

Democracy would be revived in Telangana on December 3, when Assembly election results are announced as the Congress would form the government and end the rule of 'BRS Doralu.' Usually, Chief Minister K.

Chandrasekhar Rao addresses people after polling, but this time he is hesitating to show his face and has sent Industries Minister KT Rama Rao. This proves that the BRS will disappear.

- Revanth Reddy, TPCC president P4

Govt policies, decisions have taken economy to new height

I KNOW MANY MEN WHO LOVE DOING SMOKY EYES ON AN EVERYDAY BASIS

'Calling Sahasra is a pure experiment-based FILM FOR ME'

DON'T MISS...

Jagan's rule impartial: Vishnu..

Planning Board Vice Chairman and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu has said that with the impartial rule of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, sustainable development has been possible across the State and the living standards of the poor have improved. He participated in the 'Why AP Needs Jagan' programme held on Thursday in the premises of Ward 211 Secretariat along with Deputy Mayor Sreesalaja Reddy and local corporator Penumatsa Sirisha Sathya. On the occasion, the party flag was hoisted by paying tributes to the portrait of the...

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Varanasi court gives 10 more...

The Varanasi district court on Thursday gave 10 more days to the Archaeological Survey of India to complete and submit a scientific survey report of the Gyanvapi mosque complex here. Taking up the plea of the ASI seeking three additional weeks to submit the report, District Judge A K Vishvesh said he hoped that the ASI would not ask for more time, according to counsel for the Hindu side Madan Mohan Yadav. The court fixed December 11 as the next date of hearing in...

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India's GDP grows 7.6%; fastest...

India's economy grew 7.6 per cent in the September quarter of this fiscal and remained the fastest-growing large economy, mainly due to better performance by manufacturing, mining and services sectors, the government data showed on Thursday. The gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 6.2 per cent in the July-September quarter of 2022-23. India remained the fastest-growing major economy, as China posted a 4.9 per cent growth in July-September 2023. According to the National...

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India need young bowlers to deliver...

India's young bowling unit, which has been under the pump, will look to better its death overs performance while utilising Glenn Maxwell's absence to its advantage in the fourth T20 International against Australia here on Friday. 'India's second-string attack did not paint a good picture of itself by not defending 40-plus runs in the final two overs in the third match which the Australians won while chasing a daunting 223-run target. There is a possibility of a minor tweak in the Indian line-up after Prasadh Krishna gave...

-SPORTS

Tension at NSP dam

TS cops oppose AP police erecting fence at 13th crest gate

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Tension prevailed at the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam when a substantial contingent of Andhra Pradesh Special Police (APSP) personnel hurried to the site in the wee hours of Thursday. The APSP police erected a barrier at the 13th crest gate of the dam.

Sources indicate that a significant number of AP police reached the dam, extending up to the 13th crest gate, where they installed a barricade along the dam's roadway. Upon receiving this information, Miryalaguda DSP Venkatagiri promptly arrived with his team, insisting that the AP police dismantle the fence.

Reports suggest that AP officials emphasised the need to release water from the Nagarjuna Sagar reservoir via the right canal for downstream drinking water purposes. However, Telangana irrigation authorities declined to release water to AP, prompting a substantial deployment of AP police to the dam. Sources report a confrontational situation unfolding on the dam for a brief period.

It is alleged that the AP police attempted to release water from the dam, but Telangana officials thwarted their efforts by disconnecting the power supply.

Some accounts suggest that Telangana's SPF police attempted to



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- Ultimately, the episode concluded amicably as Telangana officials agreed to release 2000 cusecs of water to address the drinking water requirements in AP, sources added.

restrain the AP police on the dam, alleging that the latter confiscated mobile phones and vandalized closed-circuit cameras. However, AP police officials dismissed these accusations.

Ultimately, the episode concluded amicably as Telangana officials

agreed to release 2000 cusecs of water to address the drinking water requirements in AP, sources added. Notably, the incident occurred just hours before the Telangana state went to polls, with leaders from various political parties describing it as a manifestation of vote bank politics.

Well-marked low pressure area over Bay of Bengal

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A well-defined low pressure system situated over the Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjacent South Andaman Sea has been moving in a west-northwest direction. As of 0830 hours on Thursday, the Meteorological Centre reported that the system is currently positioned over the Southeast Bay of Bengal.

According to the latest update in today's weather report, this well-marked low-pressure area is expected to continue its west-northwestward movement and is likely to intensify into a depression over the Southeast Bay of Bengal within the next 24 hours. As it progresses further in the same direction, gradual intensification is anticipated, with the system potentially evolving into a cyclonic storm over the Southwest Bay of Bengal by around December 3.

Subsequently, the forecast suggests a northward trajectory, with the cyclonic storm reaching the coasts of North Tamil Nadu and South Andhra Pradesh in the early morning hours of December 4. The report emphasizes that the system is projected to make landfall as a cyclonic storm during this period.

TELANGANA ELECTIONS Edge for Cong in exit polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

After polling in the 2023 Telangana Assembly election exit polls predicted a setback for Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's BRS and advantage for the Congress. But some polls predicted a neck-and-neck fight between the Congress and the BRS.

Today's Chanakya exit polls said that the Congress will win 71 seats. It predicted 33 seats for the BRS and seven for the BJP. The majority mark in Telangana is 60 and the Congress is expected to cross that.

In Telangana, the KCR-led BRS has been in power for 10 years. The India TV-CNX exit poll survey gave 63 to 79 seats to the Congress, 31 to 47 to the BRS, 2 to 4 for the BJP and 5 to 7 for AIMIM.

The Jan Ki Baat said that the Congress would get 48 to 64 seats, the BRS 40 to 55, the BJP 7 to 13 and the AIMIM 4 to 7.

The Times Now-ETG poll said that the Congress will win 60 to 70 seats, the BRS 37 to 45 seats, the BJP 6 to 8 seats, and the AIMIM 5 to 7 seats. The total number of seats is 119. The Republic TV-Matrise exit poll said the Congress would get 58 to 68 seats, the BRS 46 to 56, the BJP 4 to 9 and the AIMIM 5 to 9.

Advantage Cong in C'garh; hope for BJP in MP, Rajasthan

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Most exit polls on Thursday predicted an edge to the Congress in Chhattisgarh and Telangana while forecasting that it was advantage BJP in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Pollsters also indicated that in Mizoram, Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) was locked in a close race with the Mizo National Front (MNF) with the Congress and the BJP lagging behind.

While the BJP is in power in the 230-member Madhya Pradesh assembly, the Congress is ruling Rajasthan (200) and Chhattisgarh (90). In Telangana, the K Chandrasekhar Rao-led Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has been in power since 10 years and in Mizoram, the MNF is in government.

Elections to the five states took place between November 7-November 30 and the counting of votes would take place on December 3.

FIBERNET CASE



Hearing in Naidu's bail plea deferred to December 12

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Supreme Court on Thursday deferred hearing on a plea filed by TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu seeking anticipatory bail in connection with alleged Fiber Net scam. A bench comprising Justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi said that it will take up the matter on December 12 as it is likely to deliver its verdict soon on another plea filed by Naidu seeking quashing of criminal proceedings in alleged skill development case.

The bench noted that the undertaking given by the Andhra Pradesh CID that it will not arrest Naidu in the FiberNet case will continue till the next date of hearing.

The special leave petition has been filed before the apex court against a decision of the Andhra Pradesh High Court refusing anticipatory bail to the TDP leader. Naidu is accused of playing a 'key role' in the AP Fiber Net scam that happened during the TDP government in the State.

Continued on Page 2

CM Jagan opens Tunnel 2 of Owk

Releases 20,000 cusecs of water from Gorakallu to Owk reservoir

PNS ■ METTUPALLI

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy dedicated Tunnel 2 of the Owk project to the people by unveiling its pylon and releasing 20,000 cusecs of water from Gorakallu reservoir to Owk reservoir amid recital of hymns by Vedic pundits here on Thursday. The government has so far spent



Rs 1,501.94 crore on Owk tunnel on Tunnels 1 and 2. Out of the 5.801 km length of

Tunnel 3, an extent of 4.526 km was completed with Rs 934 crore, and the works relating to the rest of 1.275 km are in full swing. The total cost of the third tunnel is estimated to be Rs 1297.78 crore.

Last year, the Chief Minister dedicated to the people Nellore and Sangam barrages which are the lifelines of the Penna delta, and the Handri-Niva Lift Irrigation project that would fetch water to 77 lakes to meet the drinking and irrigation needs of the western parts of Nandyal and Kurunool districts.

Continued on Page 2

10 shops gutted in another incident at Vizag fishing harbour

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a tragic turn of events, a fire broke out at the fishing harbour, destroying 10 shops and damaging equipment used by local fishermen. The incident follows closely on the heels of a major fire that engulfed 40 fishing boats just days ago.

Official sources reported that the fire, occurring in the evening, resulted in the complete gutting of 10 shops where crucial fishing equipment was stored. The estimated loss from the incident is pegged at Rs 10 lakh.

APJAC - Amaravati seeks swift resolution of staff issues

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee - Amaravati (APJAC - Amaravati), Bopparaju Venkateswarlu, called for the immediate settlement of outstanding dues during a State secretariat meeting at Revenue Bhavan in Vijayawada on Thursday.

Venkateswarlu, leading the proceedings, addressed concerns regarding pending payments, including Dearness Allowance (DA), Surrender Leaves, General Provident Fund (GPF), Andhra Pradesh Government Life Insurance (APGLI), and retirement benefits owed to government employees, police personnel, and pensioners. Members of the committee collec-



tively stressed the importance of swiftly addressing these financial matters, essential for meeting the future needs of employees and pensioners, such as educational expenses, marriages, and other familial requirements.

The Chairman highlighted the substantial financial obligation owed by the State government, expressing

disappointment at the perceived lack of government interest in resolving these financial concerns. He specifically noted the absence of compensatory appointments for Zilla Parishad Teachers who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Continued on Page 2

ASSEMBLY POLLS IN 5 STATES Seizures over Rs 2,000 cr EC cracked whip on several occasions

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission cracked its whip on several occasions to ensure a level playing field for all parties in the five states where assembly polls were held even as authorities seized freebies, drugs, cash and liquor worth over Rs 2,000 crore aimed at alluring voters.

Elections were held in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Telangana between November 7-November 30 and the counting of votes would take place on December 3.

Acting on complaints and

inputs by the local poll machinery, the EC issued show cause notices and advisories to top politicians to adhere to the provisions of the model code.

It withdrew permission given to the Telangana government for disbursements of financial aid to farmers for rabi crops under the Rythu Bandhu Scheme after a state minister violated the provisions of the model code by making a public announcement about it.

The poll panel had given its nod to the state government to disburse the rabi installment during the model code of conduct period on certain grounds.

AS ELECTIONS DRAW CLOSER

Number of fraud cases tends to increase: CJI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of "fraud cases" in the Supreme Court tends to increase as elections draw closer and the court becomes a site for political engagement, Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Constitution Day function organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) in the apex court, Justice Chandrachud said we all exist together and the Indian Constitution tells us that "we either survive or we perish together".

"But above all, I think it is important that on a day where we celebrate the Constitution, we learn to discharge our duties to the cause of justice. Our duty to



Chandrachud said after elections get over, things settle down and as the polls come closer and closer, the court becomes a site for political engagement.

the cause of justice ranks much higher than the success or failure in individual cases," he said. "Just yesterday, I had to deal with a fraud case. The Supreme Court deals with fraud cases every day. Some courts have more than their share of fraud cases and

there are some times as elections come, the number of fraud cases tends to increase in the court and we as judges realise it," the CJI said.

Constitution Day is celebrated across the country on November 26 every year.

Henry Kissinger dies

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the diplomat with the thick glasses and gravelly voice who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam and broke down barriers with China, died Wednesday, his consulting firm said. He was 100.

With his gruff yet commanding presence and behind-the-scenes manipulation of power, Kissinger exerted uncommon influence on global affairs under Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, earning both vilification and the Nobel Peace Prize. Decades later, his name still provoked impassioned debate over foreign policy landmarks long past.

Kissinger's power grew during the turmoil of Watergate, when the politically attuned diplomat assumed a role akin to co-president to the weakened Nixon.

EXPANDING HORIZONS

Madagada Viewpoint in Araku set for a facelift

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to enhance the tourism experience in the picturesque Araku Valley, plans have been unveiled by Andhra Pradesh Tourism Authority (APTA) to develop the Madagada viewpoint, situated approximately 12 km from Araku.

The Madagada viewpoint, nestled in the lush landscapes surrounding Araku, is poised to become a major attraction for visitors seeking breathtaking vistas of the valley. The move aligns with the broader strategy of promoting Araku as a premier tourist destination in the region.

Regional Director of APTA Srinivas Pani, emphasised the commitment to elevating the tourism infrastructure in the area. "We have plans to develop the Madagada viewpoint, about 12 km from Araku," Srinivas Pani stated. This development is part of a comprehensive initiative to showcase the natural beauty and cultural richness of Araku Valley, drawing travelers from far and wide.

The Madagada viewpoint,

As plans for the Madagada viewpoint take shape, the Tourism department invites locals and tourists alike to look forward to a future where Araku Valley stands out not only for its natural splendour but also for the thoughtful and exciting additions that enhance the overall visitor experience.



with its strategic location, is expected to provide panoramic views of the sprawling landscapes and verdant valleys characteristic of the Araku region. The development project is set to include amenities that cater to the comfort and convenience of visitors, ensuring a memorable and enjoyable visit to this upcoming attraction.

As part of the recent enhancements, a thrilling addition near the famed Borra

Caves has been introduced - a 'zipline' that promises to add an adventurous edge to the visitor experience.

The zipline, known for its exhilarating nature, offers tourists a unique perspective as they soar through the verdant surroundings.

This initiative not only aims to boost tourism but also contributes to the economic growth of the region by creating opportunities for local businesses. The unveiling of such

projects reflects a concerted effort to balance the preservation of natural beauty with sustainable tourism development.

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Number of fraud...

Continued from Page 1

"But in the process of giving each one of us a better livelihood, we are also engaged in providing a better existence to our fellow citizens. That is the big power which all of you command as lawyers," he said.

Referring to the attire of judges and lawyers, the CJI said it reminds us that the "similarity of our attire is a symbol of the common existence which we share". It was for the members of the Bar to make the legal profession broad-based and inclusive, Justice Chandrachud said while highlighting the need to encourage young lawyers.

"And remember, ultimately, it is if you support the institution of justice, which is to ensure that you support the independence of your own judiciary, that the judiciary can truly be able to discharge its duties," he said. "If you are not giving to the judiciary its own sense of due, how will you expect them to discharge their own obligations towards society. Because your judges come from you and they return to you, they are not distinct from you," he said.

He said members of the Bar are also here for the betterment of the profession, to serve the cause of justice and to ensure that the other side of the profession, the judges, who are duty bound to act in aid of justice, continue to do so.

"You have to not merely protect your judges, but you have to hold them to account as well," he said. Sharing a story, Chandrachud said sometime back, one of his colleagues had an attack of dengue and there was a need for blood transfusion.

"But we drew on the credit of the blood which was given by our employees during the last blood donation camp my colleague came back to normalcy very quickly by the blood transfusion," he said.

'Breakfast with Community' marks World AIDS Day eve

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On the eve of World AIDS Day, Andhra Pradesh State AIDS Control Society (APSACS) along with partners organised a get-together with the community, "Breakfast with Community". The programme began with a welcome address by Dr K Koteswari, APD APSACS, and Dr T Manjula Joint Director, IEC, and STI APSACS.

Then the Project Director of APSACS Dr SB Rajendra Kumar Laghimsetti interacted with the community members and requested them to reach out to his office for any help like education, shelter, etc. The Project Director encouraged children infected and affected by HIV to talk and share their career goals. The people living with HIV, children infected, and those affected by HIV have actively participated and entertained the audience. Many children enthusiastically came forward and performed dances.

CM Jagan...

Continued from Page 1

Due to the sustained efforts of the Chief Minister, the government paid a compensation of Rs 1000 crore to the displaced persons of Gandikota reservoir in which 26.85 TMC of water could be stored in successive years from 2019.

The displaced persons of the Chitravati reservoir were paid compensation of Rs 250 crore after which officials succeeded in storing water to its capacity level against the storage of 4 TMC of water during the TDP rule.

The Irrigation Department could also maintain capacity water levels in the Velugodu reservoir from 2019 after the Government spent Rs 500 crore and completed the lining works of the link canal and Telugu Ganga canal. The Owk project witnessed hectic activity when Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy was the Chief Minister as the then Government spent Rs 340.53 crore completing the major portion. The project was neglected between 2014 and 2019 as the TDP Government abandoned the fault zone spending a meagre Rs 81.55 crore following which the present government sanctioned necessary funds and completed the Tunnel 2 with Rs.145.86 crore.

With the release of water to Owk reservoir, an integral part of the Galeru-Nagari Sujala Sravanthi (GNSS) project, the Government has fulfilled the long-cherished aspirations of the Rayalaseema people.

While Tunnels 1 & 2 facilitate the daily release of 20,000 cusecs of water into the Owk reservoir during flood season, the completion of Tunnel 3 will facilitate the release of another 10,000 cusecs daily.

With the completion of the tunnels, Gandikota, Vamikonda, Sarvaraya Sagar, Mylavaram and Paidipalem reservoirs will receive an additional 1TMC of water daily for irrigating 2.60 lakh acres in the undivided Kadapa, Chittoor, and Nellore districts besides stabilising 1.31 lakh acres of ayacut and providing drinking water to 20 lakh people in 640 villages.

While it will help fill the Gandikota reservoir in 15 days through the Galeru-Nagari flood canal, Rayalaseema will receive 2 TMC of water daily in the flood season.



Dr. Kameshwara Prasad Joint Director BSD, Dr. Subramanyam Joint Director CST, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, PEPFAR Coordinator, Renuka, TNP +, APSACS partners YRG care, UNICEF, WHO, SHARE India, VHS, SAATHI and members from TI NGOs, network, CBOs have participated in the event.

Later the dignitaries had breakfast with the community members.

During the breakfast, the community members had an opportunity to share their experiences with the Project Director.

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Hearing in...

Continued from Page 1

The CID has accused him of exerting pressure on officials to favour a certain company that was awarded the Fiber Net contract.

On Tuesday, the apex court issued a notice to Naidu on a plea filed by the state government against the decision of Andhra Pradesh High Court granting him regular bail in the alleged Skill Development Corporation case.

A bench of Justice T Mallikarjuna Rao of the Andhra Pradesh High Court on November 20 ordered that the TDP leader be released on regular bail on the bail bond already furnished by him.

Edge for....

Continued from Page 1

The TV9-Polstrat exit poll predicted a close race between the BRS and the Congress. The BRS is likely to get anywhere between 48 to 58 seats and the Congress 49 to 59 seats. The BJP will get 5 to 10 seats and the AIMIM will get 6 to 8 seats which can be crucial in forming the next government in Telangana.

SRM Univ-AP honoured for excellence in job creation at FICCI HEE Awards

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

SRM University-AP, Andhra Pradesh has been bestowed with "Excellence in Creating Employment" at the 9th FICCI Higher Education Excellence (HEE) Awards organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) on Wednesday. Dr Vinayak Kalluri, Dean - Academic Affairs, and Dr Karthik Rajendran, Associate Dean - Quality Assurance & Ranking, SRM University-AP received the award on behalf of the varsity for the institutions' exemplary contribution to creating employment success amongst students at the university.

SRM University-AP has



been ensuring 100% placement since its inception, and the university has formulated a system wherein the quality of outgoing students is on par with industry expectations. The revamped curricula, exemplary faculty with doctoral and post-doctoral degrees, and industry-orient-

ed experiential learning are some of the measures undertaken to ensure the quality of students.

"Receiving special recognition from FICCI for Excellence in Creating Employment is indeed a proud moment for SRM University-AP. The graduate outcome is our ultimate

goal and this worthy achievement has inspired us to further work in significantly improving the graduate outcomes through greater academic rigour and innovative research", commented Prof Manoj K Arora, Vice Chancellor, SRM University-AP.

Pro-Chancellor, SRM University-AP, Dr P Sathyanarayanan congratulated the team and stated that the award is a commendable recognition for the Placement Cell of the Directorate of Corporate Relations & Career Services (CR&CS). He lauded the CR&CS Team for their continuous and consistent efforts in honing students' skills to make them industry-ready.

APJAC-Amaravatis...

Continued from Page 1

Venkateswarlu also lamented Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's failure to disburse dues scheduled for payment by April 2022, emphasising the lack of an official response from government officers. He urged the government to expeditiously fulfill promises outlined in the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

The meeting also addressed pending dues related to the General Provident Fund (GPF), Andhra Pradesh Government Life Insurance (APGLI), and other saved funds.

Venkateswarlu demanded the implementation of the Employees Health Scheme for all retired individuals and their family members.

APJAC - Amaravati general secretary P Damodara Rao, president of the retired employees' association PSSN Sastry, and leaders VV Murali Krishnam Naidu, and B Kishore Kumar, were among those present.

APSSDC to address skills shortage in Indian market

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Government, through the Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation (APSSDC), is planning a one-of-a-kind initiative - 'Leading towards Next Age Programmes.' This project has the potential to revolutionise the state's talent development environment, addressing the perennial problem of skills shortages in the Indian labour market. As part of this visionary programme, the Government aims to bridge the gap between industry demands and workforce skills, positioning Andhra Pradesh as a leader in the rapidly evolving landscape of skills development and employment.

S Suresh Kumar Principal Secretary, Dept. of Skills Development & Training stated, "The 'Leading Towards Next Age Programmes' concept epitomises our commitment to transforming aspirations into accomplishments."



We construct not only careers, but also a resilient and affluent future through skills development. This project aspires to shape destiny, link opportunities with goals, and propel our children into a world of limitless possibilities where their abilities become the currency of a prosperous future."

Andhra Pradesh has strategically integrated its skilling approach to create better placement opportunities for unemployed people by acquiring job-specific skills. In 2019, the Government launched a new integrated Skill Development Ecosystem, integrating all skills and vocational education

wings under the Department of Skills Development & Training (SD&T). The SD&T coordinates numerous wings, giving long-term and short-term vocational and technical training to a varied pool of users. The department has taught 14,42,134 individuals and placed 3,57,334 people in 98 career roles across 20 different industries.

"Investing in skills development is a strategic allocation of resources that transcends the immediate need for employment," said Buganna Rajendranath, Finance Minister of Andhra Pradesh. "It is an investment in the fundamental fabric of our state's future."

The Leading towards Next Age Programme is an important step towards a future of sustainable economic development in which our youth not only find jobs but also create opportunities, promoting a dynamic ecosystem of innovation and advancement."

APTransco, Discoms file ARR for network business

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a significant development, the State Transmission Utility, APTransco, along with the three major Distribution Companies in the State, namely APCPDCL, APEPDCL, and APSPDCL, jointly filed their Multi-Year Aggregate Revenue Requirement (ARR) for the network business.

This filing pertains to the upcoming 5th control period, spanning from the fiscal year 2024-25 to 2028-29. The submission took place before the Andhra Pradesh Electricity Regulatory Commission (APEREC) in Guntur on Thursday.

For the forthcoming financial year (FY) 2024-25, the APDISCOMs have also submitted their annual ARR specifically for their Retail Supply activity.

The filings were officially received by Chairman APEREC, Justice Nagarjuna Reddy, and Member APEREC, Thakur Rama Singh.

The filing process witnessed the active participation of key figures in the energy sector, including Special Chief Secretary Energy GoAP and CMD APTransco, K Vijayanand. Joining him were KVN



Directors and senior officials from the AP Power sector were also present, making the event a comprehensive representation of the state's power industry.

The filings mark a crucial step in the strategic planning for the next control period, reflecting the commitment of the utilities to ensuring a robust and sustainable power infrastructure for Andhra Pradesh.

Advantage Cong in C'garh; hope...

Continued from Page 1

In Madhya Pradesh, while Jan Ki Baat exit poll predicted that the BJP would get 100-122 seats and the Congress 102-125, Republic TV-Matrise forecast 118-130 seats for the BJP and 97-107 for the Congress.

TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat said the BJP would get 106-116 and the Congress would get 111-121.

Today's Chanakya, however, predicted a massive victory for the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, forecasting that the BJP would get 151 (plus minus 12 seats) and the Congress 74 (plus minus 12 seats).

Jist-TIF-NAI said the Congress was enjoying 2018-like edge in Madhya Pradesh, predicting 107-124 seats for the party as against the BJP's 102-119.

In Rajasthan, India Today-Axis My India forecast a tight race, predicting 86-106 seats

for the Congress, 80-100 seats for the BJP and others 9-18.

Ki Baat pollsters forecast that the BJP would get 100-122 and 62-85 for the Congress, TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat predicted 100-110 for the BJP and 90-100 for the Congress.

Times Now ETG poll predicts 108-128 seats for the BJP and 56-72 for the Congress in Rajasthan.

Jist-TIF-NAI predicted that in Rajasthan there would be continuation of the state's revolving door tradition, forecasting 110 seats for the BJP and the Congress 70.

For Chhattisgarh, while ABP News-C Voter predicted 36-48 seats for the BJP and 41-53 for the Congress, India Today-Axis My India forecast 36-46 seats for the BJP and 40-50 seats for the Congress.

India TV-CNX forecast 30-40 seats for the BJP and 46-56 seats for the Congress.

According to Jan Ki Baat, the BJP would get 34-45 and the Congress would get 42-53.

Today's Chanakya predicted that the BJP would get 33 seats (plus-minus 8 seats) and the Congress would bag a clear majority 57 seats (plus-minus 8).

For Telangana, while India TV-CNX forecast 63-79 seats for the Congress, 31-47 for the BRS, 2-4 for the BJP and 5-7 for the AIMIM, Jan Ki Baat forecast that the Congress would get 48-64 seats, the BJP 7-13 and BRS 1-7.

Republic TV-Matrise pre-

dicted that in Telangana, the Congress would get 58-68 seats, BRS 46-56, BJP 4-9 and AIMIM 5-9. TV9 Bharatvarsh Polstrat stated that the Congress would get 49-59 seats and the BRS would get 48-58.

In Mizoram, while India TV-CNX said the MNF would get 14-18, ZPM 12-16, Congress 8-10 and BJP 0-2, ABP News-C Voter said MNF would get 15-21, ZPM 12-18 and Congress 2-8.

Jan Ki Baat said the MNF would get 10-14 seats, ZPM 15-25 seats, Congress 5-9 and the BJP 0-2.

GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
RURAL WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION DEPARTMENT
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE
No. 683 to 759/TO/e-procurement/2023-24 Date: 28-11-2023
Online tenders are being invited for execution of 73 works of providing drinking water amenities in villages and other works under the limits of Guntur under Jal-Jeevan Mission at an estimated cost of Rs. 1374.61 Lakh. Tender documents can be accessed online from 02-12-2023. For details, contact www.apeprocurement.gov.in for further details. Self-Executive Engineer, RWS&S Division, Guntur

APCRDA destroys two unauthorised layouts

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (APCRDA) authorities on Thursday destroyed internal roads and survey stones of two real estate ventures in which unauthorised layouts were laid at Sheri Narasannapalem (SN Palem) of Bapulapadu mandal in the Krishna district without obtaining approval from the CRDA. Also, they removed water pipelines in these layouts besides destroying the drainage system.



36/1D in this village.

APCRDA Commissioner Vivek Yadav warned the real estate people that selling plots without obtaining permission from the APCRDA was a crime and that they were punishable. Further, he suggested to people that they would lose if they purchased unauthorised plots in these layouts. Subsequently, he said that they would also be responsible for the actions.

for construction in the unauthorised layouts, he said, and added that the CRDA would suffer income due to these real estate ventures which do not obtain permission, he said.

He clarified that permissions would be given to the ventures that followed the rules and regulations and provided infrastructure facilities such as roads, water supply, drainage, and other amenities. He asked the people to inform the CRDA officials about the unauthorised layouts to prevent further loss to people. The people can complain to CRDA about unauthorised layouts on WhatsApp No.7095599838 and website <http://crda.ap.gov.in>.

APCRDA Commissioner Vivek Yadav has given directions to the officials concerned to destroy unauthorised layouts within the limits of the CRDA. As per directions of the Commissioner, officials destroyed the unauthorised layout at Sheri Narasannapalem (SN Palem) village and they removed the survey stones and internal roads by using excavators. The authorities destroyed the layout in the RS No.37/1C and



Srikakulam ORR still a pipe dream

Conceived a decade ago, the project is bogged down in delays

PNS ■ SRIKAKULAM

The Outer Ring Road (ORR) project around Srikakulam city, a dream envisioned nearly a decade ago, continues to remain a distant reality, trapped in the quagmire of delays and bureaucratic hurdles. Initially proposed in 2013 by the then-Congress government, the project aimed to alleviate traffic congestion and streamline connectivity within the city.

lack of proper planning and commitment from the authorities as the primary reasons for the project's stagnation. This delay has exacerbated traffic woes within Srikakulam city, causing inconvenience and frustration for residents.

The initial blueprint for the ORR outlined an ambitious 12 km stretch, connecting multiple areas around Srikakulam city. However, after careful consideration, the project was scaled down to a more manageable 5 km. Despite this adjustment, the project encountered significant roadblocks during the verification process at Peddapadu village, bringing it to a standstill.

In a recent development, officials from the Srikakulam Municipal Corporation (SMC) received suggestions from Dharma Prasad Rao, the MLA and Minister for Revenue from the ruling YSRCP. However, opposition leaders from the TDP have dismissed these developments as mere election stunts, lacking any concrete action plan.

Over the past decade, the ORR project has remained confined to paper, its potential benefits unrealized. Critics have pointed to a

Amidst the ongoing debate and political rhetoric, residents of Srikakulam remain hopeful for a resolution to the long-standing issue. The ORR project holds the potential to transform the city's infrastructure, easing traffic congestion and enhancing connectivity. As the city gears up for further development, the ORR's realization remains crucial for its



Now, micro stay AC room services at Vja railway station

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Narendra A Patil, Divisional Railway Manager, Vijayawada Division, SCR declared the micro stay facility AC room services open for the public on Thursday at Vijayawada Railway Station. This Micro Stay Facility is located on the first floor above East booking Office-II at Vijayawada Railway Station.

This Micro Stay Facility AC Rooms set up contains 19 air-conditioned vacant rooms along with a cafeteria facility exclusively for bonafide railway passengers. Wi-Fi, bath kit, laundry, snacks, and beverages services are also available for the passengers. The contract is awarded to Balaji Food and Beverages for five years under the Non-Fare Revenue initiative of the Commercial Department.

The new facility comes under the "PAY AS YOU USE" model, departing from the traditional 24-hour room booking concept. The facility provides passengers with a flexible and classy space for relaxation, offering various in-house amenities. Passengers can limit the duration of their stay as per their convenience in the time slots of 3, 6, 9, or 24 hours. Both offline and online booking services are available.

Guv takes part in 'Viksit Bharat Yatra' in Masula

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Governor S Abdul Nazeer participated as chief guest in the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' programme held in Machilipatnam on Thursday.

Speaking on the occasion, he said that it is a nationwide campaign to raise awareness through outreach activities to achieve saturation of schemes of the Government of India, covering all urban and rural areas with an aim to reach out to the vulnerable sections of people who are eligible under various schemes but have not availed of the benefits so far.

The Governor said that the flagship programmes like Har Ghar Jal, PM Poshan,



Ayushman Bharat Yojana, PM Awas Yojana, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana, PM SVANidhi, PM Ujjwala Yojana, PM Vishwakarma Kaushal Samman, PM Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Pariyojana, are aimed at to be implemented on

saturation basis.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually participated in a nationwide live programme and interacted with the beneficiaries from different States and Union Territories and

addressed the people to create awareness among all eligible people to avail of the benefits provided under various flagship programmes. On this occasion, a member of women's self-groups from the Prakasam district shared her

experience of flying the drone given to the group, to be used for spraying fertilisers, etc. Simhadri Ramesh Babu, MLA, Avanigadda, U Harika, Chairperson, Zilla Parishad, Krishna district, MVS Nagi Reddy, Vice Chairman, Andhra Pradesh State Agriculture Mission, and other officials and public representatives attended the programme. P Raja Babu, Collector & District Magistrate, Krishna district, presided over the programme.

Earlier, beneficiaries of several programmes shared their experiences and achievers under certain programmes were felicitated. The 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp' pledge was also administered on the occasion.

Rich tributes paid to Gurajada

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Department of Telugu of PB Siddhartha Arts and Science College, Mogalrajapuram, on Thursday, observed the death anniversary of Mahakavi Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao. NCC cadets, NSS volunteers, and student club members wore Tricolour caps and formed a map of India on the college grounds.

On the occasion of Gurajada's death anniversary, they sang his

popular poem Desamuni Preminchumanna. Firstly, Siddhartha Academy of General and Technical Education Secretary Paladugu Lakshman Rao hoisted the national flag.

Lakshmana Rao said that Gurajada Venkata Appa Rao was a great poet and he inspired many with his writings, especially on social themes. He told the students that they should know about Gurajada and his writings and how they are useful for society. Particularly, Telugu stu-

dents should know the complete life history of Gurajada, he added.

PB Siddhartha College Director Vemuri Baburao, Academic Dean Prof Rajesh C Jampala, Principal Dr Meka Ramesh, Head of Department of Telugu Dr N Siva Kumar, faculty members Dr P Neeraja, Dr Ch Masthan Rao, Dr AV Ramana Murthy, other department heads, faculty, club in-charges and NCC, NSS programme officers were present.



BJP to launch 'Viksit Bharat' campaigns using 50 chariots

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) AP president Daggubati Purandeswari has revealed that a campaign is being conducted with 50 chariots in Andhra Pradesh to inform the people about the Central government schemes and to create awareness among the beneficiaries.

Purandeswari unveiled the Viksit Bharat calendar and inaugurated the exhibition of 'Viksit Bharat' films here on Thursday. She said that five lakh calendars would be distributed to the people.

Purandeswari said, "We are doing the Viksit Bharat programme all over the country. We will promote the development and welfare programmes implemented by the Centre. It is very bad that central schemes are being advertised as state schemes by putting stickers on them in Andhra Pradesh. The people of the state should come to the Radham when it comes to their villages to know the details of the

central schemes. BJP cadres also working to aware the public about central schemes in this Viksit Bharat programme."

Responding to the ruckus at Nagarjuna Sagar during water release between AP and Telangana States, Purandeswari found fault with the AP government for not resolving the water issues for the past four and half years and said that it is very bad to send the police to Nagarjuna Sagar. She asked why the AP government was in such a hurry now that they had ignored it for four and a half years. She further asked what the Jagan government was doing when a drought situation prevailed in 400 Mandals. Purandeswari alleged that the Jagan government was trying to suppress those who raised their voices in support of farmers, there was no discussion in the Jagan's cabinet regarding drought, and ridiculed the public who didn't know who was agriculture minister as he was not doing anything for drought.

World Cyber Security Day observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Computer Science Department of Sri Durga Malleswara Siddhartha Mahila Kalasala organised an event to mark 'World Cyber Security Day' on the college premises in Vijayawada on Thursday. The event saw active participation from students, who showcased informative posters highlighting the significance of Cyber Security. During the event, students elucidated on the prevention of computer hardware and software theft, emphasizing the role of cybersecurity as a protective measure. In an era where the present generation heavily relies on computers, the internet, Bluetooth, and Wi-Fi, the students underscored the importance of safeguarding digital assets.

Jagan's rule impartial: Vishnu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Planning Board Vice Chairman and Central MLA Malladi Vishnu has said that with the impartial rule of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, sustainable development has been possible across the State and the living standards of the poor have improved. He participated in the 'Why AP Needs Jagan' programme held on Thursday in the premises of Ward 211 Secretariat along with Deputy Mayor Sreesailaja Reddy and local corporator Penumatsa Sirisha Sathya.

On the occasion, the party flag was hoisted by paying tributes to the portrait of the great leader YS Rajasekhara Reddy. Later, the Board of Welfare Development Programmes was inaugurated at the Secretariat.

On this occasion, Malladi



Vishnu said that CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has the honor of taking development and welfare forward in the state. He said that the YSR Congress government is the only government in independent India that has benefited 92 percent

of people in rural areas and 87 percent of people in urban areas through various schemes.

He pointed out that Chandrababu could not undertake even one programme like Navaratna while TDP was in power.

HAL donates Rs 1.51 cr to Hridayalaya

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The Bengaluru-based Hindustan Aeronautics Limited has donated Rs 1.51 crore to the Padmavati Children's Heart Care hospital towards the purchase of medical equipment.

An MoU was signed by representatives of the HAL and TTD EO AV Dharma Reddy along with hospital Director Dr Srinath Reddy on Thursday at the TTD Administrative Building in Tirupati.

Speaking on the occasion CB Ananta Krishnan, CMD of HAL said the hospital under TTD is providing excellent service to the poor and saved many children with heart ailments.

The HAL contribution is towards necessary operation theatres, anaesthesia workstations, and ventilators with monitors as part of the company's CSR efforts.

Spl portal for complaints on offences under SC/ST Act

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao has said that the State government has launched a special portal to implement the SC, ST (Prevention of Atrocity) Act more effectively. Such a portal has not been implemented in any other State in the country. The victims may file their complaints on this portal from anywhere in the country, he said.

In a press release issued here on Thursday, Collector Dilli Rao said that based on the complaint's nature, it would be sent to the officials concerned immediately. For example, complaints pertaining to police FIR, charge sheet etc. would be sent to the Police Department, he said. Complaints related to compensation would be sent to the Revenue Department. The concerned departments would log in and take necessary steps to resolve the issues by updating them from time to time, he said.



UJJIVAN SFB OPENS BRANCH IN CITY

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Expanding its footprint into Andhra Pradesh Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Ujjivan SFB) launched its first branch in the historic city of Vijayawada on Thursday. As a part of this expansion, the Bank will open

three branches in the region, namely Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, and Visakhapatnam. This move marks the bank's presence in 26 states and Union territories, with 700 branches serving over 79 lakh customers nationwide.

Physical test for SI aspirants on December 4

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The AP High Court has given important orders on the appointments of Sub-Inspector of Police in AP.

The candidates approached the court claiming that there was injustice in measuring the height of the candidates and the AP High court ordered all the petitioners to appear before the court on Monday (December 4) for measurements.

Petitioner's lawyer Jada Sravan Kumar filed an affidavit that the person who had previously worked as a reserve sub-inspector was also rejected as he was not tall enough.

The lawyer reported to the High Court that all the petitioners were ready to comply with the High Court's order that the height of all the candidates would be taken in the HC premises.



GIMSR white coat ceremony welcomes new medical professionals

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The GITAM Institute of Medical Sciences and Research (GIMSR) marked a significant milestone in its history as it hosted the white coat ceremony for the newly enrolled MBBS students of the 2023 batch on Thursday at the GITAM Deemed to be University campus.

This momentous occasion signified the symbolic initiation of the budding physicians into the noble medical profession. Clad in their pristine white coats, the students recited the

Hippocratic Oath for the first time, affirming their commitment to uphold the ethical principles of medicine. Gracing the ceremony as chief Guest, renowned Orthopedic specialist Dr S Adinarayana Rao, eloquently emphasized the vital role of medical professionals in society. He underscored the privilege associated with providing medical care and the responsibility of building trust with patients and their families. His words resonated with the students, instilling in them a sense of purpose and dedication to their chosen path.



Dr Gitanjali Batmanabane, Pro Vice-Chancellor of GIMSR, shed light on the symbolic significance of the white coat in a doctor's journey. She conveyed that by donning this coat, the MBBS students were accepting the noble duty of dedicating their lives to addressing the health needs of society. She emphasized that the white coat bestows identity, confidence, and respect upon the wearer, bringing forth both challenges and responsibilities.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr

SP Rao, Dean of GIMSR, underscored the noble nature of the medical profession, emphasizing the hard work, dedication, commitment, compassion, and empathy it demands from practitioners. In a noteworthy announcement, he revealed that GIMSR medical college and hospital have introduced scholarships for students who secured exemplary ranks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). This groundbreaking initiative has benefitted approximately 40% of the students from the 2023 batch, representing 19 states.

147 stolen/lost mobile phones recovered

PNS ■ ELURU

The district police have recovered 147 lost/stolen mobile phones worth Rs 28.55 lakh and handed them over to the owners.

SP Mary D Prashanthi told the media that the police used IMEI technology, found those who were using the lost/stolen mobile phones, and recovered them. The police in the 10 phase recovered 147 lost/stolen mobile phones worth Rs 28,66,500 and handed them over to the owners.

The SP said that a special toll-free number 9550351100 was set up especially to receive complaints on stolen/lost mobile phones. On the directions of SP Mary Prashanthi, a police team led by Central Crime Station Inspector Ch V Muralikrishna recovered 147 lost/stolen mobile phones during the 10th phase. The mobile phones were recovered in WG Godavari, NTR, Konaseema, Krishna, and Visakhapatnam districts and also in Telangana



state. The Eluru district police recovered 80 lost/stolen mobile phones in the first phase worth Rs 16,00,000, 94 mobile phones in the second phase worth Rs 20.50 lakh, 108 mobile phones in the third phase, and 103 mobile phones in the four times worth Rs 22 lakh.

In the fifth phase between December 22 and January 23, the police recovered 116 lost/stolen mobile phones worth Rs 25,66,384, 207

mobile phones in the sixth phase worth Rs 41.40 lakh, 113 mobile phones in the seventh phase worth Rs 22.60, 182 mobile phones in the 8th phase worth Rs 36.40 lakh, 175 mobile phones in the 9th phase worth Rs 36.75 lakh.

So far the district police have recovered 1,325 lost/stolen mobile phones out of 2,522, worth Rs 2,71,19,684 and the recovery is 53%. The police arrested 10 persons in this connection and registered 12 cases against them.

Collector, SP, Chief Whip inspect steps for CM's visit

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

District Collector P Prashanthi, Chief Whip Grandhi Srinivas and SP U Ravi Prakash inspected the arrangements being made for the programme of Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy.

Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy will participate in a programme to be held in Bhimavaram on December 8. The Chief Minister will release the Vidya Dheevana benefits to the students and address a public meeting on the day.

Chief Minister's programme coordinator and MLC Talashila Raghuram, the Collector, the



SP, and the Whip visited the venue of the public meeting and the helipad and inspected the ongoing arrangements on

Thursday. They made some suggestions to the officials in this regard. They inspected the layout

located near Vishnu College and decided to set up a helipad on the premises of Lutheran High School.

The public meeting will be held on the layout located adjacent to Grandhi Venkateswara Rao Junior College on the bypass road. A trail run was conducted with a private bus from the helipad to a public meeting venue. The Collector ordered the municipal commissioner to take steps to clean the area around the Lutheran high school.

The Collector, SP, and coordinator held a meeting with the officials and reviewed the arrangements for the Chief

Minister's programme.

The Collector directed the officials to complete the construction of the helipad and the barricading at the earliest. Coordinator Raghuram directed the officials not to remove plants on either side of the road. The shops should not be closed during the Chief Minister's programme, he told them. State Kyathriya Corporation chairman P Srinivasa Raju, DRO B Shivanarayana Reddy, RDO K Srinivasulu Raju, R&B officer B Lokeshwara Rao, and other officials were among those who accompanied the Collector and the SP.

20-year jail term for convict in rape case

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The Ongole POCSO Court sentenced the convict in the rape of a minor girl to 20 years imprisonment and imposed a fine of Rs 1000 here on Thursday.

On April 16, 2020, the victim was alone at home as her parents went to the field for work. Taking an advantage, the accused Ch Venkateswara Reddy (53) lured the minor girl with a chocolate, took her inside his house, and sexually

assaulted her. He also threatened to kill her if she revealed it to her parents.

The then ASI Sai Reddy registered a case in Darsi PS under the POCSO Act and then DSP K. Prakasarao conducted a thorough investigation arrested the accused and filed a charge sheet in the court. After the hearings, the POCSO Court Judge M.A.Somasekar sentenced the accused to imprisonment for 20 years and a fine of Rs.1000. Also, the judge asked the district legal service authority

to provide compensation of Rs 50,000 to the minor girl.

The District SP especially appreciated Darsi DSPs K.Prakash Rao, Ashok Vardhan, and Special PP r Y.Venkateshwarlu who played a major role in getting the accused to punishment in the above case.

There is zero tolerance towards anyone committing sexual abuse and atrocities on children and women, SP Malika Garg warned.

TDP's complaint to DC over voters list

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) workers, led by ex-MLA GV Anjaneyulu complained to district Collector L Shivashankar about the double entries and deletion of votes in Vinukonda constituency Thursday.

The TDP leaders submitted a memorandum to the Collector stating that double entries were made in the voters' list and urged him to remove them. The Collector went to Vinukonda to participate in the agricultural land pattas distribution programme.



MP gives a clap to 'Muhurtam' shot of Telugu flick

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

Rajahmundry MP Margani Bharat Ram gave a clap to the opening scene of a Telugu future film being shot in the city on Thursday.

The MP gave a clap to the muhurtam shot on the hero

and heroine. The Telugu movie is being shot in the city and surrounding areas. The Telugu film is being produced by the Vigneshwara Creations Production number 1. The MP conveyed best wishes to the producer and the film unit crew.

Utilize Central, State welfare schemes: Magunta

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Local MP Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy has called upon the people to utilise the welfare scheme benefits being provided by the State and Central governments.

The MP participated in the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) of the Central government here on Thursday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the programme from New Delhi virtually. The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra is being organized across the country to create awareness among people on the Central government-sponsored welfare schemes.

The Pakala village in Sinkarayakona mandal was selected for the programme in

the state. Collector AS Dinesh Kumar, the VBSY programme state in-charge M Ramachandrudu, SEARCH CEO Mohammad Intiaz, and Joint Collector K Srinivasulu was among those who took part in the programme.

Self Help Group member K Venkataramanna spoke to the Prime Minister on the occasion. She apprised the Prime Minister of the benefits of Central government schemes which she got.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, MP Srinivasulu Reddy said that the Central government is also implementing various welfare schemes. Awareness is being created among people in every village



on the Central government schemes and including the eligible people in the schemes.

Collector Dinesh Kumar said that people would be made aware of the welfare schemes through the VBSY in all the secretariats of the district. The Collector asked all to draw inspiration from Venkataramanna, who came

forward to use technology in agriculture in the villages. The Collector apprised the government machinery for making arrangements for the VBSY on war footing to make the programme a success.

VBSY in-charge Ramachandrudu hoped that Bharat would become a developed country by 2047. The

VBSY would be organized across the country till January 26, 2024, to sensitize people on the 17 welfare schemes being implemented by the Central government in all states, he said.

"The VBSY is being organized to provide welfare benefits and also by making people aware of the changing technology and getting a better livelihood through its use," Ramachandrudu said.

The beneficiaries of various schemes were given cheques for the programmes. RDO Visweswara Rao, ZP vice chairman Aruna, and MPP Katta Sobha Rani were among those who participated in the programme.

APNRTS holds awareness drive on safe migration abroad

PNS ■ NARASAPURAM

A large number of people from the State are increasingly seeking employment opportunities abroad, drawn by the promise of better prospects. Regrettably, some who migrate to Gulf countries find themselves ensnared by unscrupulous agents, encountering challenges due to a lack of awareness.

In response to this issue, the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS) has embarked on a mission to raise awareness in migration-prone regions, in line with the directives of Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Under the able guidance of Venkat S Medapati, President of APNRTS, the society, in collaboration with District Collectors, Police, Revenue, and District Administration Officials, conducted an enlightening awareness program on safe migration for prospective migrants planning to go abroad. This event took place on Thursday in



Narasapuram, West Godavari district.

During the programme, DSP G Paideshawar Rao underscored the prevalence of unscrupulous agents exploiting individuals in pursuit of overseas employment. He highlighted the lack of sufficient information and support faced by many potential migrants, leading to challenging situations abroad. Commending APNRTS's Safe Migration Awareness Campaign, he acknowledged the initiative's

role in equipping potential migrants with the necessary knowledge and resources to make informed decisions.

CI K Govind Rao (Rural) issued a cautionary note against illegal migration, particularly in rural areas. He urged potential migrants to exercise caution against false promises of lucrative employment abroad and advised seeking guidance from government-authorized recruiting agencies such as APNRTS. These agencies, he emphasized, provide comprehensive assis-



tance to those seeking employment overseas. Stressing the significance of safe and legal migration procedures, he encouraged individuals to contact APNRTS for accurate information and guidance, actively participating in awareness meetings to gain valuable insights for informed decision-making about traveling abroad.

CI Srinivas (Urban) emphasized the importance of understanding foreign laws, cultures, and traditions before embarking on journeys abroad. He

advised prospective migrants to conduct thorough research, familiarizing themselves with local customs and regulations.

Individuals planning to go abroad or currently residing overseas can avail themselves of assistance by contacting APNRTS through their 24/7 helpline numbers: 0863 2340678 or WhatsApp: 85000 27678. The society remains committed to providing support and guidance to ensure safe and informed migration practices.

'HIV/AIDS impact extends far beyond medical realm'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

World AIDS Day, observed annually on December 1st each year, stands as a global reminder of the ongoing battle against HIV/AIDS. The day originated back in 1988, conceived by the World Health Organization (WHO) to raise awareness, commemorate those we've lost, support those living with the virus, and educate the world with prevention strategies. This year's theme is "Let Communities Lead," which underscores the pivotal role communities play in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Dr Harika Uppalapati, Consultant, General Physician, at Manipal Hospital said that HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) attacks the immune system, weakening the body's ability to fight infections and diseases.



Over time, if left untreated, HIV can progress to AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome), leading to severe health complications and even death. It also has a viral effect on mental and emotional well-being, relationships, and soci-

etal integration.

Dr Harika states that the impact of HIV/AIDS extends far beyond the medical realm, affecting individuals, families, and entire communities. Stigma and discrimination against those living with HIV remain prevalent, hindering access to treatment and support. Understanding and compassion are crucial in combating this societal barrier.

She said that advancements in medicine have transformed HIV/AIDS from a once-debilitating diagnosis to a manageable chronic condition. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) has revolutionized treatment, enabling individuals with HIV to lead longer and healthier lives. Moreover, preventative measures like PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) offer protection to those at high risk of contracting the virus.

'KCR changes seat when he smells defeat'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Reacting to exit poll results TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that KCR would change constituencies whenever he is on the verge of defeat and declared that KCR is going to be defeated in Kamareddy.

The Congress saved democracy. Thank you for defeating KCR in Kamareddy. KCR changes constituency whenever he smells defeat. It is commendable



Congress government is going to take charge on December 9. We have faith in the people. Let's fight whoever is elected. The KCR media did not come forward as the results are not in their favour," he said. "A challenge to KTR. Have you missed the exit polls? If they are true, will you apologise to the people? The opposition and the ruling party should act responsibly. If KCR wins he acts like a king and if he loses he is a slave. The Congress has

restored democracy. It gives confidence to all sections of society. Media will also get freedom from today. We are not rulers, but servants. The four crore people of TS have allowed us to serve them. Our first and last enemies are the four members of KCR's family. The BRS will not cross 25 seats," Revanth said.

BRS WILL WIN 70 SEATS

● KTR pooh-poohs exit polls

NAVEENA GHANATE ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said that the party led by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar would return to power with over 70 seats.

"On December 3, it will be an egg on your face, the BRS will get nothing less than 70 seats in Telangana and KCR will lead the next government. I ask all my party workers not to go by exit polls. The national media conducts surveys by speaking to just 200 people. It is the same national media which went wrong earlier with their exit polls. Out of the five exit polls, only one got it right in 2018," he said on Thursday.

"On December 3, it will be an egg on your (media houses publishing exit polls) face and on your reputation. Your institution's credibility will be at stake. When people are still queuing up to vote how can they declare results? How can you publish such exit polls? It is meaningless for the ECI to revise timings. These exit polls



"I called the Chief Election Commissioner and asked him why exit poll results are allowed to be published when people are still waiting to vote"

will affect the morale of candidates. Do you (media houses) have the guts to publish the

right numbers afterwards? Do you have the courage to accept your fault? Unfortunately, you don't. I want to convey to BRS cadres not to believe exit polls. We are 100 per cent sure our government will come to power. Let us hope that we will win with bigger numbers. Once the full numbers are out, then we can analyse. Let's hold our horses and talk about it on December 3," KTR said.

He also criticised the Election Commission for allowing exit polls to be aired at 5.30 pm while many voters were still queuing up to vote. "I called the Chief Election Commissioner and asked him why exit poll results are allowed to be published when people are still waiting to vote. Why not ensure exit polls are published after polling is over? We have seen these exit polls in the past too and most of them were wrong. I promise to all supporters of KCR and the BRS that we will get nothing less than 70 seats and we will form the next government," he said.

KCR, wife vote in Chintamadaka

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao voted in Chintamadaka village in his native Siddipet district in Telangana on Thursday.

Accompanied by his wife Shobha Rao, the BRS Chief participated in the polling process at a booth in the village. He greeted voters with folded hands before returning from the polling booth.

Chintamadaka village is a part of Siddipet constituency, where his nephew Health Minister T. Harish Rao is seeking re-election.

Industries Minister KT Rama Rao, Congress leader Revanth Reddy, and Union Minister G. Kishan Reddy also voted. Celebrities like Allu Arjun, Chiranjeevi and Jr. NTR also exercised their franchise.

Expressing hope that the BRS would form a government for the third time in the state, KTR tweeted, "Getting reports from all over the state.

CAR in Top Gear. Jai Telangana."

Political leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge urged the public to exercise their franchise.

"I call upon my brothers and sisters in Telangana to vote in record numbers and strengthen our democracy. I urge youth, especially first-time voters, to exercise their right to vote," tweeted Modi.

Union Minister Amit Shah tweeted, "Only a corruption-free and pro-poor government can work selflessly for Telangana. I appeal to the people of Telangana to come out in large numbers and elect a government whose priority is empowerment and not appeasement."

"No force on earth can stop an idea whose time has come," tweeted Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge urging the people of Telangana, especially first-time voters, to exercise their franchise.

WE ARE SERVANTS

Revanth confident of Congress victory

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that he is happy to defeat KCR

Kamareddy as he had been tormenting Telangana for the last 10 years and that Telangana has once again proved its dynamism.

Speaking to the media at Kamareddy on Thursday, Revanth paid tributes to the immortal Srikantha Chary who was martyred in the final stages of the Telangana movement. The Telangana movement took off after Srikantha Chary died on December 3, he said, adding that coincidentally the Telangana election results too are coming out on December 3.

He said that the first statement was made on December 9, 2009. Now, coincidentally on the same day, Telangana will be freed from the rule of 'aristocrats,' he said.

INDIA CORNER

All rescued workers normal, can go home: AIIMS-Rishikesh

The AIIMS-Rishikesh on Thursday declared all 41 workers who were evacuated from Silkyara tunnel fit to return home. Briefing the media here on their health condition, Dr Ravikant said the workers were thoroughly examined and their blood test, X-ray, and ECG reports were normal. "They are physically normal and clinically stable. We have given them clearance to return home," he said. The workers were rescued from the tunnel Tuesday night after a long-drawn operation. The doctor said as they have come out of a tunnel after 17 days, the workers might need acclimatisation. They have been advised to go to the nearest hospital after two weeks for a check-up. "On the basis of their major organ screening, we can say they are fit to travel. As they were taken good care of during their confinement in the tunnel with regular feeding, there was no case of starvation. They are mostly quite young or of middle age. That also helped them stay fit," Ravikant said. Doctors from AIIMS-Rishikesh will stay connected with the workers through tele-medicine to monitor their mental health for the next few weeks, he said in reply to a question.



BJP demands suspension of jailed WB Minister

BJP lawmakers staged a walkout from West Bengal Assembly on Thursday demanding a discussion on the suspension of the jailed West Bengal Minister and TMC MLA Jyotipriyo Mallick. All the about 30 MLAs of the saffron party present walked out of the Assembly hall after Speaker Birman Bandyopadhyay disallowed a motion by them demanding that they be allowed to raise the issue of Mallick's suspension from the House in view of his arrest in a money laundering case linked to the ration distribution scam. The motion was brought by BJP MLAs Shankar Ghosh and Agnimitra Paul among others two days after senior party leader Suvendu Adhikari was suspended for the entire winter session of the House after allegations that he made objectionable remarks against the speaker and created ruckus in the House. In response to BJP leaders demands Bandyopadhyay said the issue cannot be discussed in the House.



French defence major Thales opens new office in Bengaluru

French aerospace major Thales has set up a new office in Bengaluru in sync with its focus on expanding its footprint in India. In 2019, Thales set up its Engineering Competence Centre (ECC) in Bengaluru in support of the group's ramp-up plans in India and the region. This ECC is a first-of-its-kind centre in India focusing on software and hardware capabilities in civil and defence businesses serving Thales's global needs. "Thales invests close to 4 billion Euro globally in R&D every year. This ECC, along with an additional center based in Noida, form one of the group's three major engineering competency center hubs," the company said in a statement. The new office in Bengaluru was inaugurated on Wednesday. "We are proud to mark yet another expansion of our footprint in India with this new facility in Bengaluru," said Ashish Saraf, Vice President and Country Director for Thales in India.



Govt policies, decisions have taken economy to new height

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said his government's policies and decisions have taken the economy to a new height, creating immense possibility for employment and self-employment generations. Speaking to newly inducted employees in different government departments at the Centre and in some states after distributing nearly 51,000 appointment letters as part of 'Rozgar Mela', he asked them to ensure that welfare initiatives reach the most deprived people wherever they are and said this will lead to the realisation of goal of making India a developed country by 2047. Modi said that their biggest priority should be people's ease of living, and took a swipe at past governments saying they ignored the equality envisaged by B R Ambedkar, the key figure behind the Constitution, among all citizens. A big section of society was



Modi said that their biggest priority should be people's ease of living, and took a swipe at past governments saying they ignored the equality envisaged by B R Ambedkar, the key figure behind the Constitution, among all citizens.

denied even basic facilities till 2014 when his government came to power, he said. The prime minister said his government prioritised the marginalised and adopted their development as a mantra, asserting that it reached out to those who for decades had not got any facility from any government. "We have been trying to change their lives," he said. The same bureaucracy and system are in place but the

mindset and work culture has changed, changing the lives of people, he said. Citing a report, Modi said over 13 crore people moved out of poverty in the last five years. Many global agencies have come out of positive reports about the Indian economy, he said, adding that this also is an evidence of the immense possibility for employment and self-employment in the coming years. The prime minister told the new employees through

video conferencing that they should make a note of any hardship they might have faced due to some government employees and ensure that they never treat anyone in the same manner. His government, he said, has been spending lakhs of crores of rupees in building modern infrastructure, including expressways, airports and in rail sector, which have obviously created a lot of employment. India is witnessing an "infrastructure revolution", he said. Development projects hanging fire for years and decades were accomplished by his government, he said, citing the construction of an airport in Sikkim and Paradip refinery. Real estate sector was headed to sure shot destruction when his government came to power but it ushered in reforms through the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act to restore its good health. The sector creates a lot of employment, he noted.

Angry guests pour boiling oil on cook

PNS ■ BADAUN (UP)

Miffed at not getting "hot roti" at a wedding here, some guests allegedly poured boiling oil on the cook, who was rushed to a hospital with serious burn injuries, police said on Thursday. The incident happened when Indrapal Pali, the groom's uncle, and a few others sat down to have dinner at the wedding of Pannalal's daughter in Moosajhag Police Station area here late Wednesday night and asked for "hot roti." They were told that it was not possible since it was very late in the night and the tandoor had been extinguished, police said quoting the witnesses. Angry over the refusal, Indrapal and his three friends went to the spot where the cook was busy making preparations for the next feast and poured hot oil on him and fled. The cook named Rajesh was admitted to a private hospital where his condition is said to be critical.

India approves defence acquisition projects worth Rs 2.23 lakh crore

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Thursday accorded an initial approval to defence acquisition projects worth Rs 2.23 lakh crore that included procurement of 97 Tejas light combat aircraft and 156 Prachand combat helicopters, in a major move to significantly enhance the combat capabilities of the armed forces. The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, cleared the projects, at a time India is locked in a bitter military standoff with China at a number of friction points in eastern Ladakh for over three years. The defence ministry said 98 per cent of the total procurement worth Rs 2.23 lakh crore will be sourced from the domestic industries and that the move will give a substantial boost to the Indian defence industry in achieving the goal of 'Atmanirbharta' (self-reliance) in defence industry. The DAC also approved a proposal of the Indian Air



Force to upgrade its Su-30 fighter fleet by state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL). The DAC further accorded Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) or initial approval for procurement of two types of anti-tank munitions namely area denial munition (ADM) type-2 and type-3. The top body on procurement of military hardware also cleared acquisition and integration of automatic target tracker (ATT) and digital basaltic computer (DBC) for T-90 tanks besides approving another proposal to buy medi-

um range anti-ship missiles (MRASHM) for the Indian Navy. The MRASHM is a light-weight surface-to-surface missile which will be a primary offensive weapon onboard various Indian naval ships. "The DAC accorded AoNs for procurement of Light Combat Helicopter for Indian Air Force and Indian Army and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk-1A for IAF from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) under Buy (Indian-IDD) category," the ministry said. Though it did not mention the specific numbers, official sources said 97 Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (Mark 1A) are being procured for the IAF and 156 Light Combat Helicopters (LCH) are being procured for the Army and the Air Force. In February 2021, the defence ministry sealed a Rs 48,000 crore deal with the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd for procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF.

Ecosystem that encouraged corruption has ended: V-P Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Thursday said India stands at the "front leagues of nations" in the domains of land, sea, air and space at a time the country has an ecosystem that encourages a level playing field for all. He also said that while disruptive technologies have made inroads, this is the first time India is among the leading countries that is focusing on it. Addressing participants of a course on public administration, he said India's achievements in indigenous technology was demonstrated by the launch of aircraft carrier INS Vikrant last year and the development of several indigenous defence equipment. He also referred to the recent flight Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook on a Tejas light combat aircraft. "When you started your career, we had in the country

an ecosystem which unfortunately had embedded in it an element of patronage, an element of corruption. People thought they were above the law," he said. Now, an ecosystem exists that provides a level playing field, Dhankhar said. In the past, Dhankhar said, the country used to wait for other nations to help in technological advancement. "Now we are in research, quantum computing, we are in the front-line our country is one of the very few countries in single digits that are focusing on 6G. Commercialisation of 6G will take place from 2025 to 2030," he said. Dhankhar also expressed concern over recent incidents of stone-pelting on Vande Bharat trains and pushed for "exemplary consequences" for the culprits. There has been at least seven such incidents in the recent past.



'I am not a rubber stamp or yes man'

■ Kerala Governor on holding back certain bills

PNS ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan on Thursday said he was not a "rubber stamp" or a "yes man" who would give his assent to bills passed by the state Assembly without applying his mind. Khan said when any ordinance or Bill comes before him, he applies his mind to ascertain whether it is constitutionally and legally sound. He said that a bill or an ordinance meant for the welfare of the people of Kerala will not



stay on his desk for even an hour. "I will dispose of it immediately. But where they (government) use the power of law to destroy the institutions, universities and their autonomy and also go against the letter and spirit of the Constitution, they cannot expect me to be their

yes man. "I am not a rubber stamp. I am not," he told reporters here. Regarding the seven bills he reserved for presidential assent, Khan said he had waited for nearly two years for the ministers to come and explain the contents of those legislations. "The ministers came but could not explain," he said. Khan further said that since the government decided to go to the Supreme Court, instead of giving the explanations sought by him, he referred the seven bills to the President. He further justified his

action by claiming that of the seven bills, four were in the nature of Money Bills as they entailed expenditure and therefore, prior permission of the Governor was required for tabling them in the state Assembly. Regarding the remaining three, Khan said that those bills were contrary to the UGC norms. His decision was criticised by Leader of Opposition in the Assembly V D Satheesan, who said that the Governor cannot unnecessarily hold back bills passed by the Assembly.

Pratul Patel rules out two NCP factions coming together

PNS ■ KARJAT

Pratul Patel, working president of the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, on Thursday said it was a misconception that the two rival factions of the party would soon come together. Speaking at a news conference at the Nationalist Congress Party's two-day conclave here, he also claimed that the majority of public representatives, functionaries and workers of the party supported Ajit Pawar's decision to join hands with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

"There should be no confusion because some people in the (Sharad Pawar-led) NCP misled people into believing that we are again coming together. I want to state it very specifically that we are working in the NCP under Ajit Pawar's leadership for Maharashtra's benefit," Patel said. On the meetings between Ajit Pawar and his uncle Sharad Pawar, he said they do not meet often. The Pawar family had come together earlier this month for their annual Diwali get-together (where Ajit and Sharad Pawar were present), Patel said.

LS SECRETARY GENERAL GETS ONE YEAR EXTENSION

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh was on Thursday granted a further extension in tenure for one year, an official order said. Singh, a 1986-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of the Uttarakhand cadre, took over as the Lok Sabha Secretary General on December 1, 2020. He was granted a two-year extension on November 30, 2021. "The Speaker is pleased to extend the tenure of Shri Utpal Kumar Singh, IAS (retd), as

Secretary General, Lok Sabha and Lok Sabha Secretariat...in the rank and status of Cabinet Secretary on the existing terms and conditions for a period of one year with effect from December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024," the order said. Singh retired as chief secretary of Uttarakhand on July 31, 2020 and took over as Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat on September 1, 2020. He assumed the post of Lok Sabha Secretary General on December 1, 2020 after the superannuation of the then incumbent Snehlata Shrivastav.

'BJP resorting to provocative, divisive issues to garner support for 2024 polls'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

BSP chief Mayawati on Thursday predicted multi-cornered contests in next year's Lok Sabha polls and claimed that the BJP resorts to "narrow, provocative and divisive issues" as it cannot get votes on the basis of its work. At a meeting here of its Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand units, she repeated the party's stand to fight the Lok Sabha elections on its own strength. "Yearning for some 'achhe deen' (good days), the 25 crore citizens of UP continue to suffer the pangs of poverty, unemployment, backwardness and migration during the BJP rule," she was quoted as saying in a statement. The former UP chief minister called upon the party workers to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha election with all their might, and said it is going to be a "multi-cornered struggle" and her party will play an important role in it. "All the party workers should fulfil their responsibilities with full force and honesty to secure better results in the next general elections," the BSP supremo said. On the political situation in

the country, Mayawati said, "The political situation is changing rapidly due to the narrow, casteist and anti-people policies and functioning of the country and various state governments, including Uttar Pradesh." "In such a situation, people seem eager to choose the path of multi-cornered struggle rather than the dominance of any one party. It is very likely that the next Lok Sabha polls will be interesting. The BSP will also play an important role in this. "Good results can definitely be achieved by working honestly and sincerely on the important guidelines given to the party from time to time," she said. She claimed that the BJP, like the Samajwadi Party and Congress, is not in a position to seek votes on the strength of its work and hence "it again needs to resort to narrow, inflammatory and divisive issues" for the electoral gain. The BSP contested the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in UP in alliance with the Samajwadi Party and won 10 seats. However, in the 2022 assembly elections, the party managed to secure a victory on only one seat in the state.



Indira Gandhi, P N Haksar proved more than a match for Nixon-Kissinger in 1971: Ramesh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger passed away, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Thursday recalled that in 1971 then US President Richard Nixon and Kissinger created huge headaches for India but then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her close aide P N Haksar proved "more than a match for them". Kissinger, who dominated foreign policy as the United States extricated itself from Vietnam, died Wednesday. He was 100. In a post on X, Ramesh said, "Henry Kissinger has passed



away. He was as immensely consequential as he was hugely controversial." In his long and eventful life he has been both celebrated and condemned, Ramesh noted. "But there can be no doubt about his sheer intellectual brilliance and awesome charisma," he said. For the last three decades, he

positioned himself as a great friend and supporter of India and indeed he was, Ramesh said. "But this was not always so and in 1971 especially, President Nixon and he created huge headaches for India and thought they had us cornered. However, Indira Gandhi and P N Haksar proved more than a match for them," the former Union minister said. "I have described the Kissinger-Haksar and Nixon-Indira Gandhi encounters with archival detail in my book 'Intertwined Lives: P N Haksar & Indira Gandhi,'" Ramesh said.

Varanasi court gives 10 more days to ASI

PNS ■ VARANASI

The Varanasi district court on Thursday gave 10 more days to the Archaeological Survey of India to complete and submit a scientific survey report of the Gyanvapi mosque complex here. "Taking up the plea of the ASI seeking three additional weeks to submit the report, District Judge A K Vishvesh said he hoped that the ASI would not ask for more time, according to counsel for the Hindu side Madan Mohan Yadav. The court fixed December 11 as the next date of hearing in the matter, Yadav said. The court was hearing the ASI plea moved on Tuesday

seeking three more weeks for submitting the report, saying it needed more time for the assimilation of information generated by different experts. The ASI started the survey in the barricaded area of the Gyanvapi premises, excluding its sealed section, on August 4, following court orders to determine whether the 17th-century mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. The Muslim side represented by lawyer Mohammad Ikhlag strongly objected to the request for more time and argued that the ASI is seeking time to file the report again and again without any proper reason. He also argued that there



should be some end to this process of taking time again and again to file the report. The ASI is directed to file the report positively within the time granted by the court, Ikhlag said. In its order, the court said it expects that within the provided time, the ASI shall positively file the report and will not

seek further time. On Wednesday, taking up the plea of the ASI, District Judge Vishvesh asked a senior ASI official from Delhi to explain the need for more time, to which the ASI counsel said that officials in Varanasi had been handling the task and would apprise the court about it. Earlier, the district court had asked the ASI to submit the survey report of the Gyanvapi complex by November 28. In its application, the ASI had stated that its experts are working on various types of data collected by archaeologists, surveyors and other experts, etc., and assimilation

of information generated by different experts and different tools is a difficult and slow process and it will take some more time to complete the report for final submission. On November 2, the ASI told the court it had "completed" the survey but may take some more time to compile the report, along with the details of the equipment used in the survey work. The court then granted additional time till November 17 for submitting the document. But its counsel again sought 15 more days due to the non-availability of the technical report and the district judge then asked it to submit its report by November 28.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

The CAA scare

Amit Shah rakes up citizenship Act amid State elections, much to the consternation of minorities

Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent statement regarding the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) has reignited a vigorous debate and speculation. The CAA, a bone of contention since being introduced in December 2019, aims to provide citizenship to persecuted minorities from neighbouring Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. At the time, it faced widespread protests and criticism over its potential impact on India's secular principles and the rights of religious minorities. This time again, Shah's reiteration about the CAA's implementation has triggered doubts and discussions. Due to its association with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the fear of potential discrimination and exclusion – especially against the Muslim community – fueled protests across the nation. The Government's response to these protests involved reassurances that the CAA was not meant to harm any particular community and that it aimed to provide a haven for persecuted minorities from the neighbouring countries. However, the controversy surrounding the Act persisted, leading to an unspecified delay in its implementation. But due to nation-wide protests Government chose to put it on the backburner. Meanwhile other issues took over and CAA was almost forgotten. But with Amit Shah's statement it is back on the centre stage. Proponents argue that the CAA is a humanitarian gesture, offering refuge to neighbours facing religious persecution. They contend that it aligns with India's tradition of sheltering persecuted communities and upholds the principle of religious freedom. On the



other hand, critics express concerns about the Act's potential impact on India's secular fabric. They argue that by selectively providing citizenship based on religion, the CAA undermines the principle of equal treatment for all regardless of religious affiliation. Critics fear it may set a precedent that challenges the secular foundation of the Constitution. Furthermore, the CAA has been closely associated with the NRC, a process aimed at identifying and expelling undocumented immigrants. The combination of CAA and NRC has raised apprehensions about possible discrimination and exclusion, particularly affecting vulnerable communities who may struggle to produce the necessary documentation. Shah's statement on the CAA's implementation, especially during Assembly polls, raises questions about the timing and political motivations. Elections often bring specific policy issues to the fore as leaders seek to rally support. The CAA, with its polarising nature, can be strategically used to appeal to certain voter bases. The nation does need a comprehensive refugee policy but that must not be discriminatory, to say the least. Besides, dislocating people living in India for generations would be inhumane as it violates India's commitment to uphold human rights.

PICTALK



School students form 'red ribbon', Universal symbol of awareness about HIV, in Moradabad

Are foreign universities best bet for better education?

Foreign university campuses in India may be good for many reasons but improvement of higher education is not one of them

With the latest UGC notification regarding the regulations for foreign universities to be set up in India, getting a degree from a reputed foreign university may not be difficult for the privileged class. In recent times, there has been an exodus of Indian students to foreign countries for higher studies and jobs. In states like Kerala and Punjab, this trend is increasing daily. The trend is so alarming that even after schooling, students leave the mother country, and many foresee a generation of old-age couples living in posh houses. Why are people moving to alien countries? Is it due to the lack of quality education in our country? Is it a lack of poor infrastructure in our educational institutions? Or is it the colonial mindset that made us look at foreign countries as better than our homeland? If we analyze the issues behind this exodus, we find that there are multiple issues, and it is challenging to pinpoint one problem. One main issue in our higher education is the unnecessary administrative procedures followed in our public



sector universities and colleges. It's more challenging to tackle the administrative people of these institutions than to learn complicated subjects. Half of the productive time of students doing doctoral degrees in these institutions is wasted on tackling the people in the administration. Students must get no-objection certificates from different sections, even sections unrelated to their course. Even after awarding the PhD degree, if the student wants a NET exemption certificate, they have to repeat the complete cycle of paperwork. What is the need for these complicated administrative procedures? Is it to protect the job of jobless staff members? Few new-generation public sector universities like the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research (AcSIR) have streamlined these com-

plicated procedures, reducing the paperwork and completing the work within the stipulated timeline on their website. However, the majority still follow the old culture. Many students move to foreign countries to complete their degree within the specified time without hassles. The second reason for the mass exodus is their lucrative salary in foreign countries. Gone are the days when students worked jobs as service. Nowadays, for even minor assistance, a student expects remuneration. When we were students, we used to help our teachers to maintain departmental libraries and gardens. Only people from the affluent class could get admission to these universities because of the higher tuition fees. More than that, even if a student receives a degree from a foreign university having a campus in India, it won't have the same weightage as studying in their main campus in the respective countries. The culture of a university is directly related to the culture followed in society. So, even if a foreign university tries to follow an alien culture, the native societal culture is

bound to reflect on their campuses. Even though starting foreign university campuses is a welcome step, it won't bring long-term benefits. Instead, we must improve the quality of education and research in our public sector universities and attract international students to India. The presence of international students on our campuses will enhance our academic quality and bring money to the public exchequer. Since the Indus Valley civilization, education and learning have been deeply ingrained in the Indian subcontinent. Our ancient universities, like Takshashila and Nalanda, have attracted students from around the globe. We have to envision the day when students from foreign countries visit our public sector universities, and we start our university campuses in other countries. As a driving force, this will also help propagate Indian values and philosophy across the globe. (The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

India rising but China still ahead

India is becoming proactive in international arena and getting good response but the China's dominance in the Global South remains undisputed



SANTHOSH MATHEW

In the ever-shifting landscape of global power dynamics, India finds itself at the forefront of a compelling narrative—the quest to be the "voice" of the Global South. As it assumes the G-20 Presidency, India's ambitions to represent the diverse nations of Africa, Latin America, and Asia echo loudly, challenging its formidable neighbour, China, in a musical chairs game of influence. The ongoing great power struggle between these two nations raises crucial questions about the future trajectory of the Global South and who will emerge as its torchbearer.

In this intricate dance of geopolitics, the article ultimately raises the question of what it truly means to be the "voice" of the Global South. As the world watches the interplay between the Dragon and the Elephant, whether India's soft power and ideals of brotherhood can attract nations, contrasting with China's more robust physical and economic might. In the late 1980s, Deng Xiaoping prophetically declared the advent of the "Asian Century" during a meeting with India's then-Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. This prediction has materialized, but the pivotal question remains: which nation will lead this Asian century? Statistical data, unequivocally, places China ahead of India in military prowess, economic size, and technological advancements. Yet, this article explores the unique strengths and potential contributions India can offer as it endeavours to become the "voice" of the Global South. Coined in 1952 during the Cold War, the term "Third World" has evolved into the more neutral "Global South." This term transcends through the diverse group of nations from Africa, Latin America, and Asia, evolving into a symbol of shared historical experiences of colonization, economic challenges, and a collective desire for a more equitable global order. India, currently hosting the G-20 Presidency, has taken proactive steps, hosting a virtual "Voice of the Global South" summit and championing the issues of developing nations. As India positions itself as a



leader, it offers distinct advantages over China. India's vibrant democracy, commitment to pluralism, human rights, and the rule of law resonate with nations worldwide. With a young and tech-savvy population, India's scientific community has already made significant global contributions. India's diplomatic finesse comes to the forefront as it navigates challenges posed by China's economic investments in neighbouring regions. Unlike China's perceived debt-trap diplomacy, India's trade relations and diplomatic acumen position it as a bridge between the Global North and South. The question lies in whether India's commitment to collaboration and building trust can outshine China's more assertive tactics. A recent report published by Pew Research Surveys has unveiled a noteworthy trend: India has greater favourability than China in the developed world. However, when it comes to developing countries (the Global South), China has an edge over India as the more favourably favoured nation. This trend can be seen because, within the Global South, many countries grapple with shared historical experiences, socio-economic challenges, and aspirations for equitable global representation. China's ascendancy as the preferred nation is predictable

INDIA'S ADVANTAGES LIE IN NOT BEING PERCEIVED AS AN AGGRESSOR OR ENCROACHER, IN CONTRAST TO CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE VIEWED AS A POTENTIAL DEBT TRAP

due to its economic prowess and infrastructure investments, which will help developing countries achieve their developmental goals. Amidst a backdrop of geopolitical shifts and economic realignments, India's democratic values, commitment to human rights, and rule of law sets it apart. Its young, tech-savvy population and thriving scientific community position it as a catalyst for innovation. India, with its evolving intellectual property regime, excels in process technology and manufacturing. US-based multinationals heavily invest in both China and India. The allure of less expensive skilled labour, market access, collaboration opportunities, and government incentives draws these corporations to India. In sectors such as information technology, telecommunications, transport equipment, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, and energy, India faces both opportunities and challenges. The lack of a sophisticated customer base hampers significant innovation in IT, but this gap may close in the coming decades. The growing sophistication of engineering and design services in aircraft and automotive industries positions India as a significant player in global markets. India is moving beyond replicating designs to contributing to cutting-edge innovation.

India's ascent in the Global South leadership struggle against China is not only influenced by geopolitical dynamics but also by its innovation landscape. Chinese and Indian firms are increasingly involved in early-stage research and clinical trials, showcasing a shift towards innovative product development. India's advantages lie in not being perceived as an aggressor or encroacher, in contrast to China's Belt and Road Initiative viewed as a potential debt trap. India's trade significance and good relations globally position it as a bridge between the Global North and South. While China may have firepower, India's diplomatic prowess and cordial relations give it a better ability to lead the world. India's journey from shadows to spotlight in the global innovation arena is nothing short of a triumph. As the dragon of China breathes its economic fire, the elephant of India is trumpeting its unique strengths on the global stage. So, as the dragon and elephant dance in this innovation duet, India's ascent is not just a rise; it's a melody, echoing across the realms of progress. (The writer is Associate Professor, centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences Pondicherry Central University, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ALLOW DUAL CITIZENSHIP

Sir — Very often, this age-old issue about dual citizenship despite various utterances by different politicians over the years comes to the fore. It is an issue that has been of concern to many people. It would be in everyone's best interests to resolve this issue once and for all. The government and the courts need to find a solution that may resolve the issue faced by many who have obtained Portuguese and other nationalities find themselves in, many through birth and for historical reasons. It would be prudent for the central government to allow people dual nationality or citizenship as they can have a foreign nationality and still maintain close links with the motherland. According to the World Population Review, 49% of all countries worldwide allow dual citizenship which means that a person can be a citizen of more than one country. We are living in an age where the world is a global village just like no man is an island.

Ramanath Krishan | Kozhikode

TELANGANA ELECTIONS

Sir — Telangana sees a triangular contest between the BJP, Congress, and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS). BRS has fielded candidates in all 119 seats. As per the seat-sharing agreement, the BJP and actor Pawan Kalyan-headed Jana Sena are contesting in 111 and 8 seats, respectively, while Congress has given one seat to its ally CPI and is fighting from 118 others. Meanwhile, Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has put up candidates in nine segments in the city. The key candidates include Chief Minister KCR, his minister-son K T Rama Rao, state Congress president A Revanth Reddy, and BJP Lok Sabha members Bandi Sanjay Kumar and D Arvind. Ahead of the polls, the state saw top national leaders, including PM Modi, Rahul Gandhi, and ruling BRS supreme K Chandrasekar Rao, wooing voters.

Silkayara rescue operation



Prayers from the entire nation towards rescuing the 41 workers trapped inside the Silkayara tunnel in Uttarakashi bore fruit after a 17-day ordeal. The mission that has been accomplished is a triumph of human labour over

machinery, as the rat-hole mining experts managed to manually break through the final 12 metres of rubble using only hand drills and pulleys. This extensive and challenging rescue work, spanning over 400 hours, showcases the resoluteness and determination of the rescuers and the indomitable spirit of the trapped workers. It also highlights the might of our nation and the combined spirit of its people to stand united in the face of any adversity, and we can go to great lengths when it comes to the well-being of our people. But as we watched on television the hardship and struggle over the operations, questions emerged as to whether the mountainous area in Uttarakhand can withstand the level of this kind of heavy tunnelling work.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

The saffron party's campaign stressed the necessity of electing a "double engine government" and pointed to the "family rule" of KCR and alleged corruption. The BRS's campaign centred around the previous Congress regime's failures and ongoing welfare measures for farmers, women, and other sections of society, as well as his struggle to achieve Telangana statehood. Congress's campaign focused mainly on the alleged corruption of the BRS government while highlighting its six poll guarantees. The results of Telangana will be out on December 3 along with the other four states that went to polls. It would be interesting to see which way the wind is blowing. The general elections are not very far and these results would definitely give an indication of public mood.

Ashraf Hussain | Howrah

ALL INDIA JUDICIAL SERVICE

Sir — Since lower courts are the lifelines of the common man, picking their presiding officers with care and caution cannot be overemphasised. At present, the jurisdictional high courts or state

governments are vested with the power to select subordinate court judges either through examination, interview, or both. At the same time, however, the process of selecting lower court judges has not consistently met the nod of approval from the know-how. The need to have a uniform mechanism for picking judges at the entry level on an all-India basis is widely felt. President Drupadi Murmu recently pitched for an All India Judicial Service, and there are a plethora of legal experts who believe the time is ripe for such a system on the lines of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). The generally tough IAS exams attract the best talents in India. In the same vein, an All India Judicial Service could captivate meritorious young minds that are at present not keen on the judiciary as a career. The Centre does not seem averse to the idea, but it may not easily pass muster with the judiciary because the latter's authority stands threatened.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN A METAPHOR FOR INDO-AUSTRALIAN RELATIONS

Australian, Arnold Dix, personifies healthy Indo-Australian relationship



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

A miracle occurred this week, when a joint effort of nearly 1000 people working like a single organism and the prayers of millions, managed to move a mountain to rescue 41 trapped workers in eighteen days. While much would be written and hours of content would be created, chronicling the death-defying, Human vs/with Nature feat, there was one of the heroes who stood out like a lone lighthouse, signalling the way to large ships in the tricky geo-political waters. Arnold Dix, an international tunnel expert from Australia had been roped in earlier in the 17-day operation to assist the evacuation process.

This expert besides, providing the necessary professional help, was perhaps the most visible face of the rescue mission, offering prayers at the temple of the local deity, beaming with confidence in his interviews with the media about the success of the mission and bringing hope to millions who prayed for the trapped miners. A week earlier, most Indians or at least cricket fans would not have batted an eyelid to lambast the Australians, as they defeated India in its dream run towards a cherished world cup. A week later Arnold Dix is a celebrated figure in India due to his ingenuity in handling the crisis.

Taking a cue, leaders at the top from both nations were also busy finalising their geo-political strategy in 2+2 dialogue for greater cooperation bilaterally and at multilateral platforms. The joint statement released after the dialogue mentioned that the Comprehensive strategic dialogue between the two nations was to ensure "both countries sharing major Indian Ocean coastlines, and sharing a positive agenda of cooperation with countries across Asia and the Pacific Ocean region, their cooperation served to reinforce an open, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific.



As the India-Australia CSP continues to deepen bilateral cooperation with a shared commitment to democracy and pluralism, rule of law, and a multifaceted bilateral agenda, the Ministers reaffirmed that gender equality is of fundamental importance and investment in the empowerment of all women and girls is critical to full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Ministers reaffirmed their support for sovereignty and territorial integrity in the Indo-Pacific, democratic values, the rule of law, freedom of navigation and flight and the peaceful resolution of disputes. The Ministers underlined the importance of being able to exercise rights and freedoms in all seas and oceans consistent with international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), including freedom of navigation and overflight, in addressing challenges to the maritime rules-based order, including those in the East and South China Seas. They underscored the importance of disputes being resolved peacefully by international law without threat or use of force or any attempt to unilaterally change the status quo, and that countries should exercise self-restraint in the conduct of activities that could complicate or escalate disputes affecting peace and stability. They expressed serious concern about the militarisation of disputed features, the dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels and efforts to disrupt other countries' offshore exploitation activities.

All was happening in the backdrop of India's close ally Sri Lanka allowing nearly \$4.5 billion Chinese investment in the strategic Hambantota port town. Hambantota is literally in India's backyard and offers strategic access to China on Indian critical infrastructure. Chinese shipping company already owns the port of Hambantota. The mention of a strong commitment by India and Australia in the joint statement was a show of recommitment to jointly address regional issues, with Chinese sharks lurking in their oceans. Perhaps Arnold was a greater symbol of what is yet to come out of the Indo-Australian relationship.

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

Employability of skilled trainees is a must



DINESH SOOD

Aligning Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana PMKVY with the industry to match local economic needs is crucial to making skilled trainees employable

The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), launched in 2015, has trained 13.7 million candidates over seven years. However, only 18% or 2.4 million of these candidates have been successful in securing a job. This low placement rate is one of several concerning issues highlighted by a Lok Sabha standing committee. The committee also identified underutilized funds, infrastructure deficiencies, dropouts, a disconnect with industry, and insufficient state engagement as significant problems. To increase the effectiveness of the program, PMKVY must be aligned with the local economy's needs. Currently, only 2.4% of India's 530-million-strong workforce has received formal vocational education or training. This means that a vast majority of the workforce remains unskilled, making them less productive. Additionally, a quarter of India's workforce has less than primary education, further emphasizing the importance of skill development programs in reducing unemployment rates. Despite this, the latest data from the quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) reports an unemployment rate of 6.8%, with a youth unemployment rate (for ages 15 to 29) of 17.3%.

The PMKVY has undergone three versions, with PMKVY 2.0 having the highest number of trained and placed candidates, with a placement rate of 19.5%. However, this rate has since fallen to 5.8% for PMKVY 3.0, the lowest yet. Overall, approximately 11 million trained candidates have completed certification. The government must take immediate action to address these concerns, align PMKVY with the local economy, and improve the program's effectiveness.

It is imperative to note that Uttar Pradesh is the state with the highest number of candidates trained, with a staggering 1.59 million individuals, however, the placement rate in the state is only a meagre 20%. On the other hand, Telangana takes the lead with the highest placement rate of 35.1%, followed closely by Puducherry at 34.6%. Haryana and Punjab are not far behind with placement rates of 31.7% and 29.6% respectively. Maharashtra and Kerala, however, need to work on their placement rates, as they stand at a disappointing 9.3% and 10.4% respectively. It should be noted that NSDC primarily partnered with private vocational training providers due to the lack of private Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) at the time. However, the shorter training duration of NSDC courses (3-4 months) compared to the 1-2 year programmes offered by ITIs is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.

Poor utilisation of funds: According to government data, the programme's fund utilization was poor in 2016-17, with only 56% of the allocated funds being used. Although the number improved to 98% in 2020-21, it fell back to 72% in 2021-22. The Lok Sabha standing committee reported that the suspension of training and placement operations due to COVID-19 restrictions led to a significant drop in enrollment and certification, resulting in low disbursement and utilization of funds. However, it is expected that the ongoing training under PMKVY 4.0 since January 2023 will lead to an increase in expenditure upon its completion.

Connect to industry is missing: NSDC, established in 2008, collaborates with partner trainers to conduct skill development



MOREOVER, THE ONLINE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR THE STATE-MANAGED COMPONENT WAS OPERATIONAL IN ONLY 15 STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES, AND THIS HAS AFFECTED COORDINATION WITH THE UNION GOVERNMENT

programmes. However, the lack of industry participation and a disconnect between NSDC and the industry is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. The current skill development programmes do not align with the actual regional demand for skills, creating a mismatch between training and local economic needs. This leads to a gap between the skills imparted and the market requirements, which is unacceptable.

The quality of training and the choice of the particular skill being imparted must meet the market standards. Unfortunately, the skill centres are not adequately equipped for practical training, resulting in theoretical training with little practical exposure. This is unacceptable, and immediate action needs to be taken to bridge this gap. The Lok Sabha's standing committee has also highlighted this disconnect and suggested surveying industry representatives to better understand their needs. It is time to take the necessary steps to ensure that the skill development programmes align with the industry needs and bridge the gap between the skills imparted and the market requirements.

Candidate dropout, infra deficiencies: A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration between 2016 and 2021 revealed that 20% of candidates who enrolled under PMKVY dropped out. The reasons for this were medical issues, family obligations, social challenges, lengthy commutes to training centres, marital status changes, increased livelihood demands, limited job opportunities, and perceived skill stagnation. Female candidates also dropped out due to pregnancy, marriage, and course duration.

The standing committee noted that the Ministry needs to take immediate action to address the factors that lead to candidate dropouts, such as distance to training centres and accessibility to jobs. For the female dropouts, the committee suggested that the Ministry should collaborate with ASHA and anganwadi centres to create awareness about the benefits of skilling and encourage them to resume training as soon as possible after delivery. It is unacceptable that out of 818 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) or training centres allocated in all districts of India, only 722 have been established so far. Of the remaining, 58 PMKKs were surrendered to the government by private vendors due to operational difficulties. This is a significant issue and requires immediate attention from the government. The lack of eligible trainers is another issue that is preventing many centres from becoming operational. As a solution, the government must create a pool of National Assessors and Trainers under PMKVY 4.0. The government must take necessary actions to ensure that the PMKVY program is successful in creating a skilled workforce and reducing unemployment in India.

Limited state participation: State disparities driven by varying economic and employment histories result in limited state participation. This is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed with a sense of urgency. For instance, while some states have a significant agricultural workforce that relies on programmes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, others like Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu have more employment opportunities. Therefore, it is imper-

ative to adopt localised, demand-driven approaches that extend employment schemes from metropolitan areas to tier-2 and tier-3 cities, thus addressing specific regional challenges.

In 2016-20, PMKVY 2.0 introduced state participation to enhance support and monitoring and enable targeted training that aligns with local needs and aspirations. However, the state-managed model encountered several issues, including delays in the release of funds from the state treasury to respective departments, a shortage of trainers with the necessary eligibility criteria, a lack of available placement partners, and delayed payments to training partners. These issues need to be addressed immediately to ensure that the programme is efficient in achieving its objectives. Moreover, the online management system for the state-managed component was operational in only 15 states and union territories, and this has affected coordination with the Union government. It is imperative to expand this system to all states and union territories to ensure that the programme runs smoothly.

In conclusion, enhancing the programme's effectiveness and aligning PMKVY with the industry to match local economic needs is crucial to making skill training programmes employable. It is time to take bold steps to address the challenges facing the programme and ensure that it achieves its objectives.

(The writer is a Co-Founder and MD of Orane International, a Training Partner with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), and a Network Member of India International Skill Centres; Views expressed are strictly personal)

Leveraging the power of advanced AI in the Edtech space

As AI continues to grow, its ethical considerations must be evaluated to ensure that it provides an equitable, inclusive, and successful learning environment

As the world of education continues to evolve, technology is playing an increasingly important role in the transformation of traditional teaching methods. A particularly significant development in this field is the incorporation of Artificial Intelligence in Educational Technology. This integration can fundamentally alter how we learn, instruct and interact with educational material. AI has made a huge impact on a lot of different industries, and it's no different in the education industry. AI is becoming more and more popular and it can be used in a variety of ways to get better and more diverse results. It can be used in schools, for professional learning and assessment, for lifelong learning or enterprise work-



DINESH KUMAR POOBALAN

force learning and assessment. Let's discuss the various ways in which advanced AI is reshaping the EdTech space and its implications for the future of education; Personalised Learning, AI can tailor educational content to meet individual student needs, adapting to different learning styles, speeds and preferences. The increasing acceptance of personalized learning by students is revolutionizing the way learning and assessment are conducted, as it is based on the student's capacity and career objectives, which enable them to achieve their professional and personal goals. AI-driven software can analyse student performance and the content available to them and suggest tailored study plans that are based on their

strengths and weaknesses, as well as integrate data on market skill demand to provide clearer options and advice for students when they finish their studies. Predictive Analytics for Early Intervention: By analysing large volumes of information, AI can detect trends and anticipate potential difficulties that students may encounter. Through predictive analytics, educators can be alerted early on and provide additional support to those students who are at risk of lagging. By taking a proactive approach, educators can provide more personalised and targeted intervention, resulting in improved student performance and a decrease in dropout rates. Automated Grading: Another important aspect to discuss

here is Automated Grading. Educators may find the process of grading and assessing to be laborious and time-consuming. Artificial Intelligence (AI) algorithms facilitate the automation of these activities, enabling rapid and precise assessment of assignments, tests and assessments. Not only does this save educators time, but it also provides students with prompt feedback, encouraging a continuous learning process. Adaptive Learning Platforms: One of the most significant applications of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of Education Technology (EdTech) is the creation of adaptive Learning Platforms (ALPs). AI-powered adaptive learning platforms leverage the power of machine learning

to analyse student performance data and create educational content that is tailored to the individual needs and preferences of the learner. Adaptive learning platforms are distinct from traditional adaptive learning approaches in that they offer an individualised learning experience, allowing each student to progress at their speed. Refined Workflows: As the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the sector increases, tools will facilitate the automation of day-to-day operations and the reduction of mistakes. Schools will benefit from the elimination of redundant study materials and the assignment of appropriate learning models. Barriers and challenges associated: The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into

Educational Technology (EdTech) offers a range of advantages; however, it is important to consider ethical considerations and difficulties. Privacy, algorithmic biases and digital divide are some of the issues that need to be addressed. It is essential to strike a balance between the utilization of advanced AI to improve educational outcomes and providing equitable access to all students to develop EdTech solutions responsibly. Another key aspect is Enhanced Engagement, which explains that Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) applications that are powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI), can provide students with an immersive learning experience. For example, medical students

may be able to perform virtual surgeries; history students may have the opportunity to explore ancient civilizations. AI can also assist in developing and updating educational content based on current trends and student performance data. Advanced technological features like 'Chatbot' generate a complete lesson plan and curriculum for teachers by just asking for it. AI is revolutionizing the way students learn, providing them with personalized experiences, immersive simulations and predictive analytics. The potential of AI in EdTech is boundless, and its potential to transform education is undeniable.

(The writer is the CEO & CTO, of Creatify, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

Karnataka Govt unveils 35 innovative products

The Karnataka government on Thursday unveiled 35 "ground-breaking" products and solutions developed by startups at the 26th edition of the ongoing Bengaluru Tech Summit 2023 here. Out of the 35 startups, nine are women-led, underlining the inclusive and diverse nature of Karnataka's startup ecosystem, a press release from the state government's Department of Electronics, Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology said. Several of the startups received financial support through the state's seed funding programme, which indicates the government's commitment to nurturing entrepreneurial talent and fostering a culture of innovation, it added. A majority of the startups have flourished within Government of Karnataka-supported incubators, such as K-tech Innovation Hubs, Centres of Excellence (CoEs), and Technology Business Incubators (TBIs) and anchored by institutions like C-CAMP, NASSCOM, Jain Incubation Centre.



PVR Inox to open 150 screens next fiscal

The country's largest multiplex operator PVR Inox will open 150 screens in the next fiscal with an investment of about Rs 500 crore, a top company official has said. The company, which opened a six-screen luxury cinema at Maison Inox here on Thursday, already runs 118 screens across 23 properties in the megapolis. Overall, including its property in Colombo, it operates 1,711 screens at 359 properties across 114 cities. We are planning to add 150 more screens at an investment of around Rs 500 crore next fiscal. Sanjeev Kumar Bijli, an Executive Director at PVR Inox, told PTI here. On the Maison Inox, he said normally a screen required an investment of Rs 5 crore but given that it's a luxury collection and comes with the first attached bar (Gastby Bar), the per screen cost is about Rs 7 crore. On the company's overseas expansion plans, he said they will have more screens in Sri Lanka only and not anywhere else.



Tanishq opens two stores in Texas, expands global biz

Tanishq, an Indian jewellery brand, has opened its store here and in Frisco as part of its global business expansion strategy and to cater to the growing needs of the Indian diaspora in the US. The US state of Texas, with the second largest Indian Diaspora, is now home to two of Tanishq's stores, one in Houston and the other in Frisco, near Dallas. At the inaugural event, the Consul General of India in Houston, DC Manjunath was the Chief Guest. He was joined by CK Venkataraman, Managing Director, Titan Company Limited, Kuruvilla Markose, CEO of Titan International business and Michael McCabe, Resident Director, North America, Tata Sons. The brand is owned by The Tata Group, a Mumbai-based multinational conglomerate. "Delighted to see that Tanishq, Tata company's jewellery arm opened its 2 new stores in Texas; Houston & Frisco, thus enhancing India-US connection", Consul General Manjunath said.



India, Africa key players in peak global crude oil demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The global demand for crude oil is expected to see its peak in 2030 at 112 million barrels a day mark with India and Africa to be major contributors, according to S&P Global Commodity Insights.

The current global demand of crude oil is at 103 million barrels per day, Pulkit Agarwal, head of India Content at S&P Global Commodity Insights, said on Thursday.

The global demand for crude oil will peak to stay in the range of 112 million barrels a day in 2030 from the present level of 103 million barrels a day, he told PTI at S&P Global Commodity Insights: Media Roundtable Outlook 2024.

India and Africa will be the major contributors to the 8.73 per cent increase in demand by 2030 as industrial activities will pick up in the region, Agarwal said.

There will be increased use of clean cooking, automobiles and setting up of refineries by various economies, he said.



However, the demand for crude oil in India will see its peak in 2040 to reach 7.2 million barrels a day from 5.2 million barrels a day at present, he said. On the price outlook he said, "In our base case, oil prices will likely hover above USD 80/barrel and can inch closer to USD 90/barrel by Q3 2024."

Gauri Jauhar, Executive Director, Energy Transitions & CleanTech Consulting, S&P Global Commodity Insights, said as India grows, it will also transition at a sustainable pace based on an underlying economic transition of mobility, urbanization and a desire for reliability. An energy transition will inevitably be a technology transition to reduce emissions, and the cleaner technology spectrum offers a range of near-term, medium-term and long-term solutions. "These cleaner technologies will need financing and policy support, globally and in India, to reach giga scale, she said.

Stuti Chawla, Associate Director, India/Middle East Chemicals Pricing, S&P Global Commodity Insights, said

India is expected to remain a bright spot in Asia for petrochemical demand in 2024, given its strong economic growth and resilient industrial production. Greater demand, however, is unlikely to bring much relief to domestic producers struggling with pressure on margins, as prices of key bulk chemicals are expected to remain suppressed due to ample supplies and new capacities coming on stream.

The market for chemical commodity products in India is expected to grow at around 7 per cent in 2023 and 8 per cent in 2024. The robust demand growth is being driven by a sharp pickup in India's economic activity after it emerged from COVID-19 lockdowns.

Elvis John of S&P Global Commodity Insights said India imposed a slew of restrictions on grains trade in 2023 amid rising domestic prices, fear of El Nino affecting crop production, and ahead of state elections and general elections in 2024.

Two-wheeler volumes expected to grow

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Two-wheeler retail sales are expected to increase by just 4-7 per cent in volume terms in the domestic market this fiscal year despite logging strong growth in the festive period, according to a report.

The festive season this year saw robust growth in two-wheeler retail sales aided by the upcoming wedding season and some recovery in rural demand, which supported sales growth in the entry-level (110 cc) segment, the report by rating firm Icrta stated.

The dealer inventory remained at near normal levels, with the OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) wary of a build-up in inventory at the dealerships, it added. "The industry is expected to record a moderate growth in volumes in FY 2024 (4-7 per cent) even as export volumes remain impacted by weak demand," Icrta said. Elaborating on the passenger vehicles, Icrta stated that the segment is expected to record a moderate growth in volumes in FY2024 (6-9 per cent) and reach an all-time high during the period.

India should not take new commitments at COP28 climate talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India should not take new commitments at the ongoing United Nations COP28 climate talks in Dubai and continue its green transition without additional assurances, think tank GTRI suggested on Thursday.

The climate conference is being held at the Dubai Expo City from November 30 to December 12.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that India has already made significant commitments at COP27 (Conference of Parties) and the Paris Agreement, aligning with its Long-term Low Emissions and Development Strategy. India's commitment to generating half of its electricity from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 and achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 is noteworthy.

"At COP28 India need not take new commitments at COP28. Instead, it may con-



tinue its green transition without additional commitments," GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said. However, he added that the country's high methane emissions, especially from the agriculture sector, pose a challenge.

"Any improvement will require changing crop pattern which may take decades of efforts. Balancing emission reduction with the livelihood impact on the agriculture sector is crucial," Srivastava said.

The think-tank also suggested that as 70 per cent of electricity is generated from coal power here and many large industries rely on captive and not grid power.

Stock markets eke out gains in highly volatile trade

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty settled with marginal gains on Thursday in a highly volatile trade amid the scheduled monthly derivatives expiry and muted trend in the US markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex closed 86.53 points or 0.13 per cent higher at 66,988.44, registering its third day of gains. During the day, it hit a high of 67,069.89 and a low of 66,610.35.

Despite heavy volatility in equities during the day, the combined market valuation of all listed companies on the leading stock exchange BSE continued to remain above the USD 4-trillion mark for the second day in a row. The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday. The broader Nifty50 of the National Stock Exchange edged up 36.55 points or 0.18 per cent to close at 20,133.15.

Indian economy grew 7.6% in Sep quarter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy grew 7.6 per cent in the September quarter as against 6.2 per cent in the year-ago period, according to official data released on Thursday.

India remains the fastest-growing major economy, as China's GDP growth in the July-September quarter this year was 4.9 per cent.

As per the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the GVA (Gross Value Added) of the agriculture sector recorded a 1.2 per cent growth, down from 2.5 per cent in the July-September quarter of 2022-23.

The GVA growth of the manufacturing sector accelerated to 13.9 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal against a decline of 3.8 per cent a year ago.

The growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the April-September period in 2023-24 stood at 7.7 per cent compared to 9.5 per cent in the first half of the last financial year.

The GDP growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal remained unchanged at 7.8 per cent.

DUBAI INTERNATIONAL FOOTWEAR AND LEATHER EXHIBITION

More than 60 Indian firms to showcase leather products

PNS ■ DUBAI

More than 60 top Indian footwear and leather goods manufacturers will participate in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's largest exhibition of such products here from December 11-13.

Dubai International Footwear and Leather Exhibition (DIFLEX 2023) is being held in the backdrop of the demand upswing for footwear and leather goods in the Middle East and N Africa (MENA) estimated to be growing at a compound



annual growth rate of over 7 per cent and poised to touch upwards of USD 20 billion by next year.

The Indian pavilion participation is under the auspices of the Council for Leather Exports (CLE), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of

India, and is aimed at boosting exports which stood at US\$ 5.26 billion in 2022-23, as per CLE data.

Footwear exports, both leather and non-leather exports account for over 50 per cent of the trade.

India is the second-largest exporter of leather garments, third-largest exporter of saddlery and harnesses and 4th largest exporter of leather goods in the world. Verifair, organisers of DIFLEX 2023 which will be hosted at Dubai Festival Arena, Dubai Festival.

Infosys inks pact with Shell for sustainable data centres

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IT major Infosys on Thursday said it has partnered with energy company Shell to accelerate the adoption of immersion cooling services for data centres.

Infosys and Shell will bring together their capabilities in digital and energy, respectively, along with an ecosystem of partners to create an integrated offering for green data centres, the IT firm said in a statement.

"In our joint efforts with Shell, we aim to create a more sustainable future. This collaboration will leverage AI-based digital solutions that will create environmentally responsible data centres that can manage high computing loads with optimised hardware.

Tata Tech makes bumper stock market debut

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Tata Technologies, an arm of Tata Motors, made a dream stock market debut on Thursday and ended with a huge premium of nearly 163 per cent, against the issue price of Rs 500.

The stock of the company, which provides engineering and product development digital services, was listed at Rs 1,199.95, registering a sharp jump of 139.99 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. During the day, it zoomed 180 per cent to Rs 1,400. Shares of the company ended at Rs 1,314.25 apiece, rallying 162.85 per cent.

On the NSE, it began the trade at Rs 1,200, climbing 140



per cent. The stock jumped to Rs 1,400 during the day. Shares of the firm ended at Rs 1,313 per piece, a jump of 162.6 per cent. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 53,314.99 crore. The Rs 3,042.5 crore initial public offer of Tata Technologies was subscribed 69.43 times on the final day of subscription on Friday, driven by remarkable participation from institu-

tional buyers. This was the first company from the Tata Group to float an Initial Public Offer (IPO) in nearly two decades. Tata Consultancy Services was the last IPO from the group in 2004. The IPO of Tata Technologies was fully subscribed within minutes of opening for bidding on Wednesday last week.

"As expected, a bumper listing above our expectation respecting the legacy of the Tata brand. After witnessing a remarkable subscription demand Tata Technologies garnered significant attention in the stock market," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research) at Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

India's GDP grows 7.6%; fastest-growing economy

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's economy grew 7.6 per cent in the September quarter of this fiscal and remained the fastest-growing large economy, mainly due to better performance by manufacturing, mining and services sectors, the government data showed on Thursday.

The gross domestic product (GDP) expanded by 6.2 per cent in the July-September quarter of 2022-23. India remained the fastest-growing

major economy, as China posted a 4.9 per cent growth in July-September 2023. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, the agriculture sector GVA (Gross Value Added) growth decelerated to 1.2 per cent in the September 2023 quarter from 2.5 per cent a year ago.

The expansion in financial, real estate and professional services' GVA was 6 per cent, down from 7.1 per cent in the year-ago quarter. While the GVA in the manufac-

turing sector showed a growth of 13.9 per cent in the second quarter of the current fiscal compared to a contraction of 3.8 per cent in the year-ago period.

As per the data, the output (GVA) in the 'mining and quarrying' accelerated to 10 per cent in the second quarter against a contraction of 0.1 per cent a year ago.

Electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services' grew by 10.1 per cent from 6.1 per cent.

Mkt valuation of BSE-listed firms over \$4 trn

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the leading stock exchange BSE remained above the US\$ 4 trillion-mark for the second straight day on Thursday amid an overall optimistic trend in equities.

Rallying for the third consecutive day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 86.53 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 66,988.44 points despite volatile trends during the day.



In intra-day, it touched a high of 67,069.89 points and a low of 66,610.35 points.

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE reached the US\$ 4 tril-

lion-milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday.

At the end of trade on Thursday, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies hit an all-time peak of Rs 3,35,60,155.58 crore, translating into US\$ 4 trillion, at the exchange rate of 83.30.

In three days of the market rally, investors' wealth has jumped by Rs 6.88 lakh crore.

It took just two-and-a-half years for the exchange to hit the US\$ 4 trillion landmark after the market capitalisation

(m-cap) of all listed companies on the BSE touched the US\$ 3 trillion-mark on May 24, 2021. The total valuation of the exchange-listed companies went past the USD 1 trillion level on May 28, 2007.

The journey from US\$ 1 trillion to US\$ 1.5 trillion was covered in 2,566 days or just over seven years on June 6, 2014. The m-cap of listed companies on the BSE reached US\$ 2 trillion on July 10, 2017 -- taking 1,130 days from the US\$ 1.5 trillion level.

Petrol, diesel price revision after oil price stabilises

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned fuel marketing companies are likely to revert to daily revision in prices of petrol and diesel only when international oil prices stabilise below USD 80 per barrel on a sustained basis, industry officials said.

Three state-owned fuel retailers -- Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) -- which control roughly 90 per cent of the market, have kept petrol and diesel prices on freeze for a record 20th month in a row. This is despite the raw material (crude oil) cost surging last

year, leading to heavy losses in the first half of 2022-23 fiscal year before easing rates propelled them to profitability.

"There is considerable volatility in the international oil market and prices fluctuate wildly," an official said. "Oil companies can cut prices by Re 1 per litre and everyone will applaud. But when international oil prices go up, will they be allowed to raise rates remains in doubt."

India is the world's third largest oil consuming and importing nation. It imports more than 85 per cent of its oil needs and hence domestic pricing is linked to international rates. The basket of crude oil that India buys has averaged USD



83.42 per barrel in November, down from USD 90.08 of October and USD 93.54 of September.

While at current prices, oil companies are making some money on petrol, diesel -- the

most consumed fuel accounting for almost 40 per cent of all petroleum products consumed in the country -- but it has been in a "touch-and-go" scenario in recent weeks, another official said. "On some days there is

profit on diesel but on other days there is loss. There is no consistent trend."

Three retailers had been recouping losses they incurred for holding rates when crude oil prices shot through the roof last year. In May, international oil prices and retail pump rates had come at par, but the subsequent surge widened the gulf between cost and price realised.

"For oil companies to revert to daily market based price revision, oil prices will have to come below USD 80 on a sustained basis," an official said.

Petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze since April 6 last year. Petrol costs Rs 96.72 a litre in the national capital and diesel comes for Rs 89.62

per litre. The three firms made bumper profits in April-September -- first half of the current fiscal -- but considering the low earnings of last year, they are yet to recoup all losses, officials said.

Consider this, IOCL posted a net profit of Rs 26,717.76 crore this year as compared with a full year profit of Rs 8,241.82 crore in 2022-23 (April 2022 to March 2023).

In 2021-22 (considered a normal year), the company had posted a profit of Rs 21,762 crore for the full year. Considering that to be a normalised earnings, for two years (2022-23 and 2023-24), it should make about Rs 42,000 crore.

Key infra industries' growth up at 12.1% ; 5 sectors expand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The output of eight key infrastructure sectors jumped by 12.1 per cent in October 2023 against 0.7 per cent expansion in the year-ago period on account of a sharp uptick in production of coal, steel, cement and electricity, according to the official data released on Thursday.

These numbers assume significance as the eight core sectors -- coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity -- contribute 40.27 per cent to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

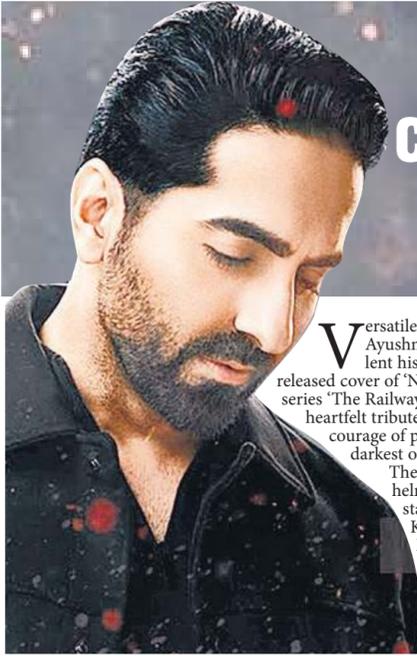
Growth was primarily driven by a low base effect and double-digit growth in five

sectors -- coal, steel, cement and electricity.

Infrastructure sectors grew by 9.2 per cent in September. The output growth of eight sectors was at 8.6 per cent in April-October 2023-24 against 8.4 per cent in the year-ago period.

Coal output rose by 18.4 per cent while steel production jumped 11 per cent during the month under review as against 3.8 per cent and 5.8 per cent in October 2022 respectively.

Cement production grew by 17.1 per cent against a 4.2 per cent contraction in the year-ago period. Electricity generation rose by 20.3 per cent in October 2023 against 1.2 per cent in the same month last year.



Ayushmann Khurrana's Nindiya captures undying human spirit in THE RAILWAY MAN

Versatile actor and singer Ayushmann Khurrana has lent his voice to the recently released cover of 'Nindiya' from the series 'The Railway Men', and said it is a heartfelt tribute to the bravery and courage of people to face the darkest of hours.

The four-part mini-series helmed by Shiv Rawail, stars R. Madhavan, Kay Kay Menon, Babil, and Divyendu in the lead roles. It is a thrilling tale of heroism, hope and

humanity.

In a heartfelt tribute to the people who sacrificed their lives to protect others on the fateful night of the Bhopal gas tragedy in 1984, National Award winner Ayushmann has now lent his voice for the reprise version of 'Nindiya'.

Talking about the same, Ayushmann said: "When I was watching the series, apart from the fact that it is brilliantly made, what stayed with me is how it instilled hope in me."

"While we all are aware of the tragedy and its aftermath, the indomitable human spirit moved me. Nindiya, in the series, encapsulated the emotions through two young children at the railway platform.

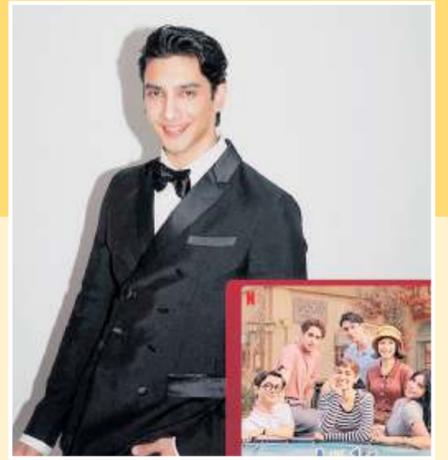
"This is my heartfelt tribute to the bravery,

courage and the ability of people to face the darkest of hours and rebuild themselves from scratch. This show and this track 'Nindiya' hold a special place in my heart," he added.

Set against the backdrop of the world's worst industrial disaster, the Bhopal gas tragedy, 'The Railway Men' follows a group of railway employees whose unshakable tenacity compels them to help save countless lives during the city's darkest hours.

'Nindiya' (Reprise) is an ode to the undying human spirit and the determination to overcome any difficult situation.

The show is a first from the partnership between Netflix and YRF Entertainment. It is streaming on Netflix.



With The Archies, Vedang Raina not only makes his acting, but also singing debut

The entire gang of The Archies comprises some very charming newcomers who foray into Bollywood with the Zoya Akhtar film. The Archies star Suhana Khan, Vedang Raina, Khushi Kapoor, Agastya Nanda, Dot, Yuvraj Menda, and Mihir Ahuja. From these young guns, Vedang seems to have a fan base of his own. Yes, he left many charmed in the trailer of his debut film The Archies, but do you know there is more to this?

The Archies does not just mark Vedang's debut as an actor but as a singer too. The

actor who plays Reggie Mantle in the film has lent his voice to the song Everyone Is Politics. The song is a groovy, peppy number that literally gets you hooked. Everything Is Politics has gotten music from Shankar, Ehsaan, Loy, and is quite a mood lifter.

Even before his debut, Vedang gained the new chocolate boy image in Bollywood. He has lent many smitten with his charm in The Archies and is reportedly doing another big project with Alia Bhatt next.

All ready to prove his mettle as an actor, Vedang has set heartbeats racing already.

Ethan Hawke to return for 'The Black Phone 2'

Hollywood star Ethan Hawke is set to return for the sequel to his supernatural horror film The Black Phone.

Filmmaker Scott Derrickson is also returning for the sequel to the 2021 movie, along with cast members Mason Thames, Madeleine McGraw, Jeremy Davies and Miguel Mora, reported Deadline.

The Black Phone 2 is backed by Blumhouse, Crooked Highway Production and Universal. The movie has been slated for release in theatres on June 27, 2025.

The first film was about a 13-

year-old boy, who is abducted by a child killer (Hawke) in a suburban neighbourhood and locked in a soundproof basement, begins to receive calls on a disconnected phone from the killer's previous victims.

Derrickson and his frequent collaborator C Robert Cargill had adapted the screenplay from a short story by author Joe Hill, who had served as an executive producer. The Black Phone had earned over USD 161 million worldwide, becoming a sleeper hit in a rebounding summer from COVID-19 pandemic.

Randeep Hooda, Lin Laishram drop wedding clicks; say 'We are one'



Bollywood actor Randeep Hooda and Lin Laishram have shared their official wedding pictures, leaving the fans in awe of their traditional nuptial ceremony.

The lovebirds had tied the nuptial knot in Imphal on Wednesday. They got married in a traditional Meitei ceremony in the presence of family members and a few friends.

The couple took their wedding vows in the Shannapung resort.

Randeep took to social media and shared the clicks from his dreamy wedding with Lin.

The 'Sarbjit' actor wore a plain white kurta, dhoti, and a matching shawl wrapped around himself. He also wore a white and golden Randeep Hooda on his head. On the other hand, Lin looked like a princess in a traditional Manipuri Potloi dress, which is a cylindrical skirt made up of thick fabric and bamboo. It had red satin cloth adorned on it with heavy embellished work on it. She opted for a black and golden embellished blouse, and completed the wedding look with traditional gold jewellery.

Randeep captioned the photos as: "From today, we are One #justmarried," followed by a red heart and infinite emoji.

Ahead of the wedding, Randeep had expressed his excitement on getting married in Laishram's Meitei traditions.

Randeep and Lin have been in a relationship for a long time. Lin has been a part of films such as 'Mary Kom', 'Rangoon' and recently in 'Jaane Jaan'.

The reception will take place at a later date in Mumbai.

Sebastian Stan to play young Donald Trump in Ali Abbasi's 'The Apprentice'

Sebastian Stan, the star of Pam & Tommy and multiple Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) films, is set to play a younger version of former US president Donald Trump in upcoming movie The Apprentice from Iranian filmmaker Ali Abbasi.

According to Deadline, Succession alum Jeremy Strong and Oscar nominee Maria Bakalova will also appear in the movie, touted as an "exploration of power and ambition set in a world of corruption and deceit".

The Apprentice will examine Trump's



efforts to build his real estate business in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, also digging into his relationship with infamous attorney Roy Cohn. It's a mentor-pupil story that charts the origins of a major American dynasty, as per the official logline.

Strong, also known for his film roles in The Trial of the Chicago 7, Molly's Game and The Big Short, will portray Cohn, a notorious lawyer and fixer who Trump considered a mentor early in his career. Bakalova, who received an Academy Award nomination for Borat

Subsequent Moviefilm, will appear as the late Ivana Trump, a business woman who partnered with then-husband Donald Trump on some of his most prominent real estate projects.

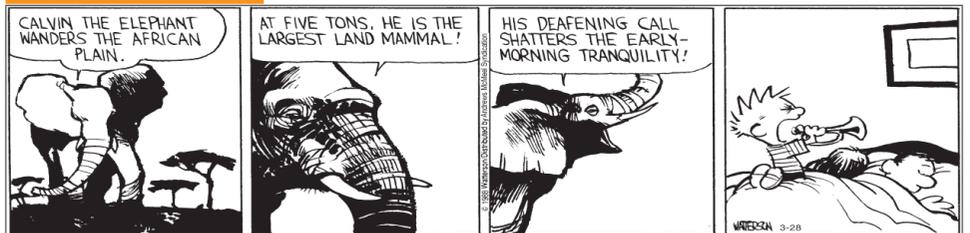
The two divorced in 1992, and Ivana Trump died last year. Gabriel Sherman, whose bestseller The Loudest Voice in the Room inspired Showtime's miniseries The Loudest Voice, starring Russell Crowe as Fox News founder Roger Ailes, will serve as the writer on the project. The Apprentice will be produced by Daniel Beckerman of Scythia Films, Jacob Jerek of Profile Pictures and Ruth Treacy of Taylored Films.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



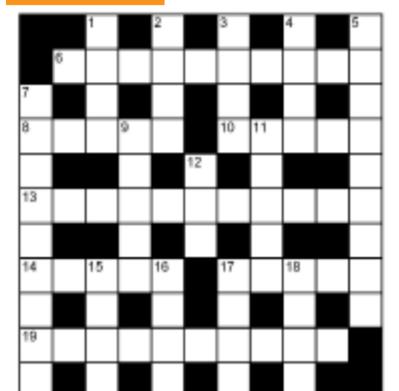
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 6 Good-looking
- 8 Feeling cheerful
- 10 One third of twenty-four
- 13 This many-legged creature is the young form of a butterfly
- 14 Queues
- 17 An animal to ride
- 19 People on journeys
- 7 Yummy brown stuff
- 9 A part of something
- 11 A house made of snow
- 12 A gorilla is one
- 15 Tidy and well arranged
- 16 Observes
- 17 Fifty percent
- 18 Very uncommon

DOWN

- 1 Come to a halt
- 2 Mix black and white to make this
- 3 A throbbing pain
- 4 Make music with the voice
- 5 Periods of a hundred years



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

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.

RATHIKA ROSE: I am a solo traveler; I ENJOY MY OWN COMPANY

TEJAL SINHA

Irrespective of the language that India's most controversial show, *Bigg Boss*, telecasts in, every episode that the show brings has its own twists and turns. And talking of the *Telugu Bigg Boss*, recently, with the double eviction, actress Rathika Rose had to yet again leave the house.

And so now, after her stint in *Bigg Boss*, any plans to travel? Why not? After all the hustle-bustle in the show, wouldn't traveling be the best rejuvenation one would need? Well, the actress is going to travel to Goa today for the Santosham Film Awards 2023, and she's going to blow our minds with her performance. How???? She reveals to us exclusively that she's going to perform a special dance during the ceremony.

And this is not just it? After her eviction, the actress made sure to take her passport and fly all the way to Bangkok. Just like how it has been for many, traveling to different countries, different states, and even different cities is the best way to relax your body, rejuvenate your body and mind, and just live in the moment. Similar has been true for

her as well. Taking some time from her dance rehearsals, the *Bigg Boss Telugu* fame shares, "Travelling helps in making me get stress-free mentally and physically. I prefer traveling alone—a solo traveler I am. In fact, I mostly prefer night-time journeys. Every time I feel stressed and need some fresh air, I just pack my bags and go for a trip."

The different culture that she got to experience there in Bangkok was something worth mesmerizing, and she says, "I really enjoyed their culture there because, one, the food there is very tasty (we giggle). And something that I really adored about the people there was that they chose their own lifestyle and did not bother about what's going on with the rest. The individuality that you get to see in people is so heartwarming there."

In fact, she also recalls how she used to bargain with the local vendors there and how calmly they'd refuse to reduce the price. Hahahaha! But again, that was something she really cherished during her trip. And so, more than experiencing a staycation there, being a solo traveler, she preferred exploring the surroundings there and enjoying the beauty. She had stayed in Pattaya for

three days, the reason being that "Bangkok is like a business hub with commercial buildings. In Pattaya, I got to explore, meet, and interact with the locals there, enjoying the beach, and of course, the hotels there gave you a glimpse at the local culture. I used to have my breakfast and used to go for a walk every day and get back to sleep. The night walks I got to do were just amazing. I majorly focused on exploring rather than staying in the hotels."

She's been one of those who does not prefer going to the same place more than once or twice. Every time she is under intense pressure, she looks to explore a new place and a new city.

The actress, who will next be ticking off Leh Ladakh from her bucket list, signs of this fun chit-chat on a brighter note, saying, "People might prefer traveling with their friends and families. But I'm someone who enjoys traveling solo and enjoying my own company, which gives you some mental peace. As a woman, one should not fear if they've got the zeal to travel. There are many countries and places that receive a traveler or a foreigner as their own guest, which is very overwhelming. And so, people need to explore, and once you explore, you'll get to know a lot of things. If you sit in just a corner, you'll miss out on many things. Just get up, pack your bags, and explore."

Rathika Rose, who recently was evicted from *Bigg Boss Telugu 7*, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing her travel plans post-show, her recent trip, and more for our weekly segment of *Travel Tales*.



ANKUSH BAHUGUNA:

I know many men who love doing smoky eyes on an everyday basis

SHIKHA DUGGAL

We can all see how Ankush Bahuguna is now dominating the field of beauty. In fact, where skincare and beauty tips for men had generally been labeled as feminine, this influencer made it a talking point for all the right reasons.

Now that he has made an effort, he is the first male beauty influencer who has his own show too! *Cherry on the cake?* Well, *Wing It With Ankush* is coming up with season two. He's defying the preconceived gender biases related to the beauty ecosystem. In an exclusive interaction with us, sharing about how the notion of beauty, in general, isn't limited to just the fairer gender but has also extended itself to all men out there, he explained, "Even as an influencer, I wouldn't confine myself. My earlier introduction to the world was, Hey, I am a comedy content creator. That changed to an actor! Then I started making make-up videos. I am open to better work opportunities because I can multitask. I can't see people boxing me because it took me a lot of years and confidence to be like this. I was always in a dilemma about whether people were going to accept me or not. I am over it, finally!"

Ankush illuminates further, paving the way for men to pay attention not only to their skincare and hair regimens, but also to their makeup. "I belong to a profession where even men need make-up to look good. We are entertainers. From the beginning, I normalized it. So when I went on to start a make-up feed, I didn't realize the impact would be so overwhelming. It's just make-up; there is no gender in it now. I want my reels to reach male audiences prominently so that we can dismantle these barriers. I have witnessed something very interesting: men do not pick up a product until and unless a "for men" tag is written on it. They are always looking for validation. This is just an illusion. I know of many men who love doing smoky eyes on an everyday basis, including me. On the other hand, there are women who don't like make-up at all!"

We were leading some great conversations on the importance of gender fluidity in beauty; hence, he continues, "Beauty trends are always fun to try. Let's be real: these trends get your eyeballs! Even if it's outrageous, if you want to be a part of that conversation, you will have to step into it.



Actor, writer, and renowned content creator Ankush Bahuguna, who can make all men crave good skincare, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about the transition from a content creator to an actor, skincare for men, and more.

see some of the other creators who immediately blend everything and apply it to their faces. In the make-up industry, experts are way too fixated on whether we are professionally trained or not. They forgot how some of the biggest make-up artists in the world are self-taught! It's a misconception that we can't learn it by ourselves; you don't have to go to a make-up studio to learn," adds Ankush.

Known for his stunning makeup looks, he spills his favorites: "Lakme is my favorite—I have done a whole season with them. I can't imagine to date that I have an IP of my own, and that too for makeup. Four years ago, I wasn't thinking of any beauty pages, and now there is a show with season two. To collaborate with a brand as big as Lakme is again a wild dream coming true. My mother has been the most supportive. I don't have any sob stories to tell! It takes my parents two and a half years to understand what I'm trying to accomplish. They wanted me to pursue architecture; they were concerned about their investment (he laughed out loud). Now that they have realized the potential of a creative field, earlier, they couldn't understand why I was walking on the ramp. When I was on the cover of *Forbes Magazine*, they realised the impact of what I do, or a *Times of India* feature on me. It was a big deal for them; they were flexing in the whole neighborhood. I feel embarrassed, but they are so cute."

On a final note, sharing his camaraderie with his closest friend, who is now a popular actress, Shibani Bedi, he shared, "We have seen each other grow and even break apart. There were times when we weren't picking up, but we were rock solid. It's not that our videos are going viral now; they were equally loved when we weren't actors in this industry. When we collaborate with each other, we are never selfish toward each other. Now that she's doing movies, I just want to see her succeed madly."

You cannot be so blasé about it. Beauty hacks rely on shock values! I don't find these trends outrageous; I see opportunities. I don't want my audiences to feel inferior after watching my content, but they turn to me for guidance on skincare and beauty tips for men. I always show filter-

free make-up to let them know it will take up. A slight crease in your make-up is not bad make-up; it's something normal to happen."

He's willing to change the mindset, and that's what is resonating with us. "I am no trendsetter. I genuinely enjoy doing this. I

Sustainable living, a shared responsibility

Sustainability is no longer just a buzz word – it's social responsibility. We urgently need to safeguard our planet, lessen our impact on it and save our natural resources. This is now a concern shared around the world. Sustainability is not the responsibility of a select few but a collective duty that extends to every stakeholder in society, from individuals to corporations and educational institutions.

At its core, sustainability begins with individuals. All of us play a crucial role in adopting eco-friendly practices and reducing our environmental footprint. Small lifestyle decisions can have a significant effect. Something as basic as reducing water and energy consumption at home, recycling and minimizing single-use plastics can contribute significantly to global sustainability efforts. Using public transportation, cycling or carpooling instead of relying solely on personal vehicles also helps reduce emissions and traffic congestion.

A noteworthy example is the growing trend of "zero-waste" lifestyles. Individuals are embracing the challenge of producing little to no waste by reusing, recycling and reducing. By consciously making sustainable choices, individuals can pave the way for a greener future.

Businesses and corporations are integral stakeholders in the pursuit of sustainability. In fact, ESG is an important facet of many businesses today. Many forward-thinking companies are incorporating eco-friendly practices into their operations.

For instance, major corporations are making ambitious commitments to carbon neutrality. They are investing in renewable energy projects and setting strict emission reduction targets. These steps are not just good for the environment but also for their bottom lines. Sustainability efforts can lead to cost savings, greater customer loyalty and a positive public image.

One sector that holds significant influence is educational institutions. Schools, colleges, and universities are

not just centres of learning but also breeding grounds for future leaders and responsible global citizens. Many educational institutions around the world are incorporating sustainability into their curricula and are teaching students about environmental stewardship, social responsibility and the importance of sustainable practices. These institutions are promoting a culture of sustainability by passing on the values to the younger generation to build responsible professionals and citizens of the world.

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global plan for tackling pressing environmental and social issues. They have brought together nations, organizations and individuals to work together to eliminate poverty, reduce inequality and protect the planet.

NMIMS Hyderabad is a fine example of an institution that takes its role in sustainability seriously. They have introduced electric buggies on their campus, which not only promote sustainability through zero tailpipe emissions but also empower women by employing female drivers.

The installation of a Pad Vending Machine on their campus is evidence of their commitment to women's health and the environment. The institute also undertakes tree plantation drives which contribute to sustainability by improving local air quality, mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration and reducing the need for power-consuming air conditioners. Moreover, this initiative promotes biodiversity, beautifies the campus and positively impacts mental well-being.

Clearly, collaboration is the way forward when it comes to implementing sustainable development, and it is through collective efforts that can make a difference to safeguard the planet for generations to come.

(Dr. N Mahesh Kumar is the Deputy Registrar of NMIMS Hyderabad.)

INDIA NEED YOUNG BOWLERS TO DELIVER

PTI ■ RAIPUR

India's young bowling unit, which has been under the pump, will look to better its death overs performance while utilising Glenn Maxwell's absence to its advantage in the fourth T20 International against Australia here on Friday.

India's second-string attack did not paint a good picture of itself by not defending 40-plus runs in the final two overs in the third match which the Australians won while chasing a daunting 223-run target.

"There is a possibility of a minor tweak in the Indian line-up after Prasad Krishna gave away 68 runs in four overs, including 21 in the final over.

"Deepak Chahar is back in the T20 mix and his ability to move the new ball should be considered for his inclusion in the playing XI along with death overs specialist Mukesh Kumar, who is back after one-match break.

"Both Prasad and Avesh Khan lack variety and innovation as they keep pitching the ball at the same length. Both bowl in late 130s or early 140s but consistently pitch it back of the length and the nature of Indian tracks make it a cannon fodder for batters. 'Also not being able to use variations like conventional or wide yorkers has been the undoing of these bowlers who also didn't execute slower deliveries properly.



"In the batting line up, Shreyas Iyer's comeback means only Tilak Varma looks a candidate who could be benched as five others -- Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rituraj Gaikwad, Ishan Kishan, skipper Suryakumar Yadav and finisher Rinku Singh select themselves.

"India will also look to exploit the absence of a marauding Maxwell who pulled off a heist of sorts to singlehandedly bring Australia back into the five-match series with a win in a last-ball finish in Guwahati.

"But the hosts will fancy their chances with Maxwell, and other influential players such as Steve Smith and Adam Zampa not figuring in the playing XI here, having left for home after a long stay in the country where they won their sixth World Cup title recently.

"Cricket Australia (CA) released many of its top players including Maxwell midway into the series keeping in mind their workload and fitness ahead of the T20 World Cup.

"The Suryakumar Yadav-led second-string India are smarting from a classic Maxwell innings, and the home team bowlers will be relieved that he will not walk out to bat at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Stadium.

"Instead, they will probably be bowling to players such as Tim David, Josh Philippe and big-hitter Ben McDermott, a far better proposition at the moment than challenging Maxwell, who has enhanced his reputation as one of Australia's greatest white-ball batters in the past five-weeks.

"The runs, and the manner and situation in which he has accumulated them, has catapulted Maxwell into a level not meant for others.

"India's bowlers, though, will still have to contend with Travis Head, on a high after his scintillating match-winning hundred in the World Cup final against India, and the seasoned Matthew Wade, who is leading the side in the ongoing series.

"Like in Guwahati, dew could again have a say on a December evening in this part of the world, and the captain winning the toss would opt to bat second without an iota of doubt, leaving the team batting first to deal with the wet ball in the second innings.

"The reinforcements have already joined the Australian squad and are available for the penultimate match of the series that started barely three days after their triumphant World Cup campaign, the tight scheduling leaving many former players surprised.

"India's batting has been served well by the likes of young Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ishan Kishan, Rinku Singh, Tilak Varma and the skipper himself when required.

"These players are expected to fire again but one man whose confidence will be sky high is Rituraj Gaikwad, who is coming off a blazing 123 off 57 balls.

"The likes of Jason Behrendorff, Kane Richardson and Tanveer Sangha could find the going tough one more time.

"So far, the unfriendly conditions meant the series has been a nightmare for the bowlers with five 200-plus totals in six innings, and the trend is expected to continue in the remainder of the rubber.

"Teams (from):

"India: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Rituraj Gaikwad (vice-captain), Ishan Kishan, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Washington Sundar, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Prasad Krishna, Avesh Khan, Deepak Chahar.

"Australia: Matthew Wade (capt), Jason Behrendorff, Tim David, Ben Dwarshuis, Nathan Ellis, Chris Green, Aaron Hardie, Travis Head, Ben McDermott, Josh Philippe, Tanveer Sangha, Matt Short, Kane Richardson.



Rohit will handle it with grace: Ashwin 'If Mumbai Indians make Hardik captain'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Spin stalwart Ravichandran Ashwin feels that if all-rounder Hardik Pandya is made the Mumbai Indians skipper, Rohit Sharma will "handle it with grace" as the Team India captain "does not have much ego".

"Pandya returned to Mumbai Indians recently after an all-cash deal trade-off with Gujarat Titans, the IPL side he led for two years.

"Pandya, who had started his IPL journey with Mumbai Indians in 2015 and won four titles, moved to Gujarat Titans in 2022 and led the side to title triumph the same season, besides helping it finish runners-up in IPL 2023.

"The trade-off to bring Pandya back to the MI fold raised several eyebrows, especially in terms of the franchise's captaincy, which is currently with Rohit.

"Rohit Sharma does not have much ego. He is a great human being and a sound leader. He will handle it with grace (if Pandya is made MI leader)," Ashwin said during his YouTube interaction with former cricketer S. Badrinath.

"In the history of IPL, apart from the top four to five teams, all have released players. Mumbai and CSK have never done it. I know Hardik to an

extent. I see this move as a milestone achievement," he added.

"The day I lose this motivation, I know it's over"

"Asked about his retirement plan, Ashwin, 37, said the day he loses motivation, he would call it quits.

"I am not being diplomatic, but for four to five years (since 2019), I found myself in a very dark space in life, and took help for mental health as well. In the dark space, I realised I have to be ready for any eventuality," he said.

"I have been preparing for life after cricket for five years. But I continue to work hard on my cricket; to contribute with the bat, I went to the USA and practised baseball.

"The day I lose this motivation, I feel irritated about waking up in the morning to bowl or bat, I know it is over. I will then quit immediately, say thanks to all and go on to the next chapter in life."

"Ashwin, however, clarified that he has not yet decided on his post-retirement career.

"I am searching for something to do beyond cricket. I am interested in marketing and a lot of other things. But even if nothing else, I can't stop watching cricket. I am a cricket-etragic. I will do something in cricket and something other than that," he concluded.

Shanto's century helps Bangladesh

AP ■ SYLHET (BANGLADESH)

Najmul Hossain Shanto became the first Bangladeshi cricket to hit a century on his debut as captain as the hosts tightened its grip on the first Test against New Zealand here on Thursday.

"Shanto's 104 helped Bangladesh extend its lead to 205 runs by reaching 212-3 at stumps on Day 3. Mushfiqur Rahim was batting on 43, after adding 96 runs with Shanto for the fourth wicket.

"The captain helped his team regain the upper hand on a spin-friendly track after Bangladesh lost two openers in quick succession to leave them on 26-2.

"Left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel got the better of Zakir Hasan (17) for the second time in the match, with a delivery that spun sharply to rap him in front of leg-stump.

"Mahmudul Hasan, who top-scored for Bangladesh with 86 in the first innings, was run out in unluckiest manner as a drive from Shanto touched bowler Tim Southee's palm on the followthrough to hit his stump.



"The two wickets in two overs brought the Black Caps back into the game but Shanto and Mominul Haque added 90 runs for the third wicket to give Bangladesh the edge.

"Mominul survived a leg-

before shout as New Zealand reviewed in vain but appeared to be confident against his favorite opponent, against which he has averaged a whopping 55.61. He was run out on 40 after hitting four

boundaries from 68 balls.

"Unlike his aggressive first-innings 37, Shanto stayed clam throughout the day to frustrate the New Zealand bowlers. He raised his fifth test hundred off 192 balls and his third in the

last four innings, pushing a fuller delivery of Patel past extra cover from a single.

"He then hit a boundary in the last ball of that over, his 10th in 193 balls as bad light forced stumps for the third consecutive day.

"New Zealand had resumed the day on 268-8 and was bowled out for 317, in reply Bangladesh's 310 in the first innings.

"Captain Tim Southee Southee played the key role, scoring 35 off 62 with three fours while Kyle Jamieson added 23 off 70.

"With the main bowlers failing to make any breakthrough, Shanto introduced occasional bowler Mominul who wrapped up New Zealand's innings, dealing a double blow.

"He trapped Jamieson leg-before to end a 52-run ninth-wicket partnership and, four balls later, also got the better of Southee to finish on his career-best 3-4.

"Left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam took four wickets on Wednesday, including top scorer Kane Williamson for 104, but didn't add to his haul on Day 3 and returned figures of 4-109 from 39 overs.



Uganda qualify for T20 World Cup, join Namibia

PTI ■ WINDHOEK (NAMIBIA)

Uganda qualified for next year's T20 World Cup, set to be held in the West Indies and the USA, with a nine-wicket win over Rwanda here on Thursday.

"It will be joining Namibia as the second side to enter the main tournament from the ongoing Africa Qualifier.

"In the regional final of the Africa Qualifier, Uganda ensured a top-two finish with the victory over Rwanda, their fifth in six matches.

"Batting first, Rwanda were all out for 65 in 18.5 overs. In reply, Uganda completed the formality in 8.1 overs while losing just one wicket.

"Uganda will become the fifth African nation to play in the T20 World Cup.

"On the other hand, Africa Qualifier favourite Zimbabwe failed to secure a berth. Zimbabwe are currently placed third in the regional final with six points, having won three of their five games.

"After the results of the Africa Qualifier, the slots for the 20 participating teams have been filled.

"The main tournament is set to take place between June 4-30 next year.

"The top two sides from each group make it to the Super 8 stage, followed by the semi-finals and the final.

"The qualified teams for the 2024 T20 World Cup: USA, West Indies, Australia, England, India, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Ireland, Scotland, Papua New Guinea, Canada, Nepal, Oman, Namibia and Uganda.

Delhi didn't keep promise to retain me: ABD recalls 2010 snub

PTI ■ DURBAN

One of the greatest batters of modern era, AB de Villiers has revealed that he was snubbed by erstwhile Delhi Daredevils after spending three seasons at the IPL franchise.

"Before making it big at the Royal Challengers Bangalore, the South African batting legend had three lukewarm seasons with the Delhi franchise, now known as Delhi Capitals.

"But in a team meeting, also attended by explosive Australian opener David Warner, de Villiers was told that he was going to be "retained" but it happened otherwise as the franchise released him before the 2011 auction.

"Recalling the incident in his YouTube channel, 'AB de Villiers 360', the former South African skipper said: "When I played in the 2010 season, I got called into the office and was told 'you are going to get retained, young AB de Villiers'."

"I sat alongside David Warner in that meeting. It came as a huge surprise to me a week or two later when I realised I had been released.

"So the communication wasn't great but in the day, that must be different these days but it's not a nice feeling," De Villiers added.

"The 39-year-old said it was a huge blow and he was very nervous before the auction.

"You're unsure of your career,



at that time in 2010 I think I only played five games in that IPL season so a lot of doubts crept up in my mind.

"But I did have a very good international season. I kept

playing good cricket and luckily for me the auction happened and I got picked up by RCB, and it changed my life forever, so great memories with regards to that.

"I was so nervous. Then I got the news from Twitter that I was picked by RCB and the next moment Virat (Kohli) called."

"De Villiers went on to mesmerise the Indian fans with his stroke-making and formed a dream combination with star batter Kohli at the top of the order for 11 seasons.

"De Villiers said the released players should not feel disappointed as it's not the "end of the road".

"For all the released players, it's not the end of the road, keep a close eye on the auction. But if you're not picked up, it gives an opportunity to go back to the drawing board and work even harder," he added.

'Rohit, Virat were crying in dressing room after heartbreaking loss'

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Skipper Rohit Sharma and star batter Virat Kohli were in tears in the dressing room following India's heartbreaking loss to Australia in the recent ODI World Cup final in Ahmedabad, veteran off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said.

"Australia beat India by six wickets on November 19 in the final to win a record sixth ODI World Cup title.

"After the loss, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Indian dressing room and tried to cheer up Rohit and Kohli.

"But Ashwin said the dressing room witnessed some heart-breaking scenes.

"Yes, we were feeling the pain. Rohit and Virat were in tears, (and) seeing it felt bad. Anyway, (it was) not meant to be. This team was an experienced side, (and) everyone knew what to do," he told former cricketer Subramaniam Badrinath on his YouTube channel.

"Although India failed to emerge successful in the World Cup, Kohli and Rohit lit up the event with their explosive batting. Ashwin heaped praise on Rohit, both as a batter and leader.



"If you take a look at Indian cricket, everybody will be telling you that MS Dhoni is the best captain. (But), Rohit Sharma is an outstanding person, (and) he understands every single player in the team," he said.

"He knows the likes and dislikes of each of us and has a great understanding. He puts in the effort to know each player personally," he reckoned.

"Ashwin played just a game in the entire World Cup, India's opener against Australia in Chennai, finishing with figures of one for 34.

"Asked why Rohit didn't

include him in the playing XI for the final, he backed the skipper saying it's not easy to change the winning combination.

"As far as I playing the final is concerned, the team combination and all is secondary. Firstly, it's about empathy, (and) I keep stressing it a lot.

"It's like standing in someone else's shoes and looking at things from his/her perspective. Had I been in Rohit's shoes, I would have thought 100 times about altering the (winning) combination," he said.

"It was going alright for the team, so why rest a fast

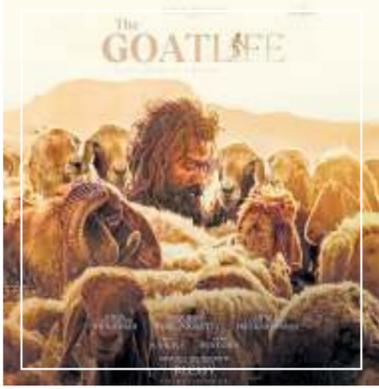
bowler for three spinners?" he wondered.

"Ashwin said he was prepared for the grand finale, but was not certain about his place in the playing XI.

"Honestly, I understood Rohit Sharma's thought process. Playing the final is big, (and) I was preparing for three days in the lead-up," Ashwin said.

"At the same time, I was also prepared to cheer for the side and run in with energy drinks if I was not given the opportunity.

I was mentally prepared for that as well," the spinner concluded.



Prithviraj Sukumaran starrer *The Goat Life* in worldwide theatres on April 10, 2024

Directed by National Award Winner Blessy, *The Goat Life* features Superstar Prithviraj Sukumaran in the lead role and is based on the novel *Goat Days* by Benyamin

The greatest ever desert film Indian cinema has seen will be releasing in theatres near you on 10th April 2024, in five languages: Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada

The wait is finally over! After a decade-long endeavour, the greatest survival adventure, based on a true story, *The Goat Life*, starring Malayalam superstar Prithviraj Sukumaran is all set to release in theatres worldwide on 10th April, 2024. Produced by Visual Romance, directed by National Award Winner Blessy, the film also features Hollywood actor Jimmy Jean-Louis, Amala Paul, Indian actor K.R.Gokul, and renowned Arab actors Talib al Balushi and RikAby in pivotal roles. *The Goat Life* boasts of music direction and sound design by Academy Award winners A.R. Rahman and Resul Pookkuttu respectively. The stunning visuals of the film have been shot by Sunil KS and the film has been edited by Sreekar Prasad. Being shot in multiple countries around the world, the film is the biggest ever venture in the Malayalam film industry, showcasing remarkable production standards, aesthetic elements, storytelling, aspirations, and acting prowess. With its ace acting and soul-stirring background score, the film is a larger than life theatrical experience.

The movie is based on the novel 'Aadujeevitham', one of the most popular best sellers ever from the Malayalam literary world, which has been translated into 12 different languages, including those that are foreign. Penned by noted writer Benyamin, it follows the true story of the life of a young man Najeeb, who, in the early 1990s, migrates from the lush green shores of Kerala in search of fortune in a land abroad.

Speaking about this Indian film, which is made for a global audience, director, Blessy said, "The greatest challenge in front of me was that *The Goat Life* is a subject with universal appeal and I would have to stay true to its narrative style. The novel is based on some real incidents and I want to captivate the viewers with each moment that something unbelievable happens to someone. The truth has never been stranger than fiction. The scale of the movie demands to be felt within the confines of a theatre and we are excited to bring this magnum opus to audiences around the world."

The Goat Life is all set to release in theatres near you on 10th April 2024, in Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada



'Calling Sahasra is a pure experiment-based film for me'

Actor Sudigali Sudheer interacts with *The Pioneer*, sharing some interesting tidbits about his film *Calling Sahasra* released today, breaking stereotypes and more.

K. RAMYA SREE

Actor-host-comedian Sudigali Sudheer's *Calling Sahasra* was released in theatres today (December 1), and one must admit that the actor has taken a huge risk with this project. In fact, Sudheer himself confessed to us that this movie is purely experimental for him.

The film, starring Dollysha, is directed by Arun Vikkiral. Sudheer's previous film *Gaalodu* was a good hit, and he shared that he has been extremely cautious about his films, so much so that he revealed having heard close to 138 scripts before signing for *Calling Sahasra*. "I want to come to the audience with good content. People expect something hilarious from me, but as an actor, I need to explore other genres too, and *Calling Sahasra* is one such experiment I did. With the release of this, I will know what the audience is 'actually' expecting from me. If the movie works out well, I will get clarity that the audience is ready to watch me do different genres, so I can choose my scripts wisely later."

To put it in simple words, Sudheer shared that he signed *Calling Sahasra* just to break the stereotype about him just

being able to do comedy and make the audience aware of what they can also see him do.

Calling Sahasra is a suspense thriller that has many layers to it, including love, the dark web, and others. "I am still confused if I performed well or not in calling *Sahasra* as I attempted something new for the first time. The movie's key point is something new to me, and I felt like giving it an attempt. I felt to myself like I was watching some new person on screen," he shared about his performance in the movie.

Shifting his career to films on the small screen, Sudheer felt the heat so much that he even consulted a doctor for extreme stress. "I feel the burden to entertain the audience," he shared.

Sudheer is popularly known for his comedy; hence, he doesn't want to sideline comedy in his films while also experimenting with other genres. He shared that his next movie, *Goat*, is complete out-and-out commercial entertainment. However, he also confessed to us: "Apart from comedy, I like the movies that Adivi Sesh Garu does, which are into crime suspense, mystery, and thrillers. I want to try those genres," added the *Three Monkeys* star.

Speaking of his camaraderie with his co-star Dollysha, he mentioned, "She is a very

good actress, and she grasps things very quickly. In fact, I took some time to get into the skin of my character, Ajay Srivatsav, in the movie. She is a very competitive actress. There is a fight sequence in the end, and one will know her hard work after watching that sequence."

Lastly, asked about what the audience can expect from the movie, and he shared, "I want the audience to go to theaters without expecting anything from Sudheer. They will see Sudheer in a new way, unlike in regular comedy or dance. This is a different and new thriller film."



Adhik Ravichandran still on board for *AK63*

Popular production house of Tollywood Mythri Movie Makers, is trying to spread its wings to Kollywood. As a part of expansion, they have confirmed Ajith Kumar's film in Adhik Ravichandran's direction. But, all of a sudden Gopichand Malineni came into the picture and since the last two days reports are rife that Adhik has been replaced by Gopichand Malineni to direct *AK63*. Ajith Kumar is currently busy with *Vidaa Muayarchi*,



directed by Magizh Thirumeni, which is expected to be released soon. Adhik, who made his

debut with the adult comedy *Trisha Illana Nayanthara*, is an ardent admirer of Ajith and has

expressed his desire to work with him several times. Now, after years of waiting, Adhik has finally got the opportunity to direct his idol in *AK 63*, which is said to be a mass entertainer with a lot of surprises. The film is being produced by the popular Tollywood production house, Mythri Movie Makers, who have delivered several remarkable hits. The film is expected to go on floors after Ajith completes his current project, *Vidaamuyarchi*, which is

being directed by Magizh Thirumeni. But, as it turns out, the rumours were false and Adhik is still the director of *AK 63*. According to sources, Ajith Kumar's PRO Suresh Chandra denied the rumours and confirmed that Adhik isn't being replaced. Adhik Ravichandran is known for his bold and unconventional films, and known for his quirky themes. It will be interesting to see what kind of film he will make with Ajith Kumar.

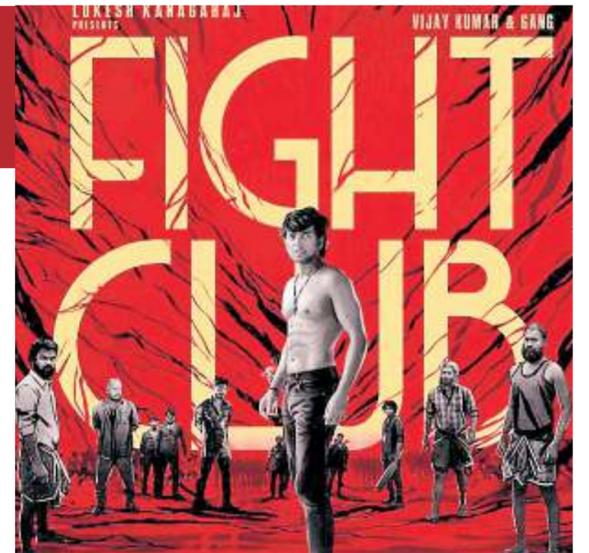
Lokesh Kanagaraj's produced *Fight Club* stars Vijayakumar in lead

Happening director Lokesh Kanagaraj, who has recently delivered blockbuster *Leo*, has launched his own production house, 'G Squad'. He announced that he will be making films with his close accomplices and friends initially, and then he will be producing movies that showcase the vision with new talent. He has already announced his first project under his banner.

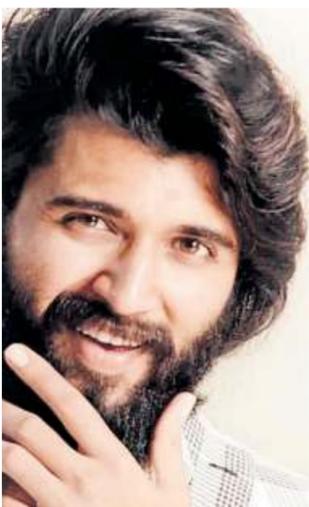
The film is titled *Fight Club* and it is directed by Uriyadi films fame Vijayakumar, who also plays the lead role. The film is said to be an action thriller with a social message. The first look poster of the film was released by Lokesh Kanagaraj on X, simply wrote, "#FightClub - The

bravest gang will meet you all soon!" The poster shows Vijayakumar in a fierce pose with a gang that has goal with vengeance. The film is written and directed by Abbas A Rahmat, who is also an assistant to Lokesh Kanagaraj. The music is composed by Govind Vasantha, who is known for his soulful melodies in films like *96* and *Jaanu*. The film is to hit the screens by December 2023.

Lokesh Kanagaraj, is currently working on his next directorial venture *Thalaivar 171*. He is currently scripting for *Thalaivar 171*, which is a standalone film without being a part of his LCU. He vouched to showcase Superstar Rajinikanth like never before.



VD-Rashmika's pic at *Hi Nanna's* event upsets fans



that it was an attempt to needlessly publicize a private moment. Many fans of the *Arjun Reddy* actor have gotten riled up. They took out their anger on the organizers of the event, the *Dasara* actor as well as host Suma Kanakala.

As per the vocal fans of Vijay, Nani and Co. should have avoided displaying the pic when the VD-Rashmika duo has not come out in the open with their alleged relationship. Others feel that such things are par for the course in the celebrity culture. "The image has been in the public domain. What is wrong with displaying it at a public event? There is nothing cheap or crass about it," a Netizen shared.



At the pre-release event of *Hi Nanna*, a picture featuring Vijay Deverakonda and Rashmika Mandanna was displayed on the big screen. The image was allegedly clicked on a Maldives vacation by the duo more than a year ago. It is known that the *Geetha Govindam* pair are rumoured dating partners.

The image was shown in a lighter vein at the *Hi Nanna* event. However, the same hasn't gone down well with the fans of the *Kushi* actor, who feel

PRABHAS-PRASHANTH'S STILL FROM

Salaar intrigues fans, trailer out today

Salaar: Part 1 - Ceasefire is set to captivate movie lovers globally, starting December 22, 2023. Directed by Prashanth Neel and starring Prabhas in the lead role, expectations for the movie are incredibly high.

In anticipation of the theatrical debut, the makers plan to release the movie's trailer tomorrow at 07:19 PM. To keep fans engaged, they dropped an on-set still featuring the pillars of *Salaar* - Prabhas and Prashanth Neel - deeply engrossed in smartphone, discussing something related to the film. The still has received an immense response from fandom. Sruthi Haasan is the female lead in this highly-anticipated pan-Indian film, with Prithviraj Sukumaran, Easwari Rao, Jagapathi Babu, Tinnu Anand, and Sriya Reddy in prominent roles. Hombale Films funded this action-packed venture, with music composed by Ravi Basrur.

