Those having political awareness and are active should be appointed as conveners. Two such people should look after every 50 houses covering 15,000 villages.

Elaborating on the networking, he said, there will be 45,000 conveners in all the village and ward secretaries. Initially, three conveners should be appointed for 15,000 secretariats who will later appoint in-charges for MLAs or Assembly constituencies. The party observers will ensure the implementation of the process in a proper manner.

"Our hard work will yield the desired results. During our three-and-a-half-year term, 92 per cent of the households in rural areas and up to 80 percent in urban areas benefited from our welfare schemes. The regional coordinators should dust off any minor issues and the cadre should be united and take forward the good record of our governance to every household of the State," he said.

Six of marriage party killed, 15 hurt as tractor overturns

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

In a tragic incident, six persons of a marriage party were killed and 15 others injured when the tractor-trailer, on which they were travelling, overturned at Lakshmaiahoooru village in Puthalapattu mandal in the wee hours of Thursday.

Police said that 26 persons, including women and the bridegroom, were going to Jettipalli village for the marriage to be held on Thursday morning. The marriage of Bhuvaneshwari was to be held with Hemantha Kumar.

When the tractor was descending a slope, its driver lost control of the vehicle, resulting in it veering off the road and overturning in a roadside ditch.

As many as 15 persons were injured in the incident and all of them were shifted to hospitals in Tirupati and Veluru. The accident took place about 2 km away from the marriage hall at Jettipalli after midnight.

Two kids, three women and the tractor driver were among the dead, police said. The



police immediately rushed to the accident site and took up rescue operations. The police with great difficulty extricated the victims, who were struck

under the overturned tractor trailer and shifted them to various hospitals later they were sent to SVIMS and Veluru CMC for better treatment.

Chittoor district M Harinarayan, SP Rishant Reddy, and Joint Collector Venkateswar visited the injured in the hospital and inquired with the doctors about their

condition. Due to the accident and death of six persons, the marriage was cancelled, the family members of the victims said.

Meanwhile, Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock and grief over the death of six persons in a road accident. He asked the government to provide the best medical treatment to the injured and extend all needed help to the bereaved families.

No safety for women in AP: TDP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief Chandrababu Naidu consoled the family members of Tapaswi who was killed in an attack by a stalker, over the phone on Thursday. He said that there is no safety for the lives of women in Andhra Pradesh now as the police officials have totally neglected the law and order. The party politburo member, Varla Ramaiah, along with others participated in the last rites of Tapaswi, a medico who was a victim of sexual assault by her own boyfriend.

After the cremation of Tapaswi, Ramaiah told media persons that the present-day youth are completely missing technology for committing crimes like sexual assaults. In the past three-and-half years, the Chief Minister, Jagan Mohan Reddy, did not conduct even a single review meeting on law and order.

Expressing serious concern that the Police Department is not in a position to maintain the law and order in the State, Ramaiah said that had the police taken timely action after Tapasvi lodged a complaint, she would not have fallen victim to the artificial love.

Every BC owns YSRC: Botsa

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Education Minister Botsa Satyanarayana has said that BCs have owned the YSRC government as theirs due to the services rendered to Backward Classes by Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and affirmed that BCs are the backbone of YSRC government. He said that the 'Jayaho BC Maha Sabha' is a grand success with the participation of 139 BC communities and questioned why Chandrababu Naidu did not offer posts to BCs during his regime.

Addressing the media persons on Thursday, the Minister extended his thankfulness to all the 80,000 BCs who participat-



ed on the platform of BCs Maha Sabha and made it a grand success. He recalled that CM Jagan Mohan Reddy repeatedly said that BC, SC, ST and Minority communities are the backbone of the party and the government. He said the communities that were neglected by the previous government, the YSRC government, have given assurance and

morale to uplift them. He said that the CM had made it public how much was spent on the BCs on various schemes.

Botsa said that there are 10 BC ministers in the State who directly interact with the CM on various issues, but during the TDP regime the Ministers would stand with folded hands in front of Chandrababu Naidu.

Replying to the question from a media person on the merger of AP and TS, Minister Botsa said, "If there is a proposal to merge the two states, it is most welcome and there is nothing wrong and we want both states to be together." He said that the YSRCP would continue to fight for the rights under the Bifurcation Act.

EV charging point opened at Vizag rly station

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a major boost toward E-mobility, Waltair Division of East Coast Railway has awarded a contract for setting up E-Vehicle charging station at Visakhapatnam railway stations. Divisional Railway Manager Anup Satpathy inaugurated the facility on Thursday.

E-mobility is an important step towards environmental sustainability as it reduces carbon emissions and improves the qual-



ity of life apart from facilitating low maintenance needs. With the continuous increase in the usage of electric vehicles, the provision of charging points for vehicles at the railway station will provide additional facilities to the passen-

gers.

Accordingly, as a first-time initiative, Waltair Division has taken up the provision of an electric vehicle charging facility at the Visakhapatnam railway station. In addition to providing an important passenger amenity, the initiative will also generate earnings for railways.

DRM Anup Satpathy appreciated the team of Waltair Division officials for undertaking this initiative toward environmental conservation.

Girl rescued from railway platform dies

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The girl student, who accidentally fell down while alighting from a train and got stuck between the train and the railway platform at the Duvvada railway station on Wednesday, died while undergoing treatment in KIMS Hospital here on Thursday.

The 24-hour-long battle with the death of MCA student Sasikala (20) ended as she lost her life while undergoing treatment in the KIMS

hospital. She was studying MCA at Vignan College.

When she was getting down from the Guntur-Rayagada passenger train at Duvvada station, she accidentally fell down from the train and was sandwiched between the platform and the train.

After two hours of effort, the railway staff dug up a portion of the platform and retrieved the girl. She was admitted to the KIMS hospital but unfortunately, she died on Thursday. The doctors of

the hospital said that the girl suffered bleeding inside and her ribs were broken. Due to internal bleeding, her organs were badly damaged which caused her death.

The students who commute daily told the media that the train halts at the station only for a few minutes, while the passengers should board the train and those who boarded, should alight. In a hurry to get down from the train, some lost their balance and fell down.



ENERGY CONSERVATION

Vja railway division wins four awards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Railway Division has bagged four national energy conservation awards from the Bureau of Energy Efficiency, Ministry of Power, Government of India. The Vijayawada, Tenali, Rajahmundry Railway stations bagged certificates of merit in the Railway Stations category and Electric Traction Training Centre, Satyanarayanapuram, Vijayawada bagged merit certificates in the Government

Building sector for adopting and practising best energy conservation measures. The South Central Railway has bagged seven NEC awards this year in the Vijayawada division has achieved four awards.

These awards are declared for the energy conservation measures adopted during the year 2022. The awards are likely to be presented on 'National Energy Conservation Day' i.e., December 14, 2022, by President Droupadi Murmu at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Tahsildar commits suicide

PNS ■ PADERU

A tahsildar allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself in the Pedabayalu mandal office in Alluri Sitarama Raju district on Thursday.

Police said that Pedabayalu tahsildar Srinivasa Rao went to his office in the morning. He asked the attendant to bring breakfast to him. The attendant brought breakfast to the tahsildar but did not find him in the office. The attendant searched for him and found the body of tahsildar hanging in a shed on the office premises. He informed the matter of the police. The police registered a case and shifted the body for postmortem. Meanwhile, the tahsildar staff told the media that the deceased tahsildar Srinivasa Rao recently attended a review meeting. The officials in the meeting reportedly reprimanded the tahsildar for the delay in completing the given assignment. However, the exact reason for this suicide would be ascertained, the police said.

IN ships taking part in IFR-22 in Bangladesh

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Indian Navy ships Kochi, Kavaratti, and Sumedha arrived in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh to participate in the maiden International Fleet Review (IFR) being conducted by the Bangladesh Navy (BN). The ships are taking part in a variety of activities being conducted as a part of BN IFR-22 from 06 to 09 December 2022.

IFR-22 is being conducted by



BN this year, to commemorate the Birth Centenary of the

Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

Rahman, and to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Bangladesh. The Chief Guest for the Fleet Review scheduled was the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina.

The visiting Indian Navy ships Kochi, Kavaratti, and Sumedha are the latest indigenously designed and developed guided missile stealth Destroyers, anti submarine Corvette, and Off-shore Patrol

Vessel respectively. INS Kochi is a part of the Indian Navy's Western Fleet based at Mumbai, whilst INS Kavaratti and INS Sumedha form part of the Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam.

All three ships are equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors, carry multi-role helicopters and symbolise India's warship-building capabilities, keeping in line with the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Be methodical to avoid stress, scribes told

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Assuring help to resolve their issues, AP Government Advisor (Communications) GVD Krishna Mohan has exhorted the journalists to report unbiased news.

A meeting was held at the Press Club, organised by the Press Academy, to create awareness among journalists on how to get rid of stress.

Speaking on the occasion, Press Academy Chairman Kommineni Srinivasa Rao said that if a news item is presented with accuracy and sincerity, the reporter could get rid of stress with

the satisfaction of presenting a good news item. He said that journalists have to face stress in various forms and he opined that there is a difference between the pressure of truth-filled news and the pressure of news full of falsehoods.

GVD Krishna Murthy said that journalism is a vital profession and the journalist in their profession has to feel stress and pressure in various forms. Such awareness meetings would be greatly helpful to the journalists, he said.

Renowned psychiatrist Indla Rama Subba Reddy said that various issues including heavy work without a time



limit, deadlines to send news items, and pressure from the editor cause the journalists to feel stress.

He said that journalists feel internal

stress and external stress and he had given some techniques and methods to be followed by the journalists to get rid of stress. Rama Subba Reddy asked the journalists to take care of their personal health while doing justice to their profession. Later he allayed the doubts of journalists.

Senior journalist Radha Reddy, IJU national vice-president Ambati Anjaneyulu, press club president Nimmaraju Chalapathi Rao, APUWJ Krishna Urban president Chava Ravi, APUWJ vice-president J Jayaraj and senior Journalist Sk. Babu were among those who were present.

Publicise registration services at V/W Secretariats: Special CS

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Manyam, Rayachoti, Nellore and Narasaraopet (Palnadu) districts have topped the State in terms of percentage-wise collections in the registrations, Visakhapatnam, NTR and Guntur districts in terms of net collections and Nellore, Sri Balaji, Guntur and Kakinada in growth in the number of documents.

Rajat Bhargava, Special Chief Secretary, Revenue (Excise, R&S), who conducted a review meeting on the Stamps & Stamps Department here on Thursday, instructed the officials to bring transparency, remove corruption and provide better services in the department. During the meeting, he mentioned the names of the districts which performed well.

Rajat Bhargava, identifying district registrars who achieved targets below 85 percent, instructed them to explore all possible steps to achieve the



100 percent target fixed by the government, and generate at least 20 percent more revenue than last year's collection. He stressed the need for the establishment of Premium Registration centres and directed the officials to identify suitable buildings by December 31 at Kakinada, Vijayawada, Guntur, Nellore, Tirupati, Kadapa, Kurnool and Srikakulam. He further instructed to initiate measures to start Premium Registration services at Visakhapatnam as early as possible.

Rajat Bhargava directed the DRs and DIGs to hold 'Grama

Sabhas' and explain the benefits of registrations to the public at Village/Ward Secretariats, in their jurisdiction keeping in view the vision of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy to bring the administration to the doorsteps of the people and give widespread publicity through pamphlets and booklets on registration procedures and services available at Village & Ward Secretariats. He has also directed the officials to make use of technology and social media for better functioning of the Department and also share the

information with the public.

The Special CS reviewed the delivery of registration services at 2,000 Village Secretariats and directed the DRs to visit at least one Village Secretariat in their jurisdiction, in a month and submit reports.

Reviewing pending chit fund cases, he directed the DRs to be more cautious in granting permissions to the companies for business and report discrepancies noticed immediately. He also emphasised the need for the Stamp Act for the State and directed the C&IG to send proposals. He also observed that many Sub-Registrar offices in the State are in old private buildings and directed them to take immediate steps for relocation of the offices to new buildings with good ambience and ample waiting space for the public.

Rajat Bhargava instructed the DRs and DIGs to personally monitor the digitalisation of old records in their jurisdictions.

Gidugu to take charge as APCC chief today

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Congress party's senior leader and former MLC **Gidugu Rudra Raju**, who has been appointed **Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC)** president, will take charge on Friday. He will assume office from current party chief **Dr S Sailajanath**.

The Congress party is organising a swearing-in function at **Vedika** function hall at the **Benz Circle** in **Vijayawada** at 1.30 pm.

After completion of the swearing-in ceremony, he will reach the party office at **Andhra Ratna Bhavan** and take charge. Later, he will conduct a meeting with **Andhra Pradesh State in charge Mayappan**, former **MPs KVP Ramachandra Rao** and **Chinta Mohan** and party cadre.

The party leaders and cadre celebrated the victory of the Congress party in the **Himachal Pradesh Assembly** elections at the **Andhra Ratna Bhavan** in **Vijayawada** on Thursday.

Purandeswari demands white paper on BC welfare

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) senior leader **Daggupati Purandeswari** has demanded that the government release a white paper on the programmes being implemented for the welfare of **Backward Classes**.

Talking to the media here on Thursday, she alleged that the **YSRCP** did not do anything for the welfare of **BCs** in the State.

"The **YSRCP** government has decided the policy of dividing the people on caste lines. The government has set up several corporations in the name of castes. The government is stoking people on caste lines," she alleged.

She claimed that the **BJP** is the only party that strives for the welfare of underprivileged sections and does them justice and stated that the election victory in **Gujarat** reflects the growing popularity of the **BJP** among the people. She predicted that some political parties including Congress would vanish in the near future.

Commenting on the Special



Category Status (SCS), **Purandeswari** made it clear that there is no possibility of granting **SCS** to any state. But instead of the **SCS**, an alternative could be given. The Centre has made many allocations to **AP** and established several national institutions, she said.

"The Centre has many financial allocations to **AP** but the **AP** government has diverted the funds to various purposes instead of taking up development projects," she said, adding that the government has become bankrupt in such a way that it was unable to pay staff salaries.

Referring to the **Delhi** liquor scam, she said that the law would take its own course and an impartial inquiry would be conducted on the liquor scam links to **AP** by the **ED** officials. Taking a dig at the **TDP**, she said that the people of the state have lost trust in the **TDP** and also in **Nara Lokesh**.

Later she released a wall poster 'Janam Kosam BJP'. She announced that the **BJP** would organise 'Praja Darbar' every Sunday to know the grievances of people and take steps to resolve them. District in-charge **Ramesh Naidu** and other leaders were present.

All steps taken to procure paddy from farmers: Min

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Agriculture **Kakani Govardhan Reddy** has made it clear that all steps have been taken to procure paddy from farmers at **MSP**.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, he said that all steps were taken to purchase paddy produce from the farmers by paying remunerative prices and he dismissed allegations made by the Opposition leaders that the government failed in purchasing paddy produce from the farmers.

He reiterated that the government is committed to purchasing farm produce from the farmers by paying remunera-



tive prices. "No limit is set for the procurement of paddy. No need for the father to agitate to sell their paddy produce as the paddy purchasing is being carried out in a transparent man-

ner across the state", he informed.

"After the **YSRCP** came to power, the paddy production increased to 14 lakh tonnes. The government has taken steps to purchase paddy produce from the farmer by paying remunerative prices. The government has also taken steps to ensure that the rice millers and lorry owners do not fleece the paddy farmers," **Kakani Govardhan Reddy** informed.

He said that the paddy produce is being purchased at the **Rythu Bharosa Kendras** and the government bears the transport charges and supplies gunny bags to the farmers at free of cost.

Jagan hoodwinking people: Naidu

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief and former chief minister **N Chandrababu Naidu** has alleged that Chief Minister **Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy** is hoodwinking the people of the state by pressing a button that is not useful to the people.

Addressing a mammoth crowd at a roadshow at **Ponnuru** on Thursday as part of the **TDP "Idemi Kharma Mana Rashtaniki**, he deplored that the government is not in a position to disburse staff salaries and pensions to the retired employees.

"The **YSRCP** regime has ruined the capital city **Amaravati**. It has also failed to complete the **Polavaram** project which was completed 72 percent during the **TDP** regime," he said and claimed



that the **Polavaram** project is his brainchild.

Ridiculing Chief Minister **Jagan Reddy** as 'iron leg chief minister', he said that in the name of 'reverse tendering' the **Polavaram** project works had come to a halt. Irrigation minister **Ambati Rambabu** is unable to tell the present status of the **Polavaram** project, he alleged. The project works were merged in the **Godavari** waters by the government

because of its ineptness, he slammed.

"Chief Minister **Jagan Reddy** has given important posts to the **Reddy** community people and assured to do justice to the **BCs**," he pointed out. The Chief Minister is giving **Rs 10** to the people and snatching **Rs 10,000** from them, he flayed. In the name of welfare, he is creating a crisis, **Naidu** lambasted.

They had earlier organised

Prepare action plans to achieve SDGs: Collector

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Krishna District Collector P Ranjith Basha has directed the officials to prepare and implement the action plans for achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** in the district. Chief Secretary **Sameer Sharma** and Medical and Health Principal Secretary **MT Krishna Babu** conducted video conferences separately with the district collectors on Thursday, to discuss the key development indicators.

The **Krishna** Collector participated in the video conferences from his chamber at **Macchilipatnam**. He explained the progress of the eight priority development indicators, which are being implemented in the district. Later, he held a meeting with the district officials and asked them to conduct a comprehensive survey regarding the key indicators and submitted the data to the village/ward secretariats.

VMC spending crores on development: Mayor

Lays foundation stones for works worth Rs.2.08 crore

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor **Rayana Bhagyalakshmi** has said that **VMC** is spending crores of rupees for the development of **Vijayawada** and this type of development was not seen during the previous government's rule. **VMC** is providing round-the-clock drinking water supply to the people, she said.

The Mayor laid foundation stones for various development works costing **Rs.2.08 crore** at the **Ranigiri Thota Cement Godown Park** in the 18th division on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, she said that **VMC** was undertaking developmental works in the city for the common people. Works on **Primary Health Centres**, internal roads, drinking

water facilities and other infrastructure were progressing at a brisk pace in the city. This type of development had not been seen in the past. She said that besides, parks were being developed to provide recreation to the public, especially children. Various parks in the city were being renovated.

Municipal Commissioner **Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar** said that the cement godown park would be developed as the best park in the city. He sought cooperation from the public in protecting saplings and other valuable items in the parks.

YSRCP **Vijayawada East** Constituency in-charge **Devineni Avinash**, **VMC** Deputy Mayors **Bellam Durga** and **Avuthu Sri Saijaya**, **YSRCP** floor leader in **VMC** **Venkata Satyanarayana** and others were present.

Officials directed to expedite construction of govt buildings

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector Prasanna Venkatesh directed the officials concerned to take steps to expedite the construction works of the government buildings. The Collector here on Thursday reviewed various works of various projects with the officials concerned and made several suggestions.

The 'Swachh Sarvekshan' programmes should be implemented in 56 villages at the rate of 2 villages per mandal in the district through the 'Jagananna Swachh Sankalpam' programme in the villages and the Panchayat resolutions towards complete sanitation should be uploaded online within 24 hours, the Collector told the officials.

Collector **Prasanna Venkatesh** instructed the officials that the government's priority building structures such as **Rythu Bharosa Kendras**, **Village Secretariats**,



Village Health Clinics, and **Digital Library** buildings should be completed expeditiously.

Prasanna Venkatesh also ordered the officials to complete the construction of sheds of **Solid Wealth Process Centres** within the stipulated time frame. The officials concerned were directed to take steps towards increasing the number of working days under the **MGNREGA** scheme in the district.

Joint Collector **P Arun Babu**, **JP CEO K Ravi Kumar**, **RWS**

SE NVV Satyanarayana, **DWMA PD D Rambabu**, In-charge **DPO Mallikarjuna Rao**, **Panchayat Raj SE Chandra Caskara Reddy**, and others were present

Earlier, **CCLA** Special Chief Secretary **G Sai Prasad**, **State Panchayat Raj**, and **Rural Development Commissioner Kona Sashidhar** held a video with the Collector on the implementation of various welfare and carrying out development works.

On the occasion, **CCLA** Special Chief Secretary **G Sai prasad** reviewed the issues of re-survey, **YSR Jagananna** permanent land rights, and land protection scheme in a video conference. Later, **State Panchayat Raj**, **Rural Development Commissioner Kona Sashidhar** reviewed the issues of **Swachha Sankalpam**, employment guarantee scheme, government priority buildings, **ODF** plus villages, and other issues.

Action plan to combat AMR

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global health threat and India is moving towards finding better solutions to combat **AMR**. To take this initiative further, **Andhra Pradesh State Government** has come up with an action plan "Andhra Pradesh Action Plan for the Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance" (**APAPCAR**). For the effective implementation of **APAPCAR** and formulation of key performance indicators, a **Global Workshop on Implementation of State Action Plans for Containment of Antimicrobial Resistance** was organised at **Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh** on November 25 and 26 involving multisectoral stakeholders.

AMR is now a priority in **Indian National Health Policy**. Also, **India's G20** presidency

for 2023 is a great opportunity to lead by example. Moreover, the **Global** action plan 2.0 and national action plan 2.0 against **AMR** are due to be released soon. This gives us a unique opportunity to align with global and national best practices with an integrated multisectoral **One Health** approach.

The stakeholders from human, animal, food, agricultural and environmental sectors, assembled at the workshop commit themselves to adopt a holistic collaborative **One Health** approach towards prevention and containment of antimicrobial resistance in the State of **Andhra Pradesh**.

The stakeholders take the pledge to Collaborate and cooperate within and across the sectors to find the most suitable and locally adaptable solutions for implementing **APAPCAR**. in letter and spirit.



TDP leader Srinath Reddy joins YSRCP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former **TDP** **MLA GV Srinath Reddy** from **Pileru** constituency, **Annamayya** district joined **YSR Congress Party (YSRCP)** in the presence of Chief Minister **YS Jagan Mohan Reddy** at his camp office here on Thursday.

Along with **Srinath Reddy**, other **TDP** leaders **Rakesh**

Reddy, **M Venkata Krishna Reddy**, **V Umakant Reddy**, **B Narendar Reddy**, **G Nares Kumar Reddy** from **Pileru** constituency also joined the **YSRCP**.

Raipur **MP PV Mithun Reddy**, **Pileru** **MLA Chintala Ramachandra Reddy** and **Minorities Commission Chairman Iqbal Ahmed Khan** were also present.

Seminar held for engg students

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

An awareness seminar for **Electronic and Communication** students was conducted by **Cranes University**, **Bengaluru**, at the **Vikas Educational Institutions** at **Nunna** near **Vijayawada** on Thursday.

Software resource persons from **Cranes University**, **Bhuvaneswari** and **Bhavani Sankar**, explained the 'Role of Systems in Today's World' at the seminar. They spoke about the importance of the **Embedded System** to the students. Also, they talked about the job opportunities in **Embedded System Design Applications**. "The students should be aware of all related designs and applications and get jobs across the world," they added.

Renovated Unguturu ZPH School opened

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The renovated 75-year-old **Zilla Parishad High School** at **Unguturu** under **Andhra Pradesh 'Manabadi -Nadu Nedu'** with the help of **NRIs** was inaugurated by **Gannavaram MLA Dr Vallabhaneni Vamsi**, **NRI Venkatadri Bobba**, **Chief Advisor to CM Jagan**, **Ajeya Kallam**, former **MP Gokaraju Ganga Raju**, **Advisor to Government** and president of **APNRT Society Venkat S Medapati** on Thursday.

Vamsi said that Chief Minister **Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy** is bringing many reforms in the education sector and 'Manabadi - Nadu Nedu' aims to provide quality education with values to every boy and girl through the creation of school infrastructure, nutritious mid-day meals, and digital methods. He said that the **NRI Venkatadri** couple largely contributed to the ren-



ovation of the schools and this transformed **ZPHC** into a modern corporate school. **MLA Vamsi** asked philanthropists to come forward for the development of schools that are **Modern Education Temples**.

NRI Bobba Venkatardi said that it gives utmost satisfaction to develop the school where he studied under a public-pri-

vate partnership. He thanked **APNRTS** who provided necessary support in this process and assured to continue **NRIs** support to the development of state schools.

Ajay Kallam said that education can eradicate poverty and the government is providing the entire necessary infrastructure for schools. He asked the students to use education as a

weapon to develop and achieve their goals in the competitive world.

President of **APNRTS** **Venkat S Medapati** said that **CM Jagan** is determined to make education available to everyone, regardless of whether they are rich or poor. He recalled that the **Jagan Mohan Reddy** government is providing basic facilities in schools with thousands of crores of rupees. He said that in addition to this, donors like **Bobba Venkatadri** are joining each other with their love for the state like every drop of water is an ocean, and it is gratifying to provide advanced school building and infrastructure with international standards. He said that if some more **NRIs** settled in different countries and provide their help, the education sector will develop more rapidly and appealed to philanthropists to come forward to develop **State schools**.

AP teams leave for Soft Tennis Jr Nationals

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Soft Tennis junior boys' and girls' teams of **Andhra Pradesh** will participate in the **17th Junior Nationals**, which will be held in **Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh**, from December 9-13. The teams left **Vijayawada** on Thursday.

A send-off function was organised for them at the **Indira Gandhi Municipal Corporation (IGMC) Stadium**. **Andhra Pradesh Soft Tennis Association** president **Valle Srinu Babu**, general secretary **Daram Naven Kumar**, treasurer **Abdul Karim** and **NTR District Sports Authority (DSA)** **Chief Coach SA Azeez** presented sports kits to the teams.

Junior Boys: **S Aron Ronal Din Ho**, **R Kiran Kumar Rawal**, **Y Bhanu Prakash (Anantapur)**, **P Jeevan Goutham**, **G Bala Manoj Kumar (Guntur)**, **M Sudhavan Ravi Nandan (SPS Nellore)**, **M Revanth (Krishna)**, **Nurul Huda (Kadapa)**.

INDIA CORNER

Tiger found hanging from tree: MP forest officials zero in on three persons

Two persons are being questioned and hunt was on for the prime accused after a tiger was found hanging from a tree in the territorial forest area of Panna district in Madhya Pradesh, an official said on Thursday. The two-year-old tiger, on Wednesday, walked into a trap laid for herbivores and broke off a piece of wood to which a clutch cable was fixed, after which it climbed up a tree and got entangled in the wire while descending, as per initial probe.

"In an attempt to free itself, the 200-kilogram tiger died of suffocation. Two persons are being questioned and search for one person, who is the prime accused, is underway," Chattarpur Range Conservator of Forests Sanjeev Jha told PTI. "Sniffer dogs from Panna and Satna took us to the spot where the wooden piece was fixed. Hats off to these dogs for the extraordinary help," Jha added.



MPs raise issues of conversion, compensation for migrant workers

There is a need to take the issue of religious conversions happening across the country seriously, BJP MP from Jharkhand Sunil Kumar Singh said in Parliament on Thursday and claimed it has led to rise of suicides. Speaking during a session in Lok Sabha to discuss matters under Rule 377, he said conversions are changing the direction of society and the country. "Such organisations specially target people from backward classes. There have been cases that people killed themselves due to religious conversion. As part of a conspiracy, they are encouraged to think that they are not Hindus, they do not believe in Constitution. In Chhattisgarh, which is majority tribal and Dalit area, this is a very serious problem. Thus I request for a strict legislation against religious conversion," Singh said. BJP's Rama Devi spoke on the need for providing compensation for migrant labourers from Bihar in case of death or injury, while her colleague from the Congress raised the issue of aid for farmers from Uttar Pradesh who lost their crops due to excessive rains.



Dancing Krishna idol stolen from TN temple traced to museum in US

A dancing Krishna idol, stolen in 1966 from Sri Ekantha Ramaswamy temple, in Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram, was traced to the Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA, during an investigation, the state Idol Wing CID said on Thursday. While investigating a complaint from the executive officer, Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments department, pertaining to the dancing Krishna idol, the team under Additional Superintendent of Police G Balamurugan found that six idols were totally stolen from the temple and these included the idols of Krishna alias Kendarva Krishna (dancing posture), Vishnu (two idols), Sridevi and Bhodevi (two). The temple EO G Narayani had in November this year complained that three or more idols including an antique Krishna idol belonging to Sri Ekantha Ramaswamy temple, Thangachimadam village, Rameshwaram Circle, had been burgled from the temple in 1966. As no image of the dancing Krishna idol was available in the temple records, the Idol Wing sought and obtained help from the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) and verified the photo images.



COLLEGIUM SYSTEM

Troubled that govt keeps names pending for long, says SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court said on Thursday its job is to enforce the law as it exists and it was "troubled" with the fact that many names recommended by the collegium for appointment as judges in the higher judiciary were kept pending by the Centre for long.

The apex court said due to the prolonged process of appointment of judges and the delay in clearing the names, several potential judges are withdrawing their consent to be elevated to the bench, which has always been considered an "honour". While hearing a matter about protracted delay by the Centre in clearing the names recommended by the collegium, a bench headed by Justice S K Kaul said, before the last hearing, 19 names were sent back to the collegium by the government.

"How will this ping-pong battle settle?" asked the bench, also comprising Justices A S Oka and Vikram Nath.

"What troubled us was the fact that there were many names pending for months and years and some reiterated cases," it said, adding, "Our job as judges of the Supreme Court is to enforce the law as it exists today". The apex court noted Attorney General R Venkataramani submitted a status report before it on December 7 where a reference has been made to the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) for appointment of high court judges. "Once the collegium in its wisdom or you may think lack of it has said that this is the basis on which it has worked the MoP... there



tify the delay. "Observation of two judges, can that upset the process of the constitutional mandate of five-judges which lays down the procedure of the MoP as the final view which is taken by the collegium," the bench asked.

It said the note placed before it has referred to the July 2017 judgement in which certain observations were stated to have been made by two judges, who were part of the seven-judge bench.

The bench said it has been submitted before it that this gave rise to a thought process in the government that this should be taken note of and there is a need to make improvements in the MoP.

Anti-incumbency, OPS promise worked in favour of Cong in HP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI


Anti-incumbency against the ruling BJP government, the issue of price rise, coupled with the Congress' promises of restoring the old pension scheme and providing Rs 1500 to every woman perhaps drew voters to the grand old party in Himachal Pradesh.

The people of the hill state followed the tradition of changing the incumbent government by voting out the BJP from power as they rejected its much-hyped slogan of 'Raj nahin, riwaaj badlenge' (changing tradition, not the government). The BJP launched an all-out and aggressive personalised campaign led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, but voters went by local rather than national issues. Instead of the incumbent chief minister, the electorate preferred to have a new face from



the Congress, where Virbhadra Singh had dominated the party's politics for four decades. This is the first election that the Congress fought without Virbhadra Singh, who passed away in July 2021. Singh's wife Pratibha Singh is the PCC chief who steered the party to victory this time while riding on Virbhadra's legacy.

A senior leader said a united leadership and people's support at the grassroots level helped the party stop the BJP's juggernaut led by PM Modi. "The people of Himachal Pradesh preferred to side with the Congress and go by the sentiment of repeating the trend of voting out incumbent governments. The Congress promises also caught fancy with the voters," another leader said. Last-minute efforts of the BJP to declare the Hatti community in the Scheduled Tribes category also did not seem to work in the state as the BJP failed to sweep all five seats in Sirmour district.



17% of MCD councillors face criminal cases, says report

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At least 17 per cent of the newly elected councillors in the MCD have declared criminal cases against them while another 8 per cent face 'serious' cases, according to a Association for Democratic Reforms report.

In 2017, 10 per cent of the 266 councillors for whom data was available had declared criminal cases and another 5 per cent faced serious cases, the report said. That year, 270 wards of the then three municipal corporations had gone to the polls. Following delimitation earlier this year, the number of wards in the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) came down to 250.

The Association for Democratic Reforms and Delhi Election Watch analysed the self-sworn affidavits of 248 winning candidates in the MCD elections. Data on two winning candidates could not be analysed due to the unavailability of clear and complete affidavits with the State Election Commission, Delhi.

The report said three winning candidates declared cases of crimes against women such as assault or using criminal force with the intent to outrage her modesty (Section 354 of the Indian Penal Code) and related to husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty (Section 498A of the Indian Penal Code).

AAP draws blank in HP Assembly polls; scores less than NOTA

PNS ■ SHIMLA

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which contested the assembly polls in Himachal Pradesh for the first time drew a blank securing just 1.10 per cent of the total votes cast, and in several constituencies polling less than NOTA.

The 'None Of The Above' option allows voters to indicate that they do not wish to vote of the options available. Altogether the NOTA vote share was about 0.60 per cent. In constituencies such as Dalhousie, Kasumpti, Chopal, Arki, Chamba, and Churah more people voted NOTA than AAP.

The poor performance of AAP dashed its hope of emerging as a strong third force in the state to challenge the hegemony of BJP and Congress, which have been alternately ruling the state for almost four decades.

CBI should have direct recruitment at inspector, DSP level: Par panel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation should have a provision for direct recruitment for the posts of inspector or deputy superintendent of police, a parliamentary panel has recommended in its report tabled in Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

A total of 1,025 cases are pending with the CBI, with 66 of them yet to see a conclusion even after five years, the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice has noted, adding that the pendency could be effectively reduced if the manpower requirements are taken care of.

In its latest report, the committee noted that there is no provision for direct recruitment of candidates above the rank of sub-inspector in the CBI.

The CBI has sanctioned strength of 480 posts of sub-inspectors filled through direct recruitment, promotions and departmental examinations in the ratio of 70:15:15.

The report recommended that there should be "a provision for direct recruitment of candidates in the rank of inspector of police/deputy superintendent of police (DSP)".

The positions at the rank of inspector, DSP and ASP are filled either through promotion or deputation and limited



Cong leaders credit Priyanka Gandhi for Himachal win

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Your hard work paid off," Priyanka Gandhi said in a tweet in Hindi. All India Congress Committee (AICC) in charge of Himachal Pradesh Rajeev Shukla hailed Priyanka Gandhi's campaign and leadership, lauding the "hard work" put in by her. Senior Congress leader Anand Sharma also complimented Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for her "spirited" campaign in the state.

This is Priyanka Gandhi's first electoral success while heading the campaign charge. The party had lost Uttar Pradesh assembly polls while she spearheaded the canvassing there earlier this year. Party sources said the team of Priyanka Gandhi and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was the senior observer for the polls, played an important role in formulating the election campaign.

With the Congress winning the Himachal Pradesh polls, its leaders on Thursday credited party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's campaign in the hill state for the good showing of the party in the assembly elections.

Priyanka Gandhi led the party's charge in Himachal Pradesh with several rallies and was also closely involved in strategy planning for the polls. Many leaders hailed her leadership in securing the win for the party and defeating the BJP's election machinery.

"Heartfelt thanks to the people of Himachal Pradesh for giving the mandate to the Indian National Congress. This victory is the victory of people's issues and their resolve to progress. Best wishes to all the leaders and workers of the Congress party."



Centre can't be mute spectator: Pawar on Maha-K'taka row

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Amid the simmering border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka, Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar on Thursday said the central government cannot remain a mute spectator.

If power is misused to destroy the idea of a language medium and movement, there is bound to be a reaction. But, the Centre has turned a blind eye to it, Pawar said addressing a meeting of the NCP here.

The Maharashtra-Karnataka boundary dispute is not between the two states, but for the rights and justice of the Marathi-speaking people in the border areas of the neighbouring state, the former Union minister said.

On Wednesday, the issue of the border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka was raised in the Lok Sabha with NCP leader and Pawar's daughter Supriya Sule seeking the intervention of the Union home ministry in the matter.

Referring to it, Pawar said, "Yesterday, the Lok Sabha Speaker told Supriya Sule that the issue is between two states and not an issue to be raised in Parliament. If Parliament will not look into the dispute, who will? The central government cannot be a mute spectator."

He said the Karnataka government has always taken a different stand on how the percentage of Kannada population can be increase in Belagavi in the southern state, which is located adjoining the Maharashtra border. They (Karnataka government) brought government offices to Belagavi. The winter session of the Karnataka legislature is also held in Belagavi to show Maharashtra has no right over the city, Pawar said.

Kannada is compulsory in schools there and children are not allowed to study Marathi, he said, adding that there are schools of all mediums in Maharashtra, he said. "If power is misused to destroy the idea of language medium and movement, there is bound to be a reaction. Unfortunately, the Centre has turned a blind eye," said the NCP chief.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday, Sule said people of Maharashtra are getting "beaten up" every day despite the BJP being the ruling party in both the states.

The border issue dates back to 1957 after the reorganisation of states on linguistic lines.

Maharashtra laid claim to Belagavi, which was part of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency as it has a sizeable Marathi-speaking population.

It also laid claim to 814 Marathi-speaking villages which are currently part of the southern state.



Over 11,000 'matters' pending in SC for over 10 years: Govt in RS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Over 11,000 "matters" are pending before the Supreme Court for over 10 years, Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju informed Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Similarly, in the 25 high courts, 8.77 lakh civil and 3.74 lakh criminal cases are pending for more than 10 years, he said citing data from the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG). In the district and subordinate courts, 6.91 lakh civil and 27.26 lakh criminal cases are pending for over a decade, the minister said. "As per information received from the Supreme Court of India, the number of matters pending for more than 10 years is 11,049," Rijiju said in a written reply.

In order to expedite the trial of court cases, a number of legislative changes have been made in procedural laws, which include provisions for limiting adjournments of court proceedings in criminal and civil matters, he said.

"The government has adopted a coordinated approach to assist the judiciary for phased liquidation of arrears and pendency in judicial systems, which, inter alia, involves better infrastructure for courts.

IMD data shows an increase in extreme rainfall events in parts of northeast India and studies at North Eastern Space Application Centre suggest a mild rising trend of black carbon concentration over the region but no specific study has been carried out on the relation between the two, the Union Environment Ministry said on Thursday.

Union Minister of State for Environment Ashwini Kumar Choubey told the Rajya Sabha

Will continue to be 'steadfast friend' of Sri Lanka: India

PNS ■ COLOMBO

India on Thursday said it will continue to be a "steadfast friend" of Sri Lanka and is committed to strengthening the bilateral economic partnership for mutual benefit, as it thanked President Ranil Wickremesinghe for holding "successful" talks on debt restructuring.



Wickremesinghe during the inaugural session of the Sri Lanka Economic Summit 2022 on Monday said that it held "successful" talks with India on debt restructuring and will also begin discussions with China, as the island nation scrambles to get assurances from major bilateral creditors to close a crucial deal

with the IMF Sri Lanka, which is trying to secure a USD 2.9 billion bridge loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is also looking at financial assurances from its major creditors -- China, Japan and India -- which is the requisite for Colombo to get the bailout package. Replying to Wickremesinghe's tweet on holding the "successful" talks on debt restructuring, the Indian High Commission here tweeted, "Thank you H.E President @RW_UNP. #India will continue to be a steadfast friend of #SriLanka and stand by our brethren. We are committed to strengthening the bilateral economic partnership for mutual benefit."

(IMD) shows an increase in extreme rainfall events over parts of northeast India, he said. The Indian Space Research Organization is operating a network of aerosol observatories under ISRO Geosphere Biosphere Programme, with black carbon mass concentration being one of the important parameters being measured, Choubey informed the Upper House.

"The long-term measurements of black carbon over the Indian region from the aforesaid regional network of aerosol observatories clearly showed a decreasing trend (0.24 microgram per cubic meter per year) in the past decade," he said.

The studies at North Eastern Space Application Centre using available data from foreign sources suggest a mild rising trend (0.000531 microgram per cubic meter per year) of black carbon concentration over the North Eastern Region. However, no specific study has been carried out on the relation between black carbon and rainfall, Choubey added.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Win-win-win

BJP, Cong and AAP have reasons to rejoice but they can't afford to ignore certain issues

Results of Assembly elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh and the MCD poll have pleased every party — at least, that's what leaders of the BJP, Congress and AAP are saying. The BJP is happy that it won Gujarat with an unprecedented landslide. Evidently, the Morbi cable bridge collapse, which was a case of monumental incompetence and corruption, had little impact on the poll. Also forgotten was the mismanagement during the deadly Delta wave of Covid-19. In the 2017 Assembly election, the saffron party had just managed to form Government with 99 seats, with the Congress not much behind with 77; this must have caused jitters in the BJP's State unit. But Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, along with other top party leaders, spared no effort to register a handsome victory. In the MCD election, too, where the saffron party was estimated to win around 50 wards, it crossed the three-digit mark. This was again impressive, given 15 years of incumbency and its sub-optimal performance in local governance. While in both States, the BJP did better than what the exit polls had predicted, it was not so in Himachal. But again, given the magnitude of rebellion, the party did better than expected. For the Congress, the Himalayan State was the only bright spot as it shrunk in Gujarat and Delhi. But the win should come as a big morale booster for the party which has become accustomed to losing elections. Anti-incumbency and BJP rebels did help the Congress cause.



This is also Priyanka Vadra's first success in electoral politics; this may occasion an increase in her role. AAP also has reasons to be pleased with the overall results. Of course, it didn't get a landslide in MCD, but it won comfortably. Party boss Arvind Kejriwal had made tall claims about success in Gujarat but it didn't reach the double-digit mark. Still, it was able to dislodge the BJP from the local bodies in Delhi against a spirited campaign by the saffron party. Satyendra Jain's video clips, the charges against Delhi Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia and AAP's alleged involvement in Liguorgate did little to harm the party's electoral prospects. Besides, AAP, by winning a few seats in Gujarat, has now graduated to becoming a national party. The three parties, however, should not lose sight of the challenges they will face. The grand old party can celebrate its victory in Himachal, but it should also be cognisant of the fact that its decline in several States is quite steep. In Gujarat, for instance, it got just about one-tenth of the seats that its arch-rival BJP got. The BJP must beware of the problem of rebellion, which seems to have been exacerbated because of the centralisation of powers in the party. And AAP has to look beyond freebies, which didn't find many takers in Gujarat and Himachal.

PICTALK



Devotees cover the Yamuna with sarees during the Chunari Manorath festival, in Mathura

PTI

Pak army chief

Gen Asim Munir, who is the new Army chief of Pakistan, has to battle its falling credibility

A new army chief has taken over from General Qamar Javed Bajwa. The new army chief is General Asim Munir. In Pakistan popularity of army Generals is as important as the popularity of politicians in their careers. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, had become quite unpopular during his last months in office. The reason of course is the role he played in the ouster of the former prime minister of Pakistan Imran Khan. Imran had fallen off from the General and criticized him for orchestrating his ouster through a no-confidence vote in April on the behest of foreign powers. After the assassination bid on Imran Khan People turned rather sympathetic to the former Pakistan captain and little skeptic of General Bajwa who had overshot his tenure several times and continued in the office for the power he wielded in the army and the political circles of the country. However, it going to be quite a challenging job for General Munir. One of the biggest challenges he faces is the credibility of the army and his position.



After the ouster of Imran Khan, the Pakistan army is being seen as bad boys who dance to the tunes of Uncle Sam for all the monetary support they get from him. Besides, Imran has played his victim card rather well and painted the army as the culprit for his ouster. His scathing remarks have damaged the reputation of the army in a big way. Genberal Munir must restore credibility to the army which has taken major popularity hit from Khan's large and growing support base. Another major task he has at hand is to bring some semblance of political order to the country. The present government in place right now is courtesy Pakistan army but it faces a huge trust deficit. General Munir would have to opt for early elections before he is also branded as an anti-democratic person happy to have a proxy army rule. But before that, he will have to devise a formula that both the government and Imran Khan can agree upon. This is not going to be easy as Imran Khan has emerged stronger and is in no mood to give concessions to the present government. Besides what makes his task even more daunting is that he doesn't have a good rapport with Khan who fired Munir as Pakistan's spy chief. The given scenario leaves not many choices for the new General and how he maneuvers would decide the future of Pakistan.

Every problem has a solution

Our attempts to resolve any number of socio-economic and political problems have to focus on behavioural changes and social engineering

Any effective reform in the electoral process has to take into account many factors including legal and legislative ones. The steps are discussed so as to bring a holistic change with an inclusive approach. Any change in the behavioural aspect of people solicits an endeavour for awareness building. Art 324 (1) of the constitution India vests the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission of India. As such ECI is the most important constitutional body having Superintendence, direction and control over the election process. This vesting of such large power also generates responsibility for ECI for smooth conduct of free and fair elections.

As a first step, ECI should also try to create awareness among people delineating the role (voting) power of citizens to choose their representatives. Frequent publicity over print and visual media about dos and don'ts for the voters would create some awareness Collectors as the agents of ECI also may be directed to carry and convey the voice and messages of the Commission in the nook and corner of the districts and also in the interior pockets.

The vulnerable groups (tribals etc.) should be guarded heavily against exploitation and intimidation. Frequent visits to these areas, especially the day/night before the election would foil the prank of the unethical elements to win by the force of money. Any violation of code of conduct in case of the candidates or followers should warrant disqualification. District and police administration's alertness, swiftness and sincerity can nip the criminal activities in the bud. The erring and non-performing district administration officials should be taken to task by the ECI. A strong ECI, effective district administration and strong police force can make the process smooth.

The fact that about one third of the population lives below the poverty line, makes the voters vulnerable and prone to the influence of money for unethical voting.



The first and foremost task for the government should be eradication of poverty. But it is not plausible to eradicate poverty overnight. But if abject poverty conditions are addressed properly, a major task would be accomplished. The distribution of freebies with taxpayers money (in my opinion) be stopped forthwith and the party indulging in such activities may be severely dealt with.

In any democratic set up criminality has no role to play as being anathematic. Hon'ble Apex Court has taken a very laudable step in regard to criminalization of politics — disqualifying a candidate on conviction. Revealing criminal antecedents at the time of filing nomination and disqualification on conviction have set the ball rolling. A strict vigil and strong implementation of stringent law would silence criminality.

Cleavage based politics — politics utilizing the divisive factors like caste, religion, language, gender and tradition, etc. should be discouraged strongly. Though it is easier said and done and the society is divided on many diverse points yet any beginning and approach to minimize would go a long way to

“AS A FIRST STEP, ECI SHOULD ALSO TRY TO CREATE AWARENESS AMONG PEOPLE DELINEATING THE VOTING POWER OF CITIZENS TO CHOOSE THEIR REPRESENTATIVES”

purify the process. Other spatial points should be cogitated and analyzed by ECI to introduce fairness into the process.

Do we need legislation for bringing up laws to ensure free and fair elections? Generally deterrent law has three major components such as severity (severe degree of punishment), Certainty (punishment follows as a certainty wherever there is occurrence of a criminal act) and Celerity (swiftness is essential). Crime would be deterred if punishment is awarded quickly and rapidly. In the opinion of Hobbes, people are driven due to their self interest and further he stressed the importance of deterrence to make the people law abiding Cesare Beccaria stated that crime and punishment should both have a proportional deterring and deterrence value.

These three components not only attract people's faith and confidence in the system but are also most effective in electoral process and dynamics. As any strong prophylactic or curative medicine has side effects, any harsh law runs the risk of abuse. The most terrifying factor for a politician is disqualification and ban on contesting elections. If the

deterrent law would address this entailing disqualification then the success rate would still be higher and so it would deter other candidates from venturing into abuse of money power and criminality.

Strict implementation and prompt investigation and certainty of the punishment for the unscrupulous elements can bring back everything on a fair path. Electoral malpractices (Abuse of money power, intimidation of voters, post poll violence, offer of freebies, criminal use of caste card etc) should be associated with disqualification, fines and other penal provisions and that would go a long way for introducing fresh air into the system.

The role of bureaucracy is very important here. Impartiality, effectiveness, sincerity and honesty should be maintained at any cost under strict vigil of Election Commission of India. As stated previously, it is a herculean task. But search for solution for every difficult task should start at the earliest and sincerity and it can achieve the most complicated task.

(The author is a superannuated senior IAS officer. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DOWNSIDE OF SOCIAL DISTANCING

Sir — Ever since the outbreak of the Coronavirus three years ago, while the hygiene measures remained the same as for previous pandemics, the social distancing norms, in particular, made the human experience unique. Notwithstanding the pandemic, social distancing presents the dangers of increasing social desertion, growing impersonality and individualism, and the loss of a sense of society as a whole. It prevents people from effectively socializing, which is a fundamental human need. When the pandemic was at its peak, social distancing measures had created a negative and psychological fear in one's mind to suspect that others were potential carriers of the deadly virus.

It made us worry that this cognitive effect could potentially remain in our society even after the disintegration of the virus. Whether at workplaces, in restaurants, or public spaces, our society has long been characterized by physical interactions between people. As we navigate through life, much of what fulfills us are the bonds we create with people, and more often than not, those bonds materialize through physical interactions. The Covid-19 pandemic is not intensely active these days, and if we still do not find ways to maintain physical and emotional connections in any kind of a situation, sadly it will make it more difficult for us to build and strengthen social bonds, and such an atmosphere apprehensively may lead to an unfortunate future for our society.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

LET US CONSERVE OUR SOIL

Sir — Soil erosion can have irreparable effects on both human and ecosystem health. India has taken several initiatives in this direction which need to be sustained and improved upon sustainably to ensure healthy soil and ultimately a healthy planet. The communication link between all the stakeholders for the management and restoration of degraded soils should be strengthened. Timely dissemination of evidence-based information is also essential. Citizens can contribute by planting trees, developing and maintaining kitchen gardens, and consuming seasonal and locally sourced food. Soil erosion is taking place in 145 million hectares in India, it is estimated that 96.40 million hectares (about 30 percent of the total geographical area) are affected by land degradation. Globally, the biophysical status of 5,670 million hectares of land is declining, of which 1,660 million hectares (29 percent) are due to human-induced land degradation.

The raging border dispute



In the open war of border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka, activists of the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction on Tuesday sprayed black and orange paints on Karnataka state transport buses in the Swargate area of Pune city and wrote "Jai Maharashtra" on these buses. A local leader of the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) faction confirmed they painted the buses. Workers of the Shiv Sena, Uddhav Thackeray faction sprayed at least two-

three buses of Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) with black paint.

The border issue dates back to 1957 after the reorganization of states on linguistic lines. Maharashtra laid claim to Belagavi, which was part of the erstwhile Bombay Presidency as it has a sizable Marathi-speaking population. It also laid claim to 814 Marathi-speaking villages which are currently part of Karnataka. Belagavi district administration in Karnataka on Monday issued orders barring entry of the two Maharashtra ministers and leaders to the city. Prohibitory orders were issued under section 144 of CrPC, barring their entry, besides that of an MP, who is a member of the Maharashtra High Power Committee on the Border Dispute. With this, the ruling party of Maharashtra is silent on this issue and not taking very strong action.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

tribute by planting trees, developing and maintaining kitchen gardens, and consuming seasonal and locally sourced food. Soil erosion is taking place in 145 million hectares in India, it is estimated that 96.40 million hectares (about 30 percent of the total geographical area) are affected by land degradation. Globally, the biophysical status of 5,670 million hectares of land is declining, of which 1,660 million hectares (29 percent) are due to human-induced land degradation.

World Soil Day is celebrated every year on 5 December. The theme of World Soil Day 2022 is 'Soil: Where Food Begins'. Healthy soil helps in the growth of healthy plants, and increases both nutrition and water percolation to maintain groundwater levels. As consumers and citizens, we can contribute to protecting topsoil by planting trees, developing and maintaining home/kitchen gardens, and consuming primarily locally sourced and seasonal foods. Soil erosion can have irreparable effects on both human and ecosystem health. India has taken several initiatives in this direction which need to be sustained and improved upon

sustainably to ensure healthy soil and ultimately a healthy planet.

Priyanka Saurabh | Hisar

THE MAKING OF MODI

Sir — In today's international world, some people can be called smart for their actions. PM Modi is a very well-known example of this quality. Our PM works day and night hard to make our country stand out in the world, whether it is about motivating our soldiers, doing rallies, or meeting foreign delegates. PM Modi never abstains from doing menial tasks. No one knows who is the smartest, but what we should consider is that smartness is a way of achieving goals and not an end goal in itself. Politicians in themselves are very smart, who are smarter than others can only be known by the actions and the result of the action taker. There lies real success and simplicity plays a significant role in molding a man to greater heights.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

People like Ponnawala will be born in every city if there is no strong leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Assam CM — Himanta Biswa Sarma

Together the UK and the US will ensure the global price of energy and the security of our national supply can never again be manipulated by the whims of a failing regime.

UK Prime Minister — Rishi Sunak

You're (Malaika) the Chaiyya Chaiyya girl. But luckily for you, some five heroines had refused to climb on the train. Malaika was nowhere on the radar.



Filmmaker — Farah Khan

We are very very confident. This is not the first time we have lost the first game in the series. It's quite normal. We know how to bounce back from these situations.

Cricketer — Shikhar Dhawan

I condemn the allegation that we are ignoring Christmas. There will be a holiday on December 24 & 25.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister — P Joshi

FIRST COLUMN

COMMONALITIES IN G20 PRESIDENCY

Indian PM Narendra Modi has taken a whole-of-Government approach



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

he first round of meeting among G20 members got off to a rather colourful start earlier this week with traditional Rajasthani turbans, scarves and jackets gifted to visiting delegates in the western Indian city of Udaipur. The event kicked off several official dialogues, networking opportunities for the G20 nation sherpas, 14 participating international organisations and nine guest countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken a whole-of-government approach to what it has dubbed as one of a kind event in the history of independent India. The narrative is of India finding its rightful place on global agenda setting tables, now being the fifth largest economy, moving quickly to be the third in a few years' time.

The current government has a lot at stake in getting the messages right to a global decision making group who are likely to be part of the 200 plus plenary discussions in the run up to the leaders' summit in New Delhi in September 2023. However, an equal stakeholder in the G20 presidency is the domestic audience, who in turn, will be gearing up for one of the largest exercises in the largest democracy of the world political map, the general elections of 2024.

Prime Minister, therefore, wasted no time after casting his vote in Gujarat assembly elections to rush back to Delhi for an all-party meet on India's G20 presidency. He has urged all key parties to be a stakeholder in India's presidency and showcase the strengths of India. A careful selection of venues dotted across the Indian subcontinent from northeast, right into the islands of Andaman has been planned to ensure a full experience of India for the visiting delegates.

The central government offices, state government and every public institution has been requested to start displaying some branding related to India's G 20 presidency and carefully plan regional events, aligning them with proposed plenary meetings. Plenaries have been planned keeping in mind important religious, cultural or social events in the states across India. The message is that the delegates of today are tourists of tomorrow.

One will expect a large amount of G20 branded content in cities /districts hosting these meetings, subtly pushing the message of India taking its "rightful" place on the geopolitical map. The political dividends, at least domestically, have not been overlooked and Modi ensured he held a meeting with key post bearers of the ruling party.

India has been the voice of the global South (an informal alliance of developing nations primarily in Asia and Africa, who may not be aligned with West or Russia, China worldview). This may have looked like India revisiting the cold war non-aligned movement ideology.

However, it may be worth noting that the days of Non-aligned Movement kind of grouping may be over and India, as it champions about reformed multilateralism, could bring a new interpretation to agile diplomacy while it negotiates and finds commonalities with the developed western countries and put across the pressing needs of the developing world. India has highlighted key themes of its presidency earlier this week, including technological transformation, green development and lifestyle for environment, climate financing and associated reform for multilateral finance institutions.

India would highlight its indigenously developed digital public goods stack to the global audience in the coming days. On the domestic front, India has moved the needle to designing the legal framework for the digital ecosystem (a key showcase during its presidency). As of now it is going to be a busy season for all major airports across the country.

(The author is a foreign affairs commentator)



Development turns an emotive issue

The economic gains registered in Gujarat have translated into a number of improvements in social indicators, including the infant mortality rate



The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) can be credited for bringing a tectonic shift in Indian politics. The Gujarat verdict has shown that development is now an emotive issue. The people in Gujarat cannot compromise on development. They rejected anyone who came to Gujarat to challenge the development model of the state. The people in Gujarat have given tight slaps on the faces of Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for questioning the development of Gujarat. The Gujarat verdict may prove to be a touchstone for Indian politics in decades to come.

Indian politics for the past few decades has seen religion and caste identities as emotive issues. The people have voted on caste lines. The people have in the past voted on religious lines. Caste and religious factors also dominated Gujarat politics for decades. Gujarati society was divided on caste and religious lines until the BJP arrived on the political horizon. Since then it has been 27 years of uninterrupted rule of the BJP in Gujarat. The people have again asked the BJP that there is no full stop in the development journey. The people, by giving an unprecedented verdict in favour of the BJP, have said that the development issue is too close to their hearts for them to consider even the moons that Congress and the AAP offered through freebies.

Congress and the AAP tried to trap the people with promises such as unemployment allowances, free electricity and water. But the people of Gujarat told Congress and the AAP to learn the art of development politics. The people don't need crutches to walk, as they have been socially and economically empowered by the development journey of the last 27 years. They stand on their feet with pride. Congress and the AAP tried to challenge the pride of the people of Gujarat. They have been served with tight slaps for trying to enter the homes of the people of Gujarat through backdoors.

In terms of the GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product), Gujarat was the fifth largest state in FY2017. At present the GSDP rank of Gujarat has improved to fourth position. Also, the GSDP grew at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10 per cent to Rs 19.44 lakh crores in FY2022 from Rs 13.29 lakh crore in FY2018, witnessing a growth of 46.47 per cent. The people of Gujarat are well versed with the power of compounding. They know that it creates a powerful force, which multiplies the gains over a time frame. This has yielded unprecedented social and economic gains to the people. This explains why the people in Gujarat showed no interest in the politics of freebies of Congress and the AAP.

The BJP government in Gujarat has kept its fiscal deficit at 1.51 per cent of the GSDP, which is way below the Finance



THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN GUJARAT STANDS AT 2.5 PER CENT WHILE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE STANDS AT 8.2 PER CENT. THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF GUJARAT HAS MAINTAINED THIS RATE AT A LOW LEVEL FOR NEARLY THE PAST 10 YEARS

(The author is Director, Public Policy Research Centre)



Commission's prescribed limit of four per cent since 2018. Along with this, low levels of debt have been maintained by switching to the National Pension Scheme (NPS) from Old Pension Scheme (OPS) to reduce financial burden on state exchequer. The financial discipline of Gujarat has been for the benefit of the people only, which Congress and the AAP sought to destroy by promising to revive the Old Pension Scheme and frittering away the gains with freebies.

The Congress and AAP definitely didn't do their homework. If they had been honest about homework they would not have raised the issue of unemployment in the Gujarat Assembly election campaign. The unemployment rate in Gujarat stands at 2.5 per cent, while the national average stands at 8.2 per cent. The state government of Gujarat has maintained this rate at a low level for nearly the past 10 years. Meanwhile, other states have recorded an unemployment rate in double digits. The unemployment rate in Gujarat mirrors the levels seen in advanced economies such as the US and the UK. Yet, Congress and the AAP tried to fool the people of Gujarat by raising the issue of unemployment, which portrayed them as non-serious political entities in the eyes of the people in the state.

Economic gains of Gujarat have also translated into improvements in the social indicators

such as infant mortality rate (25 per 1000 live births), maternal mortality rate, literacy, nutrition, school enrollment and so on. In fact, the Gujarat model of development has essentially been based on utilizing the resources of the state exchequer to create assets which work for the social and economic empowerment of the people. Works done in ensuring availability of water in Gujarat stand out as examples for other states to mobilise their resources for the long term asset creations, which the people reward also in elections.

It must now be accepted that the development model of Gujarat is all inclusive, which has made the past narrative of identity politics irrelevant. This was reflected in the BJP victory from Dariapur Assembly seat in Gujarat, which is dominated by Muslims. The BJP candidate Kaushik Jain won from here, and he must overwhelmingly have got the Muslim votes.

The BJP has also served a warning message to the AAP in the national capital. Even while the BJP lost the MCD elections after 15 years of rule, the party improved its vote share to over 39 per cent. The AAP vote share has come down from 53 per cent two years ago to 42 per cent now. The BJP is now raring to go for the next Assembly elections to overthrow the AAP by building the development plank of the party against the politics of freebies.

What is more important is that

the corruption charges against the AAP government have resonated with the people in the national capital. The BJP won the municipal wards in the Assembly constituencies of the Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, jailed minister Satyendar Jain, transport minister Kailash Gehlot, Amannullah Khan, who is accused of taking money for party tickets, Akhilesh Tripathi, who also allegedly sold the AAP tickets.

This augurs well for Delhi politics, as the people in the national capital have given the message to the BJP to work hard to throw the anarchists out of power in the next Assembly elections, which would be held in 2025. At the same time, the people blessed the BJP with 104 wards in the MCD to keep a check on the AAP in the MCD and the party would not allow the anarchist politicians to fritter away all the gains made by the MCD in the last 15 years. Unlike Delhi Assembly, the AAP will not be able to throw the BJP members from the MCD meetings, and that has been ensured by the people.

The BJP faced reversal in the Himachal Pradesh Assembly elections on account of the rebel factor. But the BJP's vote share was almost at par with Congress. The BJP may have turned the tide and changed the tradition of Himachal Pradesh of voting out the incumbent government if the candidate selection had been better.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE TIME HAS COME TO TAKE A STAND AFTER ASSESSING WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE BORDER AREAS. THE SITUATION THERE IS WORRISOME. — NCP LEADER SHARAD PAWAR



I WILL ASK MAHARASHTRA CM EKNATH SHINDE NOT TO SEND HIS CABINET COLLEAGUES TO BELAGAVI AS THEIR VISIT MAY DISRUPT THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN THE BORDER DISTRICT. — KARNATAKA CHIEF MINISTER BASAVARAJ BOMMAI

Volunteerism through Vidyanjali for education

Experiments of volunteers coming out to help in imparting education have been immensely beneficial in strengthening school infra

National Education Policy 2020 recommends enhancing learning outcomes of students by involving community and volunteer efforts for one-on-one tutoring, holding extra help classes, teaching support and guidance. These objectives recommended by the NEP were conceived through the program called 'Vidyanjali' - a school volunteer initiative wherein volunteering was proposed to be done in non-monetary form directly to the schools through a tech-based common platform.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening school infrastructure and enhancing the quality of education by seeking community support in different domains of school



A SRIJA



ABDUL MOMIN

(A Srija is an Economic Adviser to and Abdul Momin is Consultant in the Ministry of Education)

education. The volunteers could be local individuals, civil societies or corporates, people from the Indian diaspora and NRIs. Vidyanjali seeks community involvement in the efficient functioning of the schools in the neighbourhood, especially government and government aided schools.

Though volunteering for a social cause has been an integral part of Indian culture, the uniqueness of the Vidyanjali initiative is that it provides a tech-enabled smooth platform which connects the schools with the volunteers located in any part of the country. Very often, a common citizen is left wondering how to volunteer for a social cause and schools on the other hand look out for assistance to meet the diverse

yet small needs of the school which does not get covered in through their annual budget allocations.

Many a time, shortage of teachers leaves students deprived of education. Vidyanjali provides an opportunity to address these gaps. Launched in September 2021, with active volunteers participation, the programme is gradually gaining traction among citizens. It has proven its strength by successfully managing to attract a good number of volunteers and onboarded schools on the portal. As on date, there are over 3.87 lakh government and government-aided schools on board and over 102683 volunteers have registered on the Vidyanjali portal. The volunteers under Vidyanjali have

shown great deal of enthusiasm by contributing to the schools in terms of assets as well as services. For instance, there are cases where volunteers have donated about 52122 ceiling fans/water purifiers/drinking water facility and other services to schools in Assam.

Similarly, in Delhi we have volunteers providing subject assistance, mentoring, teaching art & craft and music to the students. Moreover, school girls are getting self-defense training, while volunteers are providing assistance in developing basic civil infrastructure and other classroom needs, including ICT-based learning material and devices such as tablets, mobile phone, LCD, stationary, books, laptop, and flip white board, etc., to the

schools across the country. Almost 9.27 lakh children have benefited from this volunteering programme. The next step is to rope in bulk contributions from corporations, civil societies to schools across the State to strengthen them. The success of the programme rests on the effort put in by the states/UTs in getting the program on board through regular training sessions rendered to district/block level functionaries, as well as heads of schools to onboard the schools on the portal and place their request. The volunteers can contribute only if the schools are registered on the portal and place their request. Volunteers could even be common citizens like us. We all have the urge to contribute back to the schools that we

passed out from. People having expertise in sports can impart sports training to the children, doctors can organize medical camps and conduct health/mental wellbeing lectures/workshops.

Companies/groups/organizations can assist schools in building additional classrooms/toilets for girls/ ramps for children with special needs/ICT labs/Smart classroom /residential hostels for students/electricity/water and internet connections etc. As alumni, self-employed or salaried professionals all of us can support our alma-mater in various ways. The exhaustive list on which volunteers can contribute is available on the Vidyanjali portal.

Beneficially, the programme does not minimize

the responsibilities of the Government rather it supplements/complements and strengthens the efforts of the Governments taken for the betterment of the whole education continuum in the country. The people volunteering under Vidyanjali do it selflessly. They cannot claim their services as full-time experience, while the schools cannot treat them as full-time teachers/staff of the school. The programme is fully based on the true spirit of volunteerism and with a very clear intention to tap the resources available with the community for catalyzing the needs of schools and volunteers connected through extensive use of technology and community outreach programs on a single platform.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT WITH AUSTRALIA

Will create a level-playing field for Indian home textile exporters

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Even as there is a slowdown in demand for Indian garments in the US and Europe, free trade agreement (FTA) with Australia is likely to provide a level-playing field for home textile exporters in 2022-23, according to a report.

The build-up of inventories on account of the cut on discretionary expenditure and reallocation of expenses to services have reduced imports into the key US market, according to a India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) report.

Consequently, the home textile segment continued to experience a demand slowdown, whereas other segments of cotton, apparel and man-made



spinning continue to benefit from the China+1 sourcing and continuing US ban on the use of cotton from Xinjiang, China.

However, given the discretionary nature of textile products, Ind-Ra expects the slowing demand in Europe, the US and other parts of the world to

have an impact on textile exports.

In addition, the report stated that small yarn players facing cotton availability issues are likely to get impacted.

Further, the report stated that the FTA with Australia eliminates the import duty on textile exports from India,

bringing the Indian product prices at par with China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

India's exports to Australia contribute 5-6 per cent to the total Australian requirement and at a value of USD 500-600 million, they remained at 1-2 per cent of total textile exports from India in 2020. Given the economic challenges being faced by some exporting nations and the increasing need to diversify supply chains, Indian home textile or garment producers are likely to benefit.

Given the slowdown being experienced by the US and Europe, this could provide partial relief along with other FTAs likely to be signed with the UAE, UK, Canada and Israel.

Led by RIL, two Adani companies, top 100 firms create Rs 92.2 lakh crore

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Two Adani group companies -- Adani Enterprises and Adani Transmission -- have uprooted the traditional leader Reliance Industries in annual wealth creation in 2022 so far, while the top 100 of them created a massive Rs 92.2 lakh crore of wealth, according to a report. However, Reliance Industries has smashed all records to emerge as the largest wealth creator during the five-year period ending March 2022, says the leading brokerage Motilal Oswal in its 27th annual wealth creation study. The Gautam Adani group companies have been rallying to dizzying heights in the year as the group snapped up many assets and diversified into newer areas.

The rally was so high that Adani on September 16 became the second richest person in the world with USD 155.7 billion, only second to Elon Musk who had USD 253.5 billion of net worth, according to the Forbes real-time billionaires list. The spike was following the stocks of Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports and Adani Transmission hitting record highs on that day. Adani, who owns 75 per cent each in these three companies, has added more than USD 70 billion to his fortune in 2022 in mid-September. In February, he overtook Mukesh Ambani as the richest Asian, became a centi-billionaire in April and left behind Microsoft's Bill Gates as the world's fourth-richest person last month.

India achieves 166GW of renewable energy capacity

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has achieved 165.94GW of renewable energy capacity till October as against the target of 175GW by 2022, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

"Against the target of achieving 175 GW of Renewable Energy installed capacity by 2022, a total of 165.94 GW of renewable energy capacity (including large hydro) has been installed in the country as on October 31, 2022," Power and New & Renewable Energy Minister R K Singh stated in a written reply to Lok Sabha on Thursday.

A capacity of 76.13 GW (of renewables) is under various stages of implementation and a capacity of 36.44 GW is under various stages of bidding, Singh informed the House. In line with the Prime Minister's announcement at COP26, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is working towards achieving 500 GW of installed electricity capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030.

FINAL CLOSE AT RS 15,530 CR FOR STRESSED REALTY PROJECTS PLATFORM

Govt infuses Rs 5,000 cr in SWAMIH Fund

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The government has put in an additional Rs 5,000 crore into the SWAMIH Invest Fund-I to help the stressed realty investment platform achieve its final close at Rs 15,530 crore, its manager SBI Capital Ventures said on Thursday.

The fund set up under the Special Window for Affordable and Mid-Income Housing is India's largest social impact fund, according to a statement, which said the government recently infused Rs 5,000 crore. It intends to provide priority debt financing for the completion of stressed, brown-field and residential projects registered with regulatory bodies that fall in the affordable, mid-income housing category. SBI is also one of the anchor investors of the Fund along with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) while other investors include HDFC and major nationalised banks. The

country's largest lender SBI is one of the anchor investors of the Ministry of Finance-sponsored fund along with Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC). Other investors include HDFC Ltd and major nationalised banks, the statement said. The final close comes three years after the fund had marked its first close on receiving Rs 10,037.5 crore in commitments, including Rs 5,000 crore from the government, in December 2019. So far, the fund has given final approvals to 127 projects which will in turn complete over 79,000 homes, it said, adding that 286 projects across over 30 cities, which entail construction of over 1 lakh homes are being evaluated at present, the statement said.

Its investment team, which has been scaled up to 33 people now, has evaluated over 1,000 deals and will keep evaluating deals till December 2024 with the final close in place, it said.

Air India to invest over US\$ 400 million on wide-body aircraft refurbishment

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Tata group-owned full service carrier Air India on Thursday said it plans to refurbish its legacy wide-body fleet, comprising 40 Boeing planes, at an investment of over USD 400 million (about Rs 3,295 crore).

The company has mandated London-based product design companies JPA Design and Trendworks to assist with the cabin interior design elements of the refurbishment exercise, the airline said in a statement.

Of the 40 planes which are set to go for refurbishment, 27 are Boeing 787-800s and 13 Boeing 777s.

All these planes were acquired when the airline was under state ownership. The Tata Group regained control of Air India in January this year.

The first such refurbished aircraft is expected to be in service by mid-2024, as per the release. With this significant investment, Air India said it is committed to providing its passengers with a comfortable, modern, and technologically advanced cabin.

In September, the airline announced a transformation plan, focusing on growing both its network and fleet, developing a completely revamped customer proposition, improving reliability and on-time performance. It also aims at taking a leadership position in technology, sustainability, and innovation, as well as aggressively investing in the best industry talent.

Air India said as part of the refurbishment exercise, it will carry out a complete overhaul of existing cabin interiors, including the addition of latest generation seats and best



in-class inflight entertainment across all classes.

In addition, the refurbishment will see the introduction of premium economy cabins on both fleets, it said, adding that first class cabins will also be retained on the Boeing 777 planes.

"We are working closely with partners to accelerate the refit process as fast as possible and, in the meantime, leasing in at least 11 new widebody aircraft with brand new interiors to improve our offering at the earliest opportunity," Air India Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson said.

Power deficit declines to 0.1%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Power deficit or gap between electricity required and supplied has fallen from two per cent in April this year to 0.1 per cent, Parliament was informed on Thursday.

"The gap between energy requirement and energy supplied has been reduced from two per cent to 0.1 per cent between the month of April, 2022 and October, 2022," Power Minister R K Singh stated in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

The data showed that the deficit was 2,752 million units (units) in April this year

which came down to 124 MU in October, 2022.

The power deficit was 609 MU (0.4 per cent) in May, 796 MU (0.6 per cent) in June, 434 MU (0.3 per cent) in July, 465 MU (0.4 per cent) in August and 312 MU (0.2 per cent) in September.

In another reply to the House, the minister informed that as on March 31, 2022, the coal stock position was 25.6 Million Tonnes (MT), or 9 days of stock, and it increased to 26.1 MT on September 30, 2022 and further increased to 30.9 MT, or 11 days of stock, as on November 30, 2022.

The coal stock available at

coal-based thermal power plants of the country is monitored by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) on a daily basis. The minister informed that as on November 30, 2022, there are 75 plants (56 per cent) out of 180 plants are having coal stock of less than 8 days as per their consumption pattern. The gap between energy requirement and energy supplied has been reduced from two per cent to 0.1 per cent between April and October, 2022, primarily on account of various steps taken by the government, Singh stated.

Reliance General Insurance seeks Rs 600 crore capital infusion

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance General Insurance Company (RGIC) has sought Rs 600 crore capital infusion from its debt-ridden parent entity Reliance Capital Ltd (RCL) to grow its business in line with peers, sources said.

In a letter to Reliance Capital's administrator, RGIC has sought Rs 600 crore capital support by this month-end. The Committee of Creditors (CoC) is expected to

discuss RGIC's request for capital infusion in its meeting soon, the sources added.

RCL is undergoing resolution process under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and has received binding bids from Oaktree, Cosmea-Piramal consortium, Hinduja and Torrent Group.

RGIC has said the fund infusion is essential to preserve its business, enhance the value and take the company's solvency ratio from 155

per cent to about 175 per cent, sources said. Borderline solvency is creating business hesitation in corporate clients as well as government business, the letter written by the top management of the general insurance firm said. The borderline solvency of RGIC is also being capitalised on by its competitors, it added. "This capital infusion will also increase regulatory comfort at IRDAI and reflect the continued support towards RGIC,"

MONEY MATTERS

Samsung to collaborate with tech startups working on Digital India stack



Consumer electronics maker Samsung on Thursday said it will partner with startups working on technologies around the government's Digital India stack, to accelerate its digital journey in the

country. The company is inviting startups to collaborate on technologies which include UPI, DigiLocker, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN), and Unified Health Interface (UHI) among others, a statement issued by Samsung said. As part of this, startups will partner with Samsung's R&D centres and business units in India on domains such as wallet, health, and fitness, where products and services will be integrated with the company's ecosystem, it added. It will also provide funding support to some of these startups, helping them to scale with their solution. The South Korean major held a Startup Collab event in Bengaluru earlier this week, where around 25 startups from across India interacted with its leadership "Samsung's R&D centres and business units in India will work closely with startups to co-build solutions for a specific product or service that has the potential to be integrated with Samsung's product ecosystem," it said.

RBI may effect one more rate hike; repo rate may rise to 6.5 %: Uday Kotak



A day after the RBI raised the benchmark lending rate by 35 basis points, Kotak Mahindra Bank Managing Director Uday Kotak on Thursday said the central bank may go for one more rate hike to bring inflation below its upper tolerance level of 6 per cent. Yesterday,

the RBI indicated that it wants inflation to be within the band first and then move towards the target of 4 per cent, Kotak said at the CII Global Economic Policy Summit 2022. "My sense is that there could be one more rate hike and that may be the time for thinking about a pivot, but we got to watch very closely the data, and maybe around 6.5 per cent as it looks today, subject to what happens to the world, subject to what happens to oil, subject to what happens to many other things," he said. Kotak further said the US Federal Reserve's decision on interest rates this month will be a signal for other central banks.

BharatPe files criminal suit against Ashneer Grover, family



Fintech unicorn BharatPe has filed a criminal suit against its former MD and co-founder Ashneer Grover and his family, seeking up to Rs 88.67 crore in damages for alleged cheating and embezzlement of funds. The suit, running into 2,800

pages, alleges that Grover, his wife Madhuri Jain and other family members created fake bills, enlisted fictitious vendors to provide services to the company, and overcharged the company for recruitment. The civil suit and criminal complaint came up before the Delhi High Court, which issued notices to the Grover family and asked them to respond within two weeks. The next hearing date has been set for January 9. It also issued summons to the other defendants, including Grover's brother-in-law, his father and his brother. If found guilty, they could face imprisonment for up to 10 years. "Pass a decree of permanent injunction restraining the defendants (Grover and others) and/or anyone on their behalf in any manner whatsoever from making defamatory/derogatory statements concerning the plaintiff (BharatPe), its directors, employees and/or publicising, printing the same in any medium or form whatsoever," the suit said, while also seeking direction to the defendants to disclose their assets. During the hearing, senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for BharatPe, contended that Grover, his wife and other relatives were carrying out a "vicious and vitriolic" campaign against the company which has a large number of foreign investors. The counsel for Grover and his wife said they were not served with a copy of the suit.

DRI action to detain mobile phones is a death knell, says Vivo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Chinese mobile phone company Vivo has alleged that the Department of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has stopped the company's consignment at Delhi airport and such action is a death knell for company's export from India, according to industry body ICEA's letter to the government.

Vivo in an email to India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) has alleged that the DRI has detained the consignment of 26,840 mobile phones and is checking IMEI number of the handsets after opening the seal of their boxes, which is making them unfit for

export. "The entire consignment is currently scattered at the Delhi airport, and is no longer fit for exports, until it has again been moved to factory, undergone complete inspection and then repackaged. This being the festive season, this action by the DRI rings a death knell for us exporting out of India unless the DRI actions at the airport do not cease immediately and our goods released," Vivo wrote in the email to ICEA.

The communication is part of ICEA representation before the Ministry of Electronics and IT expressing concern on the action of DRI.

An email query sent to Vivo

and DRI elicited no response.

ICEA, in a letter to Alkesh Kumar Sharma, secretary in the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), informed that Vivo Mobile India Private Limited is found to be struggling to export mobile phones out of India due to harassments meted out by a few of the field officers.

"The packed export bound mobile phone boxes have been forced to be opened and being asked to verify/match the IMEI number with the box. IMEI numbers verification on exports have no legal relevance in Indian context and if required is also subject to the importing nation," ICEA

Chairman Pankaj Mohindroo said in the letter dated December 2.

He said that with consistent efforts of MeitY and industry, the Indian mobile phone industry is now manufacturing handsets worth Rs 2.75 lakh crore and exporting mobile phones of around Rs 45,000 crore as part of ambition of the prime minister to make India as the global manufacturing hub for electronics products.

"We as a nation cannot afford to allow emergence of a scenario, whereby, some officers from the enforcement agencies can derail this process through some unilateral and preposterous actions which



can disillusion global companies," Mohindroo said.

Vivo in the email to ICEA shared that despite stiff resistance from China teams, it has

been able to carve out a list of countries including Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka and Nepal to service them from India unit.

Govt extends Rooftop Solar Programme till March 2026

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Thursday asked consumers not to pay any additional charge for solar installations as the 'Rooftop Solar Programme' has been extended till March 31, 2026.

The programme has been extended till 31.03.2026 and therefore, subsidy under the programme will be available until the target under the programme is achieved, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) said in a statement.

"All residential consumers are hereby advised not to pay any additional charges to any

vendor on account of fee for application on the National Portal or any additional charges for net-metering/testing which are not prescribed by the respective distribution company," it said.

In case any such charges are demanded by any vendor/agency/person, the same can be reported to the ministry through email rtsmre@gov.in, it said.

Consumers willing to install rooftop solar panels can apply and track the process on the National Portal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the portal for rooftop solar on July 30, 2022.

Nandita Das-directorial *Zwigato* to premiere at the 27th International Film Festival of Kerala

After the World premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, and the Asian premiere at the Busan International Film Festival, Applause Entertainment and Nandita Das' *Zwigato*, is set to premiere in India at the 27th International Film Festival of Kerala.

The film has been selected as the opening film in the Kaleidoscope section of the festival. The screenings are on December 10 and December 13, 2022.

Written and Directed by Nandita Das, the film features Kapil Sharma, as a food delivery rider who grapples with the world of ratings and algorithms. Shahana Goswami plays his wife, a homemaker, who starts to work to support his income. It is the story of the relentless struggle of life, but not without their shared moments of joy. Set in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, the film captures the lives of invisible 'ordinary' people that are hidden in plain sight. The film is



life-like - bitter sweet.

The 27th International Film Festival of Kerala takes place from December 9 to 16 at Trivandrum, Kerala.

Applause Entertainment and Nandita Das Initiatives present *Zwigato*, Directed by Nandita Das



MONARCH CANCELLED AFTER ONE SEASON

Monarch, which starred Anna Friel, Trace Adkins, Susan Sarandon, Joshua Sasse and Beth Ditto, will not return for a second season. The Season 1 finale aired on December 6.

The drama opened after an NFL doubleheader, debuting to a 0.8 rating among adults 18-49 with and 3.8 million total viewers, becoming most-watched fall scripted premiere in three years. *Monarch* averaged 4.1 million multi-platform viewers across the 11 episodes as it failed to resonate with viewers, reports Variety.

The musical series, created by Melissa London Hilfers, was produced during the Covid-19 pandemic

and originally was set to premiere in January 2022. Designed for a shorter run, it was then pushed to the fall.

The show follows the 'first family of country music,' led by Dottie Roman (Sarandon), who shockingly dies in the series premiere, despite being the face on every billboard for the show.

Over the course of the season, her husband Albie (Adkins) attempts to keep the *Monarch* business afloat with the help of their two daughters and son, who all are hiding secrets of their own.

Music was a giant component of the series, with covers of both new and old hits, including Lizzo's *Juice*, Faith Hill's *Breathe*, LeAnn Rimes' *How Do I*

Live, Ed Sheeran's *Photograph*, Harry Styles' *Watermelon Sugar* and, on the final episode, Kelly Clarkson's *Stronger*.

Following the debut music supervisor Amanda Krieg Thomas told Variety, "It's a great mix of songs - there are classics to rediscover, current hits, and artists that you may have never heard of, but will add to your playlist after the show. We're set in Texas."

We never exclude a great song because the artist isn't from Texas, but we really tried to find opportunities for emerging artists from Texas wherever we could."

Monarch marks the first fully produced in-house scripted series for the network.

Jennifer Lawrence dissed for claiming there's no female action film lead before her

Hollywood star Jennifer Lawrence has been widely criticised after claiming that there's no female action movie lead before her.

Speaking with actress Viola Davis, she said, "I remember when I was doing *Hunger Games*, nobody had ever put a woman in the lead of an action movie because it wouldn't work - because we were told girls and boys can both identify with a male lead, but boys cannot identify with a female lead."

She added, "And it just makes me so happy every single time I see a movie come out that just blows through every one of those beliefs, and proves that it is just a lie to keep certain people out of the movies. To keep certain people in the same positions that they've always been in."

Many quickly disagreed with Lawrence as Franklin Leonard, founder of The Black List, said on Twitter in response to the interview, "It is untrue that no one had ever put a woman in an action movie before Jennifer Lawrence in *Hunger Games*."

Deepika Padukone to star as lady Singham, announced Rohit Shetty

Filmmaker Rohit Shetty during the song launch of his upcoming film *Cirkus* revealed that actress Deepika Padukone will be donning the khaki uniform for his cop universe as they are all set to work together. Rohit, who was at the launch of *Current Laga Re* along with Ranveer Singh and Deepika, made the news on stage.

He said, "Log poochte rehte hai Singham ka agla part kab aayega? Today let me take his opportunity to say that Deepika and I will work together next year."

Rohit and Deepika have previously worked together in *Chennai Express* which stars Shah Rukh Khan and released in 2013. It would be after a decade that the actress and filmmaker would be working together.



FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



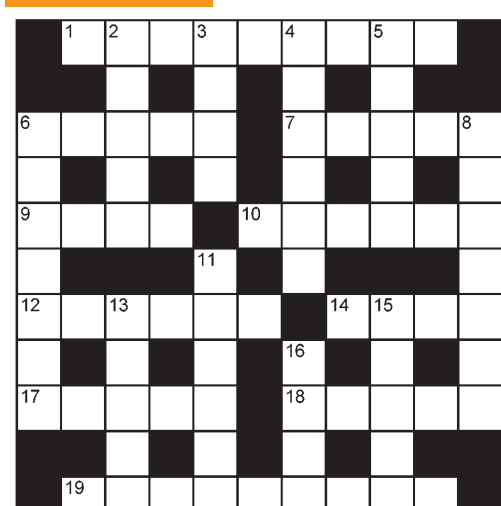
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



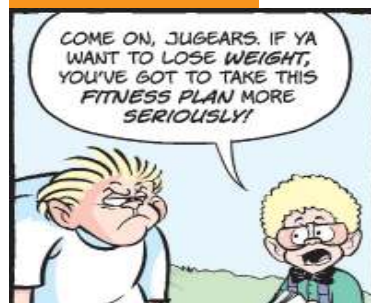
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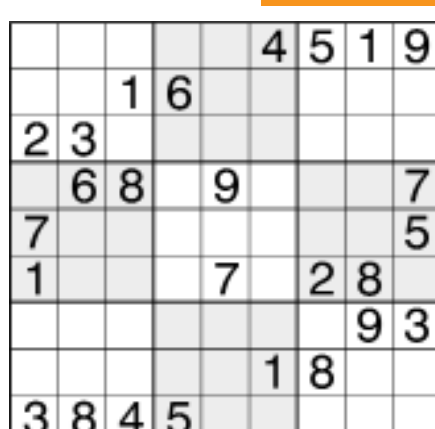
NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
2	3	7	9	6	1	5	4	8
1	4	5	3	8	2	7	6	9
9	8	6	7	4	5	3	1	2
8	1	2	6	9	3	4	7	5
4	7	3	1	5	8	9	2	6
5	6	9	2	7	4	8	3	1
3	2	4	8	1	9	6	5	7
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Rules

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

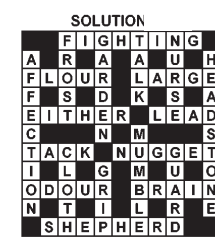
ACROSS

- A ship's right side
- Perspire
- Young person
- Take a break
- Very rarely
- A passenger needs this
- Sky colour
- Divide into two equal parts
- Acted dramas
- Lucky

- Make longer by pulling
- Carpenters and engineers use these
- Say again
- A stringed musical instrument
- Fewest
- Twirl

DOWN

- These are cut down for paper manufacture
- Decays
- The gas we need to live
- Circular in shape



PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

AP ■ ADELAIDE

PTI ■ BANGKOK

AP ■ MULTAN

"We are facing injury problems because most of our fast bowlers are playing in all the three formats and that is very tough on them," Pakistan captain Babar Azam said.

EXCLUSIVE

'I will not shy away, if I'm asked to play a terrorist'

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Several films in the past have touched upon the lives of sex workers. But actress Shweta Basu Prasad ensured one doesn't get a déjà vu of those movies, with the character she's playing in *India Lockdown* written by a national award winning director! Her character is very well fleshed out and the way she depicts how sex workers have been most challenged by the pandemic was worth echoing applause for her. In an exclusive conversation with the actress who also has quite a few Telugu ventures, speaks her heart out on how they were able to enhance the impact.

"Accepting it whole-heartedly, my lockdown was very comfortable because I am privileged. Was sitting in my cushy living room in a secure house with people to look after my daily needs, not shying away from it all. I didn't complain at all — wasn't cribbing like others on where my maid is, when am I going to jam or when will we resume work. But I had in mind even the remotest possibility of not surviving this pandemic, what can it do to us. For many years, I had it in my mind to go through Bhagavad Gita which was a religious text but after I finished the book — made me realise it's beyond that. More about the subconscious mind. And a revelation: I also managed to write the screenplay for my short film and let me tell you it's starring Anupam Kher, ting!"

Just out of a divorce during the lockdown days, the *Kotha Bangaru Lokam* fame didn't want the emotional issues to burden her. Hence, she continued to not just keep her body but also the soul happy. She continued speaking to us, "My family insisted that I come and live with them after my seperation, just an Indian thing to say na. However, we are equally progressive, so I took some time off and continued to live alone and got a hell lot of time to introspect about my life. I come

Actress Shweta Basu Prasad recently wooed the audience playing the character of a sex worker, in Madhur Bhandarkar's *India Lockdown*. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the actress opens up about her lockdown days, not letting her personal issues affect her professional life, and much more.

from a family of literature and culture, my dad had his own theatre group so many of those qualities are imbibed in me too."

After fifteen years of experience, another interesting project came her way and without attaching any stigmas to it, Shweta grabbed onto the role! She explained to us, "It wasn't the first time I was offered a Madhur Bhandarkar film, post 2005 there was a new project that I was offered, however my parents politely declined because they wanted me to focus on my education and Madhur sir accepted it graciously. Taskent Files made him approach me again! To delve into the role, my art director, Madhur Bhandarkar and I went to the red light area and I began interacting

with the commercial sex workers. What came next was heartbreaking for me as an artist."

During her research, she got to know — many sex workers were not eligible for government support during the crisis. Factors such as clients' health concerns and limited mobility had reduced demand for sexual services and they started lower their prices and took bigger risks! So the national award winning actress played and out-and-out role and swept us with her performance. She also said, "I picked up their lingo, how they sit and all. There is a particular way you'll see a sex worker will sit with her hand on the hip! There's a thing about me: I do my own make-up and I noticed the sex workers don't apply glamorous make-up yet it looks loud. When you'll watch the film, you will pity her and it's kind off strange to me."

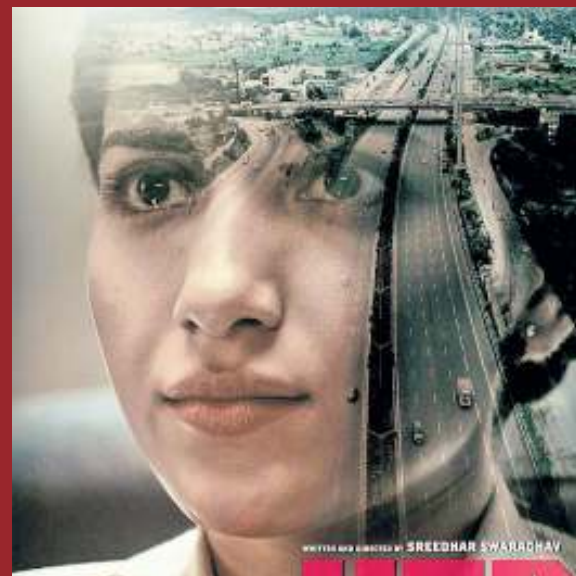
Explaining it how, "Because she's a patakha! She's like a small flame in a dark room, that's the creativity of the role. People are calling her brave, I heard people saying is this how the life of a sex worker is?" As people must be expecting that Shweta playing a sex-worker must be her break-through role but the actress dismisses it, "It was a Madhur Bhandarkar direction — had seen how he bagged a national award for *Chandni Bar* with Tabu. I just surrendered myself to him. Trigger warning: Do not fall for his serious film persona, he's a fun-loving man in reality (she laughs) I crossed checked with Saie and Prateik Babbar. There was never a day, I felt uncomfortable because I

knew him from the time I was 14-years old."

And then comes a confession: "As an actor, if I am asked to play even a terrorist, I will not shy away from it. I am not afraid of any public backlash. I know how to find a human in grey roles!"



RUHANI'S INTRIGUING FIRST LOOK FROM *HER*



Actress Ruhani Sharma is known for her selective roles. She made an impressive debut in Telugu with *Chi La Sow*, where she played a role filled with multiple emotions. she starred in another successful film *HIT*. The actress was last seen in *Meet Cute* series. She is currently doing the lead role in a female-centric film. The makers revealed the film's title as *HER*, besides releasing the first look poster.

Ruhani is playing the role of Archana Prasad in *HER* which deals with a police procedural. The intriguing first look depicts Ruhani Sharma in a khaki uniform giving a serious gaze while the title design is quite appealing with a star incorporated into it. The poster design also

looks interesting with Ruhani Sharma's face juxtaposed with a highway leading to a city. The poster and title *HER* gives us the impression that it's going to be an engaging investigative drama/ thriller and the caption "Chapter 1" hints that there's more to come. The makers are also planning to release the teaser and song promo soon.

Written and directed by Sreedhar Swaraghav. Produced by Raghu Sankuratri and Deepa Sankuratri under the banner Double Up Media. The film also has Vikas Vasishtha, Pradeep Rudra, and Jeevan Kumar playing prominent roles. Vishnu Besi handled the cinematography, while Chanakya Toorupu edited the film and the music is composed by Pavan.

'Sandeep, family worked hard to produce this movie'

Directed by Gangadhar, *Mukhachitram* stars actor Vishwak Sen as the lead role. The film also stars Vikas Vashishta, Priya Vadlamani, Chaitanya Rao, Ayesha Khan in prominent roles.

Sandeep Raj, whose earlier directorial flick *Colour Photo* won the National Award for Best Telugu film, has written the story, screenplay and dialogues for the film.

As the movie lovers are super-excited for its release, the makers today will be unveiling the cover of the film. The team had conducted a pre-release event on Thursday, during which the film director Gangadhar said, "I started working on the story with Sandeep, before itself. We had met several producers, however, some producers had taken a back step due to increasing budgets. Then Sandeep gave me the courage to make a film of our own. That's how this movie started. Sandeep has worked hard to produce this movie. Not only he but also his family took that responsibility. I say my thanks to all of them."

Meanwhile, Producer Bunny said, "After Corona, the calculations of the film have changed. Today, audiences come to theaters only if there is content. Even newcomers are enjoying movies with strong stories. The last twenty minutes of this movie are crammed. Vishwak Sen's ten minute character will be the attraction of the movie. Vishwak acted impressively in that character. Every technician showed talent. The music director Kalabhairava work is so good that even a



small correction cannot be said."

With Sandeep getting so much praise and love from the team, let's hear to what he has to say, "Every time I speak less with the belief that there will be another event. I will tell you about this movie in detail in the success meet. What have we done with this movie tomorrow the first half of the movie will speak and the second half will say even more. We made a new attempt. You will like it"

Nandamuri Balakrishna & Anil Ravipudi's #NBK108 begins

God Of Masses Natasimha Nandamuri Balakrishna and successful director Anil Ravipudi's crazy project *#NBK108*, to be produced prestigiously by Sahu Garapati and Harish Peddi under Shine Screens banner, has been launched grandly today with a pooja ceremony.

For the muhurtham shot, mega producer Allu Aravind sounded the clapboard, while ace producer Dil Raju switched on the camera. Legendary director K Raghavendra Rao did the honorary direction for the muhurtham shot.

Mythri Movie Makers Naveen Yerneni, Kilaru Satish, and Producer Sirish handed over the script to the makers.

#NBK108 will start rolling today. The shoot begins with an action block choreography by V Venkat's master. A massive set was constructed for the fight sequence under the supervision of production designer Rajeevan.

Balakrishna sports a different look and his character is also going to be first-of-its-kind for him. The movie will have Balakrishna mark action and mass element and Anil Ravipudi mark elements. Keeping



Balakrishna's stardom in mind, Anil Ravipudi penned a powerful story.

The most happening actress Sreeleela will be playing a crucial role in the movie that will have music by in-form composer S

Thaman. The collision of three forces- Balakrishna, Anil Ravipudi, and S Thaman, under the successful production of Shine Screens, is set to create history.

An ensemble star cast will play crucial roles, while *#NBK 108* will

have leading craftsmen taking care of different crafts. C Ram Prasad will take care of cinematography, Tammi Raju is the editor and Rajeevan is the production designer. V Venkat will choreograph the action part.

Ajith's Tamil action flick *Thunivu* to be titled *Tegimpu*



One are the days when Kollywood makers used to release films in Telugu and have different names in Tamil and Telugu versions. Of late they started taking Tollywood movie lovers for granted but at the same time wanted to penetrate deep into Tollywood releasing their films in Telugu also. They started releasing Telugu dubbed films with the same titles, confusing and irritating movie lovers.

Finally better sense prevailed on the makers of Thala Ajith's upcoming action flick *Thunivu*. Manju Warrior is the female lead in the film directed by H.Vinoth. According to sources, the makers have decided to have a Telugu title for the film. Sources say the film would be titled *Tegimpu*. With Chiranjeevi's *Waltair Veerayya*, Balakrishna's *Veera Simha Reddy*, and Vijay's *Varisu* in the Sankranti race, *Thunivu* which is also in the Sankranti race has been bagged by the distributors for just Rs 3crs. The film is slated for a grand release on January 11, 2023. Gibbran is the music director for the film produced by Boney Kapoor.

Urvasio Rakshasivo to be now streamed on netflix

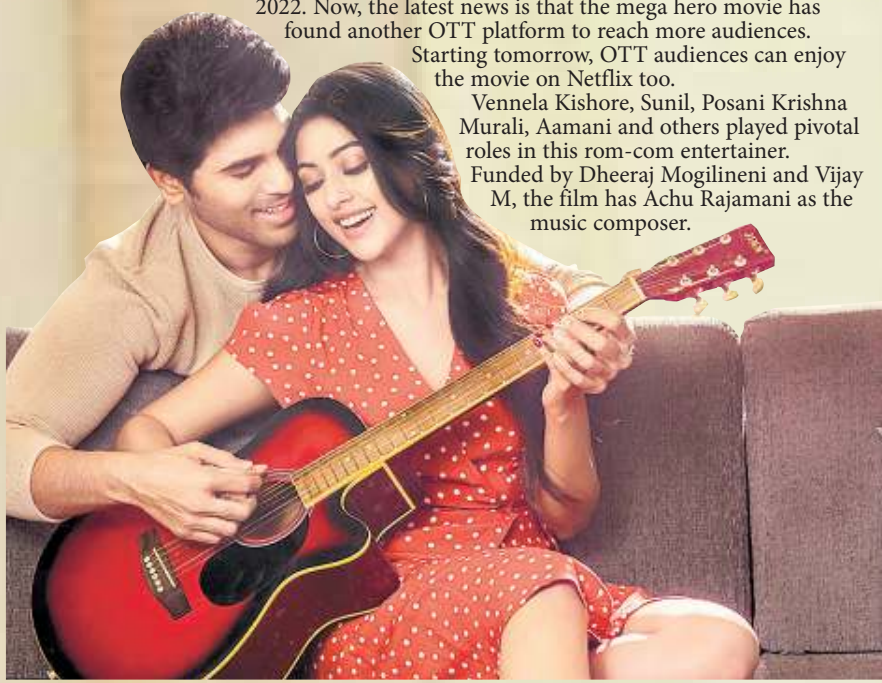
Released in the first week of November 2022, *Urvasio Rakshasivo*, starring Allu Sirish and Anu Emmanuel in the lead roles, failed to attract the majority of audiences. Now, the film is up for digital debut.

Earlier, it was reported that the film will be premiered on Aha on December 9, 2022. Now, the latest news is that the mega hero movie has found another OTT platform to reach more audiences.

Starting tomorrow, OTT audiences can enjoy the movie on Netflix too.

Vennela Kishore, Sunil, Posani Krishna Murali, Aamani and others played pivotal roles in this rom-com entertainer.

Funded by Dheeraj Mogilineni and Vijay M, the film has Achu Rajamani as the music composer.



Puri Jagannadh to team up with Mega Star for his next flick?

Any director would love to direct Mega Star Chiranjeevi. For long dashing director Puri Jagannadh dreamed of directing Mega Star Chiranjeevi. Puri Jagannadh got a huge shock when he lost the golden opportunity to direct Chiranjeevi's milestone 150th film. The project titled *Auto Jani* was shelved as Chiranjeevi and Ram Charan did not like the second half.

This created a wedge between Puri Jagannadh and Chiranjeevi. Now it looks like Puri Jagannadh is finally realising his dream. According to the latest buzz, Puri Jagannadh narrated an exciting line to Chiranjeevi and he loved it to the core. Chiranjeevi according to sources this time decided to give freehand to Puri Jagannadh. The film is touted to be an out and out mass action entertainer.

It is known that Puri Jagannadh played an important role in Chiranjeevi's *Godfather* and their bonding strengthened. Otherwise Chiranjeevi is not the kind of person who gives chances to directors who tasted a disaster like *Liger*.

