

Monday Mirchi

SECTION OF OFFICIALS SUPER EXCITED
Bureaucrats are supposed to be apolitical; for, only then they can do their duty without fear or favour, period. But the ground reality being otherwise, babus belonging to the Reddy community are extremely happy over the victory of the Congress in the just-concluded Telangana Assembly elections. Members of the Reddy community -- which has supported the Congress through its thick and thin -- are expected to get plum posts by default. Already the names doing the rounds for the new TS DGP (incumbent dropped by EC like a hot potato) have Reddy as surname. In almost a similar situation in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy did not mind picking officials from the Reddy community to fill DGP and CS positions. So, 'Can things be different in Telangana if Revanth becomes CM?' they ask. Nonetheless, all eyes are on the major bureaucratic rejig in the offing.

DESPERATE ACT OF THE POLICE CHIEF
TS Police chief Anjani Kumar meeting the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee president A Revanth Reddy at the latter's house even as election results were being announced has become a hot topic of discussion in bureaucratic circles. It also proved once again that officials, uniformed or otherwise, can change their colours chameleon-like in the blink of an eye. Even though the office of the DGP had claimed that the meeting in question was about "making arrangements for the swearing-in ceremony", the EC, which had taken suo motu cognisance of the violation of the Mode Code of Conduct, recommended his suspension. Official circles inimical to the state police chief are discussing how unbecoming and shameful it was on the part of Anjani Kumar to call on Revanth Reddy, who had abused him left, right and centre. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to watch if Revanth will sympathise with Anjani by treating his job-endangering greeting as an act of self-flagellation.

POLICE ACTION AND POLITICO'S MEMORY
Politicians, when not in power, learn to take police highhandedness in their stride and may or may not forget the insulting behaviour of cops in the line of duty. BRS working president and outgoing IT Minister K T Rama Rao often banters Cyberabad Commissioner of Police Stephen Ravendrea

on how the CP had once torn his shirt. Going down the memory lane on Deeksha Diwas, KTR recounted that Stephen Ravendra had torn his shirt during his arrest then. "All the buttons were gone", he added for good measure. Mortified Ravendra would say he was just doing his job and offer to send him a shirt. KTR would respond, saying: "there is more than shirt to give". Well, Stephen has not been on good terms with Revanth. Hopefully, he will have similar rapport with his new political bosses.

SOME AP OFFICIALS HAPPY OVER CONGRESS WIN IN TS
A handful of officials in Andhra Pradesh are extremely happy over the Congress' victory in the Telangana Assembly elections. These bureaucrats, known to be inclined towards the Telugu Desam Party, seem to enjoy the moment, considering that probable chief minister Revanth Reddy's roots lie with the yellow party that initially ruled residual AP post bifurcation. Those who want to shift to Hyderabad, perhaps on deputation, are sitting back and enjoying the grand old party's grand win. It would be interesting to see if the officials who are in Telangana but look longingly at AP continue in their positions.

POSITION AND DISPOSITION
During elections, politicians sweat it out for months until the day of polling and then wait with bated breath until the last result of the polls is declared. Tension heightens for bureaucrats from this point. Those who had lorded it over others as empowered minions of the ruling party will see the ground under their feet shift with a regime change. Some senior bureaucrats who had blurred the fine line of distinction between functioning as administrator and acting as party functionary will feel the scorching heat of change in the government. The irony is that politicians tend to rely more on babus who sport, overtly or covertly, the badge of loyalty to the ruling party. At the end of the day, upon regime change, only the crop of such bureaucrats are replaced with far-reaching consequences. Realising this bitter truth, a junior bureaucrat in TS, which will shortly usher in a Congress government, commented: "Bureaucrats also have to learn 'acting' if they want a good position." Position remains; what counts is their disposition!
-- Yours truly

Shift paddy produce to rice mills: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh directed the officials to take steps to shift paddy produce to the rice mills given heavy rains under the influence of the cyclonic storm. Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh said that in view of the possibility of rains for the next two days in the wake of Michaung Cyclone warnings the officials were ordered to take steps to shift the paddy produce to the rice millers to ensure that the produce was not damaged due to the rains. He said that because of the cyclone warning, the district machinery was instructed to take steps to shift the paddy produce which is ready to be sold after taking all precautions and also making it offline. "So far 7000 metric tonnes of paddy has been shifted to the mills. Steps were taken to shift the rest of the paddy produce and provide the required numbers of gunny bags and vehicles for transportation.

BJP bags MP, Raj, Chhattisgarh

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP swept Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh on Sunday inflicting a resounding defeat on the Congress to tighten its stranglehold in the Hindi heartland, in a big boost for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and setting the tone for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In some consolation for the Congress in the face of the saffron wave after it lost Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the party ousted the Bharat Rashtra Samiti(BRS) in Telangana to make it 3-1 for the Bharatiya Janata Party(BJP) in the latest round of Assembly elections billed as a semi-final before next year's poll showdown. Counting of votes in Mizoram will be taken up on Monday. As the BJP leadership savoured the triple victory just months after losing its lone southern citadel Karnataka, Prime Minister Modi said some people are already saying that the party's hat-trick in the states is a guarantee of hat-trick in the Lok Sabha polls. Ruling MP for 18 years, a well



entrenched BJP managed to stave off anti-incumbency in a shot in the arm for four-time chief minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan and dashing the hopes of a resurgent Congress helmed by veteran and former CM Kamal Nath. Winning 141 seats and leading in 24, the BJP got a simple majority and could get two-thirds majority in a House of 230. Congress bagged 45 and was leading in 19. Suspense also mounted as to who will be the BJP's chief minister in any of the three Hindi heartland states. Clouds of gulas, shouts of Jai Shri Ram, joyful jigs and crack-

ers were the sights and sounds of celebration in BJP offices with party workers and leaders unanimous in attributing the win to Modi's "guarantees". With BJP dislodging the Congress hit by factionalism in Rajasthan, the desert state stuck to a nearly 30-year-old 'rivaz' (tradition) of not voting an incumbent party back to power. The BJP got a majority bagging 115 seats after voting was held for 199 constituencies. The Congress notched 69 seats. The Chhattisgarh outcome was a surprise for many Congress leaders who were hoping for another stint in power in the state by fending off

the BJP challenge. The day began with both parties neck and neck but, as counting continued, the BJP consolidated its lead and won or was ahead in 54 seats. The Congress won or was ahead in 35 seats in the 90-member house. The BJP amplified its pitch around the prime minister during the Assembly polls as its manifestoes featured his guarantees, with Modi crisscrossing the poll-bound states, except for Mizoram, to seek popular support to deliver on his welfare and development promises. Modi addressed 14 rallies each in Rajasthan and MP and five in Chhattisgarh after the polls were announced. He held two massive roadshows in Rajasthan and one in MP and his entries in many of rally venues were marked by a drive through cheering supporters. The extent of the party's win in Chhattisgarh and MP has taken even some of its leaders by surprise, as most exit polls gave the Congress an edge in the former and were mixed in their forecast for the latter.

Will fight to protect 'dharma': Naidu



PNS ■ SIMHACHALAM

On Sunday Chandrababu Naidu along with his wife, Bhuvaneswari, had a darshan of Lord Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Simhachalam. Later talking to media persons, Chandrababu said that he is having darshan of the Lord here after visiting

the temples at the Tirumala and Indra Keeladri. "I prayed to the Lord that dharma should be protected," he said. Recalling the rousing reception by the people and the party cadre when he visited Visakhapatnam, Chandrababu thanked all those from across the globe, including those from the two Telugu States,

who responded when he was facing trouble. "I am totally indebted to all of them," he said. People, on a large scale, extended great support to him, he said and added that they also performed pooas for his safety. Chandrababu said that even the family members of Ashok Gajapathi Raju, who donated lands to this temple were also subjected to various kinds of trouble. Where is dharma, the TDP chief asked and said that he prayed to the Almighty to give him strength to fight against such evil forces. Naidu called upon all the people to come together to save the State. Promising to resolve the Pancha Gramala issue once the TDP is back in power, Chandrababu said that though clear directions were issued to resolve the matter during the TDP regime the issue is not solved yet.



18 L cigarettes worth Rs 90 lakh seized

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The officials of the Customs Division, Kakinada, falling under the jurisdiction of the Commissionerate of Customs (Preventive), Vijayawada on Sunday intercepted two vehicles near Rajanagaram National Highway, NH-16 which were coming from Patna transporting the smuggled foreign brand cigarettes without payment of Customs duties. Deputy Commissioner Vijaya Kumar said that the officers have taken these two vehicles to their office under escort situated at Ramanayyapeta, Kakinada for verification of the goods. He further said that upon detailed inspection of the goods, it was found that there were 9,00,000 sticks of Paris brand cigarettes in 30 HDPE packed bags in one vehicle and 9,00,000 sticks of Gold Vimal brand cigarettes in 30 HDPE packed bags in the second vehicle. The DC explained that for Paris brand cigarettes, the vehicle driver transporting the said cigarettes could not produce necessary clearance documents evidencing Customs clearance and pay-

ment of applicable Customs duties. He further explained that no markings of 'manufacturer name and factory address' and 'Made in India' were found on the packages. The Deputy Commissioner said that in respect of Gold Vimal brand Cigarettes, the goods were found to be in sound condition and ready for consumption in contrast to the damaged nature as declared and claimed in the Tax Invoice. He further said that the Paris brand cigarettes worth Rs 22.50 lakhs have been seized by the Officers of Customs Division, Kakinada on the reasonable belief that these cigarettes were illegally imported/smuggled into the country and by evading Customs duties. He added that the cigarettes of Gold Vimal brand worth of Rs.67.50 lakhs were detained on the suspicion that the goods are undervalued and attract a higher rate of GST and these goods will be handed over to the concerned GST authorities for further necessary action. The Customs DC further added that further investigation into the matter is in progress.

Telangana repays...

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At least six BRS ministers lost the elections. KCR's son KT Rama Rao and nephew T. Harish Rao were among ministers who could retain their seats. Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka retained his Madhira

(SC) seat, while former TPCC President Uttam Kumar Reddy was elected from Huzurabad. The Congress had an almost clean sweep in south Telangana and won a majority of the constituencies in north Telangana. However, the BRS continued its domination in and around Hyderabad. The BJP did well in north Telangana and won seven seats. However, the party suffered a huge setback with all its three MPs, including General Secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar, losing the elections.

Provide nutritious food to malnourished kids: Collector

PNS ■ KAKINADA

District Collector Krithika Shukla underlined the need to provide nutritious food to malnourished children for their growth and health.

A programme of 'Additional Nutrition Support to Malnourished Children' was organized at the Sambashivanagar Anganwadi Centre here on Saturday. SPM-CIL Company under Corporate Social Responsibility provided nutritious food to the malnourished children. Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 3750 children identified as severely malnourished in Kakinada district would be provided ghee and millet chickpeas with the financial assistance of this company. She said that through the

project, the beneficiaries would be provided nutritious food through Anganwadi centers for six months for which Rs 68.72 lakh was allocated. Chilukuri Ramkumar, Independent Director of SPM-CIL said that the SPM-CIL company is running under the supervision of the Central Government. Currency, passport, non-judicial, stamps, postal stamps, printing by SPM-CIL company is done through 9 units across the country. As part of community development, health care, sanitation, drinking water, education, disability, women's empowerment, environment, and village development are all part of the development of the community, to provide economic prosperity and quality of life to the people by creating infrastructure.

Minister flags off 5 vans to educate farmers about high crop yields

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Agriculture Minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy on Sunday flagged off a fleet of 5 mobile vans as part of ACFT's extensive outreach campaign 'Jago Kisan Jago' to educate farmers about the importance of using high-quality genuine agricultural inputs for maximizing crop yields. Agro Chem Federation of India (ACFI) has launched the nationwide campaign 'Jago Kisan Jago' to educate farmers on the importance of using genuine Agri inputs and also obtaining proper receipts to guarantee the authenticity of the Agrochemical they are purchasing. Addressing the gathering of farmers and other stakeholders after the launch, Minister Govardhan Reddy said the state government has launched several initiatives to help farmers



increase their income, and increase farm output as the state aims to raise its shares in the national output and exports. The expansion of irrigation facilities and renewal of irrigation tanks has led to a significant increase in crop acreage, resulting in improved farm productivity and enhanced

prosperity for farmers, the Minister said. "In a steadfast commitment to enhancing agricultural productivity, the Andhra Pradesh government has taken proactive steps to ensure the availability of high-quality agricultural inputs to the farming community. Farmers in our State enjoy

Cyclone Michaung gains...

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As of 0830 hours IST on Sunday, December 3, 2023, Cyclonic Storm Michaung was located near Latitude 11.5°N and Longitude 82.4°E, approximately 290 km east-southeast of Puducherry, 290 km south-east of Chennai, 420 km southeast of Nellore, 530 km south-southeast of Bapatla, and 530 km south-southeast of Machilipatnam. The storm is expected to continue moving northwestwards, intensifying further, and reaching the West-central Bay of Bengal off south Andhra Pradesh and adjoining north Tamil Nadu coasts by the forenoon of December 4. Subsequently, it is projected to move nearly north-

wards, parallel to the south Andhra Pradesh coast, crossing between Nellore and Machilipatnam during the forenoon of December 5 as a 'Severe Cyclonic Storm' with a maximum sustained wind speed of 90-100 kmph, gusting to 110 kmph. The IMD has issued rainfall warnings for Coastal Andhra Pradesh, with light to moderate rainfall expected on December 3, heavy to very heavy rainfall on December 4 and 5, and isolated heavy rainfall on December 6 in north coastal Andhra Pradesh. Rayalaseema is expected to experience light to moderate rainfall with isolated heavy to extremely heavy falls on December 3 and 4, and isolated heavy rainfall on December 5,

decreasing thereafter. Wind warnings have been issued for the West-central Bay of Bengal and along & off the south Andhra Pradesh coast, becoming very rough to high from December 3 evening to December 4, and high to very high phenomenal seas from December 4 evening to December 5 noon. Conditions are likely to improve thereafter, gradually becoming high to very rough from December 5 evening and very rough to rough from December 6 morning for the next 12 hours. Along & off the north Andhra Pradesh coast, rough to very rough sea conditions are likely from December 4, very rough to high on December 5, and very rough to rough on December 6. Fishermen are strongly advised not to venture into

the West-central Bay of Bengal and along & off the Andhra Pradesh coast until December 6. Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke with Andhra Pradesh CM YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, assuring him of all necessary support in light of Cyclone Michaung. PM Modi instructed top officials to ensure comprehensive assistance, and CM Jagan Mohan Reddy, after reviewing the State's preparedness, directed district collectors in coastal areas to be fully equipped for relief and rehabilitation efforts. Authorities have evacuated residents from low-lying areas, established emergency shelters, and issued advisories to fishermen to avoid the sea until further notice.

The Chief Minister told the Collectors that he would again review the situation through a video conference on Monday morning. He directed the civil supplies department to ensure that the paddy stocked in the fields does not get wet and also to procure the paddy available irrespective of its status and send the stocks to the rice mills or other available godowns at the earliest. Because of the possibility of heavy rains, officials should be ready to take all steps to safeguard people and property in the affected rural and urban areas, he told them.

Edu institutions to remain...

Continued from Page 1

Prakasam District Collector has announced a holiday for primary, secondary, and high schools running under all managements in Prakasam district on December 4 and 5 and informed all the school managements, students, and parents. He also stated that the summative assessment exams of mathematics and TOEFL subjects which were scheduled to be held on December 4 and 5 will be postponed to December 11 and 12 respectively. The Collector also instructed all the teachers and parents to take proper precautions to prevent children from going near dilapidated buildings and places where work is being done. He further instructed all teachers are required to be available at schools and none of the teachers shall be granted leave.

Safeguard lives and assets: CM

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A mesmerising concert by Navy's 'Symphonic Band'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a dazzling display of musical prowess, the Indian Navy Symphonic Band orchestrated a mesmerizing concert at the local Samudrika Naval Auditorium on Sunday to mark the Navy Day celebrations. The event, attended by State Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath and his wife Himagouri as chief guests, left the audience enthralled.

Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendarkar, Chief of the Eastern Navy, and his wife Sandhya Pendarkar, President of the 'new' Eastern Region, extended a warm welcome to the Amarnath couple, setting the stage for an evening filled with musical brilliance.

The orchestral performance, skillfully led by Commander Manoj Sabastian and Lt Commander J. Padmanabhan, showcased a symphony of talent that captivated the audience. The hall resounded with applause as the artists displayed their instrumental virtuosity, creating an atmosphere of joy and celebration.

State Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath, in recognition of the outstanding per-



formances, personally felicitated the Amarnath Vadya artist. The gesture added an extra layer of honor to the evening, highlighting the appreciation for the artistic contributions.

In return, the Amarnath couple was bestowed with a token of gratitude, a memento,

to, by Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendarkar, underscoring the mutual respect between the civilian leadership and the Navy.

The event saw the active participation of a large number of Navy officers and retired naval officers, reinforcing the strong

sense of camaraderie within the naval community. The symphony, both a tribute to Navy Day and a celebration of musical excellence, left an indelible mark on the attendees, creating memories that will resonate for years to come.

INS Vikramaditya & INS Vikrant to be deployed for Milan-2024 in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Navy has planned to deploy both its aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant on the eastern seaboard during Milan-2024, a flagship international naval exercise hosted by Vizag from February 19-27 next year, a senior official said on Sunday.

"The event will be held under the aegis of the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) of the Indian Navy with likely participation from nearly 50 friendly countries as a delegation, and 20 foreign warships along with one maritime patrol aircraft," said Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, Flag-Officer Commanding-in-Chief (FOC-in-C) Eastern Naval Command.

Navies from the US, Japan, Australia, France, Bangladesh, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia are set



to be among the participating nations in the Milan-2024 exercise to be conducted off Visakhapatnam next year, he added.

The upcoming exercise will be the biggest multilateral military war game to be hosted by India ever. It will feature large-force manoeuvres, advanced air defence operations, anti-submarine warfare, and anti-surface drills.

The aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant

which will be the centrepieces of the exercise serve as floating sovereign airfields providing a launch platform for a wide array of aircraft.

An international maritime seminar, tabletop exercises, a demonstration of the Indian Navy's deep submergence rescue vessel, a multilateral exercise at sea, a city parade and some other social and cultural events are part of the plans for Milan 2024, Pendharkar said.

"These joint drills will also highlight the Navy's expanding role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as a first responder and preferred security partner. Presence and operational reach by the Indian Navy has been steadily enhanced through mission-based deployments and other operational engagements," Pendharkar said.

To a question on increasing Chinese forays into the Indian Ocean, Vice Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar opined that China may have a legitimate reason to be present in the IOR for economic activities. "The Indian Navy keeps an eye on all that is happening there and tries to maintain surveillance of the extra-regional forces in this region," he said.

'Milan' was conducted in Visakhapatnam from February 25 to March 4 in 2022 with 40 countries participating.

'Kartika Masam' picnics serve as antidote for stressful life

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Amid escalating work stress and dwindling family time, the allure of a picnic emerges as a refreshing antidote. As the gentle cool breeze of 'Karthika masam' envelops the surroundings, families find solace in outdoor settings, spreading mats, delving into picnic baskets, and savoring moments with loved ones.

For working parents grappling with the challenge of synchronizing holidays with their children, a picnic serves as an ideal escape from the daily grind. A myriad of picnic sites across the city, such as Rushikonda, Tenneti Park, Appikonda, Yarada, Kailasagiri, Mudasarlova Park, Thotlakonda, Bojjannakonda, Indira Gandhi Zoological Park,



Kambalakonda Eco-Tourism Park, VMRDA Park, Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy Central Park, RK Beach, Araku Valley, Borra Caves, among others, beckon families for a leisurely day out.

While popular destinations garner attention, some opt for less-traveled spots seeking

a unique experience. The manifold benefits of connecting with nature include stress reduction and a heightened sense of well-being. Picnics, beyond their recreational aspect, provide a haven for digital detox, fostering focused interaction, healthy conversations, and shared meals.

Entrepreneur Gayatri attests to the distinct charm of picnics, emphasizing how outdoor meals and recreational activities contribute to familial togetherness. She shares, "When we go for a picnic, the experience is different. As a family, we get into recreational activities and get involved in games as they make us forget our concerns and enjoy the moment."

Incorporating men into the picnic-planning process is a growing trend, where spouses actively participate in packing and preparing meals. M Sravya, a boutique owner, asserts, "Whether it is a simple spread of sandwiches or a box of flavored rice or a tray of snacks, I make sure that my husband gets involved in not just packing the food but also making a portion of it."

Move to privatise govt sports facilities opposed

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Members of the Visakhapatnam Apartment Resident Welfare Associations (VARWA) and the Federation of Greater Visakha Colony Associations (NIVAS) organisation to the proposed privatization of several sports stadiums and complexes in the city.

During the protest, representatives from VARWA and NIVAS expressed their disapproval of the alleged transfer of management of key facilities, including the Aqua Sports Complex on Beach Road, MVP Sports Arena at MVP Colony, Health Arena at Kailasagiri, Port Stadium at Kailasapuram, and several other parks, to private entities under the guise of maintenance.

Protesters argued that these public spaces, funded through the taxes paid by the residents, are now being considered for administration by private individuals or organisations. They



raised concerns about the potential for private entities to impose substantial fees for access to these sports stadiums and complexes, limiting public access to these essential community spaces.

President of VARWA, N Prakash Rao, and P Narayana Rao from NIVAS were among the prominent figures present during the demonstration.

They emphasized the significant role played by public contributions in the development of these sports facilities and urged authorities to reconsider the decision to privatise these essential community spaces.

The controversy surrounding the potential privatization of these public amenities highlights the growing debate around the

role of private entities in managing public spaces and the potential impact on residents' access to recreational and sports facilities.

As VARWA and NIVAS continue to advocate for the preservation of public spaces, the issue is likely to prompt further discussions and scrutiny from both the local community and relevant authorities.

Dementia: Early detection crucial, say experts

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Dementia, a condition often misunderstood as mere forgetfulness, is a complex issue requiring early detection and understanding, emphasised Dr. K Venkateswarlu, Emeritus Professor of Neurology at Andhra Medical College. Addressing a workshop organised by the Sneha Sandhya Age Care Foundation and Dementia India Alliance on Sunday, Dr. Venkateswarlu highlighted the urgency of addressing dementia, stating, "Dementia is currently the seventh leading cause of death globally and a major contributor to disability among older individuals."

Dr Venkateswarlu presented alarming statistics, revealing that 5 in 100 individuals over 65 years in India suffer from dementia, and the number jumps to 1 in 4 for those over 85 years. These figures underscore the critical need for awareness, involvement, and a



supportive environment to alleviate the suffering caused by dementia.

Echoing this sentiment, Dr NS Raju, Managing Trustee of the Age Care Foundation (ACF) and vice president of Dementia India Alliance outlined the foundation's compassionate mission to create a more supportive environment for those dealing with dementia challenges.

To address the growing need for improved dementia care, Dr Raju announced the development of state-of-the-art facilities at the upcoming hospital in Gambheeram. These

facilities will include spacious rooms and a comprehensive training facility for healthcare professionals and caregivers. Additionally, the ACF is set to inaugurate a Free Clinic specializing in Geriatrics, Palliative Care, and Memory Clinic on Monday in MVP Colony aims to elevate healthcare services by providing personalised care tailored to the unique medical needs of the elderly.

The Chairman of the Age Care Foundation, G Sambasiva Rao, lauded the initiative and expressed gratitude for the support received for the upcoming 100-bed integrated Geriatric and Palliative Care center, at Gambheeram, Visakhapatnam. He said it will be a first of the kind in AP operational by the end of April 2024 and the care provided in the facility will set a benchmark for the practice of healthcare services, especially palliative care, and rehabilitation.

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The upcoming 4th 'Organic Mela' promises to be a landmark event for organic farming enthusiasts and practitioners in Andhra Pradesh. National leader of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) Jalagam Kumar Swamy unveiled plans for the Mela during a press conference held at BVK College Conference Hall on Sunday.

Organized by Prakriti Rythusangham, the Mela will be held from December 8 to 11 at the Andhra University Grounds. Swamy emphasised the crucial role of organic farming in combating pollution and promoting healthy living. He highlighted the potential for a healthier life by avoiding chemical fertilisers, insecticides, and herbicides in agriculture.

"This Mela aims to connect organic farming advocates, facilitating knowledge sharing, networking, and showcasing the benefits of sustainable practices. We believe nature-centric

'We expect the Mela to be a catalyst for knowledge dissemination, networking, and showcasing the advantages of organic farming. It will attract diverse agricultural participants, fostering discussions, collaborations, and advancements in sustainable method.'

cultivation can lead to a healthier environment and improved well-being for all," stated Swamy.

The Mela's itinerary caters to various agricultural segments. It features dedicated gatherings for Uttarandhra farmers (Dec 8), graduate farmers (Dec 9), sugarcane farmers (Dec 10), and organic businesses (Dec 11).

"We expect the Mela to be a catalyst for knowledge dissemination, networking, and showcasing the advantages of organic farming. It will attract diverse agricultural participants, fostering discussions, collaborations,

and advancements in sustainable methods," added Swamy optimistically.

The 4th Organic Mela is poised to be a melting pot for farmers, enthusiasts, and businesses invested in the organic sector.

Attendees can share insights, explore innovations, and contribute to promoting eco-friendly farming practices. The event reflects the growing awareness and commitment within the farming community towards sustainable and nature-centric agriculture.

DRM Waltair conducts safety audit on KK line

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Saurabh Prasad, accompanied by a contingent of Assistant Divisional Railway Managers (ADRM) and senior officers, undertook a meticulous Divisional Safety Audit on Sunday at Level Crossing gate No 19/10 near Srungavarapukota in the Kottavalasa-Kirandul line.

"Safety is paramount in our operations," asserted DRM Saurabh Prasad as he meticulously inspected the gate operations, closely observing the gateman's performance and adherence to safety protocols. He delved into the gate's documentation, ensuring that all records were maintained with precision and completeness.

The audit extended to the Srungavarapukota Station yard, where the team rigorously examined the Over Head Equipment (OHE), Points and crossings, track circuits, and other critical infrastructure elements. Safety standards were paramount, and the team

ensured that every aspect met the stipulated requirements.

DRM Prasad's keen eye extended to the yard layout, tracks, and signals, leaving no stone unturned in the pursuit of safety excellence. He engaged in direct interactions with the station staff, assessing their safe-



ty awareness and proficiency in utilizing safety gadgets and equipment.

"This safety audit underscores our unwavering commitment to providing a secure and reliable rail network for our passengers and staff," emphasized DRM Prasad. "By stringently evaluating safety measures at key locations like level crossings and station yards, we are reinforcing our dedication to the highest safety standards."

Expedite Purna Market road expansion works

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

With the festive season of Dhanurmasam, Sankranti, and Christmas approaching, Visakhapatnam Mayor Golagani Hari Venkata Kumari has stressed the urgent need to expedite the expansion of Purna Market Road. During a surprise inspection of the ongoing road widening project from Jagadamba Junction to Old Post Office on Sunday, the Mayor emphasized the importance of minimizing disruptions and completing the works before the influx of festive crowds.

"The timely completion of the Purna Market Road expansion is crucial for the convenience of our residents, especially during the festive season," declared



Mayor Kumari. "We understand the challenges faced by traders and residents, and I appeal for their cooperation. We are committed to minimizing disruptions and completing the project on schedule."

Mayor Kumari's visit comes

amidst concerns from traders and residents regarding the impact of construction activities on their businesses and daily lives. The Mayor acknowledged these challenges and directed the project authorities to prioritize the completion of critical sec-

tions before the festive rush.

"We are aware of the difficulties faced by everyone due to the ongoing construction. I assure you that we are working diligently to expedite the process without compromising on quality," stated the mayor.

Accompanied by local corporator Koduru Appala Ratnam, town planning officer Suresh, and engineering officials, Mayor Kumari conducted a thorough review of the project's progress. This collaborative approach signifies the city administration's commitment to open communication and timely resolution of any issues arising during the expansion.

"The project's success hinges on effective coordination between all stakeholders," noted Mayor Kumari. "We are con-

stantly working towards minimizing disruptions and ensuring a smooth transition once the road is widened."

The Purna Market Road expansion project, once completed, promises a transformed experience for residents and businesses alike. Improved traffic flow, enhanced safety measures, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure will contribute to a more vibrant and accessible commercial hub.

"We envision Purna Market Road to become a bustling center of commerce, not just during the festive season but throughout the year," said Mayor Kumari. "This project is a testament to our commitment to building a modern and sustainable Visakhapatnam for all."

'Krishna Tarang 2023' concludes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The three-day 'Krishna Tarang 2023' concluded on a grand note on Saturday. The three-day programme began on for three days from November 30 at Krishna University, Machilipatnam.

College Principal M Anuradha informed that the students of Nalanda Degree College won prizes in 13 categories and secured third place in the All-around Championship.

They won second prize in Western Group Singing, Debate, Mime, One Act Play, Skit, Spot Photography and Third prize in Western Instrumental, Folk Dance, Installation, Mehndi, Folk Orchestra, Group Indian



Singing, and Western Solo Sceneing.

The Chairman of Nalanda

Educational Institutions Vijaya Babu congratulated the students.

CYCLONE: DC asks officials to shift paddy to RBKs

PNS ■ BHIMAVARAM

West Godavari District Collector P Prashanthi has directed the officials concerned to take steps to save the harvested paddy produce at the fields from being drenched in the rain. She also ordered them to shift the harvested paddy produce to the Rythu Bharosa Kendras at the earliest.

Collector Prashanthi saw the harvested paddy in the fields at Sivadevuni Chikkala, Ballipadu, Dagguluru, Tillampudi, Velivela and Lankalakoderu villages.

She saw the paddy produce which was left at the fields by the farmers for drying purposes and interacted with the farmers.

She warned the officials that action would be taken against them if they were found indifferent to shifting paddy produce to the RBKs.

She said that the cyclone



storm intensified further and heavy rains were forecast in the district.

Since the farmers have left their harvested paddy produce at the fields for drying purposes, there is a scope for drenching the produce in rain and getting damaged. The sooner the paddy produce is shifted to the RBKs the better,

she told them.

The officials should be at the field level and monitor the transportation of paddy produce, she directed the officials.

"We should not receive a complaint from any farmer that their paddy produced is damaged in the rainwater as the produce is not transported on time," she told the officials,

adding that one should not wait for bank guarantees and truck sheets to buy grain in RBKs.

The Collector told the farmers that the Meteorological department had warned that rains would begin under the influence of cyclones in the next 24 hours. The officials should take steps to either shift the paddy produce to RBKs or preserve the produce in stores before the rains start. She also directed the officials to provide full support to the farmers.

Collector Prashanti said that Narasapuram, Mogaltur, Achanta, and Elamanchili mandals in the district would likely be affected by the Michaung cyclonic storm. She directed the officials to shift pregnant women to the nearby government hospital.

The entire government machinery should be on high alert during the next three days, she told the officials.

Cyclone threat puts DMHOs on high alert

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Health and Family Welfare Department Commissioner J Niwas issued instructions to District Medical and Health Officers (DMHOs) asking them to take all necessary precautionary measures in the wake of cyclone Storm Michaung. The commissioner said that sufficient medicines should be stocked in advance in remote areas and health wellness centers.

Pregnant women who are likely to give birth this week should be taken to hospitals early, said the commissioner. He also instructed that Anti-venom injections should be kept handy to treat snake bites at all the Primary Health Centres (PHCs). Medical camps should be established in all cyclone-affected areas and Medical and Health personnel should be available at the headquarters. The updated information should be sent to the state office from time to time in the aftermath of the cyclone.

Special officers appointed for coastal mandals in AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In view of the intensified effect of Cyclone Michaung, Krishna District Collector P Raja Babu has appointed special officers for the seacoast mandals to monitor the situation from time to time. Also, he is personally supervising the cyclone situation from the Command Control Room and giving instructions to the respective officers.

On Sunday, the District Collector issued orders regarding the appointment of special officers for the seacoast mandals in the district. Divisional Forest Officer (Social Forestry) K Rajasekhara has been appointed as the special officer for Koduru.

Other special officers: Samagra Siksha Additional Project Coordinator K Ramulu Naik – Avanigadda, AP Micro Irrigation Project Officer G Vijaya Lakshmi – Nagayalanka, Machilipatnam Municipal Commissioner G Chandraiah – Machilipatnam, Marketing AD L Nityanandam – Bantumilli, SC Corporation ED B Chandra



Leela – Kruthivennu, Labour Department Assistant Commissioner S Govind – Mopidevi Mandal.

Also, DRO Peddi Roja will monitor the cyclone situation in all mandals in Krishna district. DRCDA PD PSR Prasad will coordinate the Nagayalanka and Koduru mandal special officers, ZP CEO Jyothi Basu will be coordinating with Kruthivennu and Bantumilli,

DPO Nageswar Nai will be coordinating with Avanigadda and Mopidevi, and DWAMA PD GV Suryanarayana will be coordinating with Machilipatnam mandal special officer.

At a review meeting conducted from the Command Control Room in Machilipatnam, Collector Raja Babu asked the people to contact the toll-free numbers 08672252572 and 08672252000. Also, RDOs and tahsildars of concerned divisions and mandals should open cyclone control rooms immediately.

Meanwhile, NTR District Collector Dr S Dilli Rao urged the farmers to postpone the paddy harvesting process for two to three days to prevent losses. Dilli Rao, along with Joint Collector DR P Sampath Kumar, conducted a teleconference with all officials in the district. If farmers have already harvested the paddy, they should shift the paddy grains to safe places, and the district officials should transport the paddy grains to the rice mills.

Pawan hails BJP victory in three states

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Jana Sena chief K Pawan Kalyan has congratulated the BJP leadership for winning Assembly elections in three States and also thanked the Telangana votes for voting for the JSP candidates.

In a statement here on Sunday, he said that the BJP has registered a tremendous victory in three states "I congratulate and convey my wishes to the BJP leaders and activists for the election victories in the three states. The election victory in the three states is indicating the future election triumph of the BJP," he stated.

Retaining power in Madhya Pradesh, the BJP wrested Rajasthan and Chattisgarh from the Congress which is indicat-



ing the formidable political strategy and foresightedness of the BJP leadership, he extolled. "I congratulate BJP national president JP Nadda for playing a vital role in the election victory and leading the party successfully.

Telangana voters thanked

Pawan Kalyan thanked the voters of Telangana state. He said that he hails the verdict of

people in the Telangana polls. "I congratulate the BJP candidates and I also congratulate all the winners. I convey my thanks to those who voted for the BJP-JSP alliance," he said.

Pawan Kalyan said: "He considers contesting in the Telangana Assembly elections as a milestone for the Jana Sena party. The JSP has originated from the soil. The JSP's vote share was about 18% then. The JSP did not contest in the Telangana elections previously for flexibility. Youths were given tickets in the elections of which the majority of candidates belonged to underprivileged sections and middle-class families. To give an opportunity into politics, they were fielded in the election," Pawan Kalyan said.

Relief centres set up to shift people from low-lying areas

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Prakasam District Collector AS Dinesh Kumar has said that relief centres have been set up to shift people from low-lying areas and directed the official machinery to be on high alert in the wake of the cyclonic storm.

The Collector visited some villages in Kottapatnam mandal and spoke to the fishermen in the coastal area and their family members. In view of the weather department's warnings that the impact of the storm will be high on Monday and Tuesday, relief centres have been set up in schools and cyclone centres in the coastal

region, the Collector made it clear.

Officials told the Collector that arrangements have been made to evacuate people living in slums and dilapidated houses in 19 villages in the coastal region to this center, where essential food and drinking water facilities are being provided. The Collector warned the fishermen not to venture into the sea for fishing.

The Collector said that the district administration is taking measures to prevent any loss of life and property. The situation in the coastal area is constantly being monitored by the revenue, fisheries, and panchayat raj department



officials along with the local police and marine police, the Collector stated.

Collector Dinesh Kumar advised the locals to follow the instructions given by the

government administration. Boats, nets, and other equipment should be preserved carefully, he told the fishermen. The Collector said that measures were being taken by the government to build a pukka house for the people living in the slums.

Meanwhile, two SDRF teams have arrived here to swing into action, if needed, of which a 20-member SDRF team has been made available in Ongole and another 20-member team has been made available at Pakala in Singarayakonda mandal. Fisheries JC Chandrasekhar Reddy and other leaders were among those who accompanied the Collector.

Storm forces postponement of Navy Day celebrations

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In response to the imminent threat posed by Cyclonic Storm 'Michaung', the Eastern Naval Regimental Command Officer, Swaroop Banerjee, has officially announced the postponement of the Navy Day adventure maneuvers initially scheduled for December 4 at RK Beach in the city. The rescheduled event is now slated to take place on December 10th, following a full-dress rehearsal on December 8.

The decision comes as the Indian Navy prioritises the safety of spectators, naval assets, and personnel involved in the planned Complex Naval Demonstrations as part of the Navy Day celebrations. Additionally, key activities such as the Op Demo and the C-in-C's 'At-Home' function at Visakhapatnam may also face rescheduling. The Indian Navy is closely monitoring a low pressure system in the Bay of Bengal, expected to intensify into Cyclonic Storm 'Michaung' and make landfall along the Eastern coast between North TN, AP around Dec 3-4, 2023.

BJP workers on cloud nine

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

After winning the Assembly elections in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) held victory celebrations at the BJP office in Vijayawada on Sunday. Party workers raised 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' slogans and distributed sweets.

AP BJP president Daggubati Purandeswari, senior leader Sadineni Yamini Sarma and others participated in BJP's victory celebrations.

Speaking on the occasion, Purandeswari said that the people of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh voted for development and they believed that their dreams could be fulfilled only by the BJP. She praised the Election Commission of India (ECI) for the smooth conduct of the elections. During the elections, many political parties offered money and other gifts for the voters, however, they voted for the BJP, she said.

Further, she said that the BJP secured 42 per cent of votes in Rajasthan, 49 per cent in Madhya Pradesh, and 46 per cent of votes in Chhattisgarh. In Telangana, BJP registered a win. BJP candidate Venkata Ramana Reddy defeated both Chief Minister KCR (BRS) and CM candidate Revanth Reddy (Congress), she said.

She said the people of Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh voted against corruption while the BJP's vote share increased



in Telangana State. The number of MLAs in the Telangana Assembly has increased, she said. BJP State general secretary B Sivannarayana, Kisan Morcha State president Chigurupati Kumara Swamy, Minority Morcha State president Sk Baji, and others were present.

Cong celebrates victory in Telangana polls

PNS ■ RAJAHMUNDRY

The Congress activists, led by APCC general secretary Mulla Madhav, celebrated the Congress party's election victory in Telangana state here on Saturday.

The Congress activists assembled at the Kambalachervu Gandhi statue fired crackers and distributed sweets to celebrate the election victory. Congress leaders including City Congress president Balepalli



Muralidhar, Devata Sudhakar Abdullah Sharif, and other leaders were

among those who took part in the celebrations. Addressing the gathering

Mulla Madhav said that the Telangana people were fed up with the Chandrasekhar Rao-led regime and rejected them in the election. The Telangana people wanted Indiramma Rajyam again and voted the Congress to power, he claimed. The Congress leaders thanked the voters of Telangana state for electing the Congress. They expressed confidence that the Congress would come to power in the future in AP also.

APCC chief leads celebrations in Vja

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) celebrated the victory of the Congress in Telangana at the Andhra Ratna Bhavan in Vijayawada on Sunday. After the election results came out, APCC chief Gidugu Rudra Raju and other party leaders gathered at the party office for celebrations.

The Congress party won a majority of seats in the Assembly elections in Telangana and will form the government soon. The APCC had arranged a big screen to watch the election result trends.



AP Congress leaders celebrating the party's win in Telangana Assembly elections, in Vijayawada on Sunday. Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

Rudra Raju said that the Congress leaders worked together for the Karnataka

State Assembly elections and as a result, the party came to power there. The same formula was implemented in Telangana and the party has registered a great victory in the State. If this unity is maintained in the coming Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, the party will win, he added. APCC working presidents Sunkara Padmasri and Janga Gowtham, organising secretary R Rama Murthy, leaders K Sivaji, D Murali, N Narasimha Rao and others were present.

Later, Gidugu Rudra Raju met the TPCC chief and to-be-assumed Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy in Hyderabad and extended his wishes.

9-month-old baby stolen from home

PNS ■ ONGOLE

In a distressing incident at Arava colony near Agharam gate, a nine-month-old infant was stolen by an unidentified couple. Responding to the incident, Superintendent of Police Malika Garg instructed police officials to establish specialised teams dedicated to locating the missing child.

According to authorities, Devarakonda Anand and his wife, residents close to Arava colony, fell victim to the heart-wrenching crime on November 26. A couple, arriving on a motorcycle, approached their residence and requested water. Seizing an opportune moment when the mother went indoors to fetch water, the culprits absconded with the nine-month-old baby girl, making a swift escape on their motorcycle.

The distraught parents promptly filed a police complaint, initiating an investigation supervised by Additional SP (Crime) SV Sridhar Rao.



‘Kapu Vana Samaradhana’ held

PNS ■ PITHAPURAM

Zilla Parishad vice-chairman Burra Anubabu has claimed that the organising 'Kartika Vana Samaradhana' is to enhance the unity among the people of Kapu, Telaga, Balija, and Vontari communities.

A Karthika Vana Samaradhana was held at a mango orchard on Madhavapuram Road on Sunday. Kapu Sadbhavana union president Vasireddy Yesudaru, Kapu Sangam president Bolla Balajidevi Naidu, Porumamidi Eeshwar Rao,

Koppuna Shivanath and Jana Sena leader Dasari Kiran and other leaders, officials, and lawyers participated in the Vanasamaradhana. A special screen was installed to show the Telangana election results. Cultural programmes were held on the occasion.

Pragathi Bhawan will be Praja Bhawan

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy said that he expects the cooperation of the BRS in forming the new government and that he wants the BRS to join hands with the Congress to restore democratic values in Telangana.

Speaking to the media after the Congress victory on Sunday, Revanth said, "Anyway, I have a suggestion for the BRS. People gave a clear verdict on who should rule and who is the opposition. The people have decided the role of the other parties in the opposition. Taking the mandate of the people as a message, we expect full cooperation from the BRS in forming the government. We want the BRS's cooperation to restore democracy in Telangana. We hope that the attempts made to damage democracy in the past will not

happen again," Revanth said. He said that the success achieved by the Congress is dedicated to Telangana martyrs and thanked the people on the occasion.

Revanth was addressing the media at the Gandhi Bhavan here on Sunday after the Congress victory.

He said that from now onwards the Secretariat will be accessible to commoners and the administration will be brought nearer to the people. Pragathi Bhavan will be renamed as Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Praya Bhavan. Pragathi Bhavan is public property and it will be put to use for them, he said.

Revanth said that the Congress will move forward in Telangana with the democratic spirit it provided to governance in the country from

2004 to 2014.

He said that the government will implement the six guarantees given to the people of Telangana and the promise given by Rahul Gandhi. He also thanked Rahul for giving moral support whenever there was a problem.

Revanth said that he will use this victory to develop Telangana and help the poor and thanked KTR for congratulating the Congress.

He said that he hopes that the opposition would fully cooperate in forming the new government and that all opposition parties would be invited to the government's swearing-in.

He said that Srikanthachari was martyred on December 3 and that he is dedicating the electoral verdict to him. He

said that the people of Telangana have cooperated to restore democracy and that Rahul inspired us through his Bharat Jodo Yatra.

He said that the Congress is leading the battle to 'protect' human rights and that he, CLP leader Bhatti Vikramarka and Shabbir Ali will take the party forward together.

He said that the perseverance of the 30 lakh unemployed in TS is behind the Congress victory and thanked Vijayashanti for her role in the success. He thanked Thakre for coordinating the party's internal affairs. "We will move forward with the CPI and the TJSS. Rahul gave us the spirit through his Bharat Jodo Yatra. The Congress achieved victory with the cooperation of all its senior leaders. We hope that the BRS will coop-

erate with the new government. Everyone should respect the people's verdict," he said.

"Rahul has assured us that he will stand by us always. With the support of Rahul, CLP Bhatti Vikramarka, senior leaders V. Hanumantha Rao, Jana Reddy, Uttam Kumar Reddy, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, Damodara Raja Narasimha, Sridhar Reddy and Madhu Yashki we attained this victory," Revanth said.

He added that CPI leaders Chada Venkat Reddy and Aziz Pasha also contributed to Congress victory. He said that in addition to the allies of the Congress the party will also consider the CPM which did not contest the elections.

"We will also accept suggestions from Telangana Jana Samithi President Professor Kodandaram who gave us full cooperation. Revanth said.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Saffron wave, again

Triumphs in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh; Cong snatches Telangana from KCR

The climax of the nail-biting suspense thriller is revealed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP emerge the undisputed hero in four of the five Assembly elections held recently --- the party comfortably retains Madhya Pradesh and wrests Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh from the Congress. The 'grand old party', for its part, pushes KCR out of the Chief Minister's Office in Telangana and increases footprint in the south, after forming the Government in Karnataka. But the verdict is clear --- people are favouring the BJP over all other Opposition parties in the Hindi heartland. Its win in the three major States speaks volumes about its election strategy and public mood. As political pundits analyse the results' implications, attention naturally turns towards the broader impact on the 2024 general elections. The BJP's resounding victory underscores its continuing popularity in the traditionally significant States. In Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the BJP successfully



encashed the anti-incumbency sentiment, presented a united front and resonated with voters on key issues. In Madhya Pradesh, where the party did not project even a CM face, it managed to retain power by addressing local concerns and effectively countering the Opposition's narrative. The results highlight the importance of regional factors in influencing voters and the significance of a strong leadership in the BJP's poll strategy. The Congress' sole victory underscores its appeal to the Telangana electorate and its successful positioning on key State-specific issues.

The overall scenario serves as a reminder that Indian politics is diverse, with regional dynamics playing a crucial role in shaping outcomes. The four results, while showing the potential for regional variations as in Telangana, strengthen the BJP's position nationally. The party's ability to address regional concerns in key States like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh positions it as a formidable contender in the general elections. However, it is important to acknowledge the fluidity of Indian politics, where last-minute developments, local issues, alliances and changing dynamics can significantly impact the outcome. The Congress, buoyed by its victory in Telangana, may aim to consolidate its position in other States with a similar strategy. The results in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana paint a nuanced picture of Indian politics. As the nation waits for the 2024 general elections, political parties must carefully chalk out their strategies, taking into account the diverse socio-political landscapes across States. These results serve as a crucial barometer, offering an insight into voter preferences, regional dynamics and the challenges and opportunities in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. But the General elections are still months away and that is a long time in Indian politics.

PICTALK



Disabled People participate in a tricycle race, on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, in Nadia

Kissinger: Cold warrior of realpolitik



BHOPIINDER SINGH

While history will judge Henry Kissinger's many accomplishments and misdemeanours, the art and science of diplomacy has lost an ace practitioner and innovator

Amongst the eulogies offered to the highest priest of realpolitik i.e., Henry Kissinger, and the accompanying divide on his unique style of diplomacy, the most prescient was from the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Tony Blair, who said, "If it is possible for diplomacy, at its highest level, to be a form of art, Henry was an artist". Admired as much for his intellectual clarity, as for his questionable morality and intent, the artist of diplomacy may have been the most famous soothsayer to many in power in the White House, but his legacy will remain deeply contested and polarising. No less than the sitting President of the United States, Joe Biden, himself conceded, "Throughout our careers, we often disagreed. And often strongly. But from that first briefing - his fierce intellect and profound strategic focus was evident". Admittedly, diplomacy is not for idealists or even the fainthearted. The names of Machiavelli to Metternich are synonymous with statecraft which naturally entails a ruthless pursuit of self-interest, that can readily compromise which publicly maintained façade of values. Even the doyen of Indian treatise on politics and statecraft i.e., Chanakya realistically noted, "There is some self-interest behind every friendship. There is no friendship with self-interests. This is a bitter truth". Naturally, the extent of moral compromises, leniencies and even suppressions done by Superpowers in their quest to assert their geopolitical agendas and interests, is even more pronounced. As the definitive 'Cold Warrior' in the extreme freeze of the Cold War era, Kissinger personified contradictions between noble rhetoric with brutal manipulation and opportunism, to further the interests of the United States of America. Subcontinental memories are understandably rife with the wounds of deliberate indifference, uncouth behaviour, and even a clear tilt in favour of the oppressor (read, Pakistan) during the genocidal birth of Bangladesh - part of a far larger legacy of amorality that routinely manifest-



ed in supporting dictators, supporting suppression and partaking hypocritical conduct. But what remains undeniable is that Kissinger served American interests (often at the cost of other stakeholders and even purported 'allies') and institutionalised the way Washington DC would conduct diplomacy, thereafter. Kissinger can claim to have singularly introduced the 19th Century German neologism of realpolitik, in diplomatic parlance and practice. If anything, it eased up the untenable stodginess of ideology or idealism, in favour of considerations based on realism, practicality and situational possibilities - which optimized the draw of hand to still deliver the most agreeable solution, given the situation. Many partook realpolitik like Zbigniew Brzezinski, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping to even Xi Jinping, but Kissinger is synonymous with realpolitik. To that extent, it birthed subsequent concepts like 'Strategic Ambiguity', which implied remaining deliberately ambiguous towards operational and positional policies e.g., the implied commitment of the United States towards Taiwan, despite maintaining the 'One China' position. Even the much bandied 'Strategic Independence/Autonomy' deployed by India in recent times owes itself to the foundational principle of realpolitik, as it allows the practition-

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er to not get closeted within the linear grouping and associated puritanism of 'allies'/blocs to which a sovereign subscribed. As India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, quipped on the task for Indian diplomacy which may not have been possible to state earlier, "This is a time for us to engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play, draw neighbours in, extend the neighbourhood, and expand traditional constituencies of support." Contradictory at one level, given the ambition of keeping equations with America and Russia in the same breath, whilst the backdrop of the Ukraine War ensued, a clear reflection of practicality triumphing binarism, in an ode to principals of realpolitik as popularised by Kissinger. Another attributed facet of modern-day diplomacy to Henry Kissinger was the decidedly more moral role of 'back-channeler' amongst the seemingly intractable stakeholders. Kissinger had famously flown secretly to China in July 1971 to restore and repair relations with America, something he did yet again, just a few months back at the ripe age of 100 years to meet Xi Jinping. 'Back channels' is an oft-deployed tact that is frequently invoked by conflicting countries, to avoid getting the engagement getting derailed

by prying eyes, opinions and pressures that can lead to immediate cessation of thawing talks. The template was used in Track 1 and Track 2 by peaceniks in the Indo-Pak realm earlier or towards the more recent fruition of 'Abrahamic Accords' besetting Israel-Arab Sheikhdoms, all from the playbook of Kissinger's school of diplomacy. While history will judge Henry Kissinger's many accomplishments and misdemeanours at ease and with the benefit of reflection, the art and science of diplomacy (both moral and otherwise) has lost an ace practitioner and innovator, of the same. Another priceless lesson that he leaves for posterity, even though he alluded to his own country, yet applicable to all major powers is, "America has no permanent friends or enemies, only interests". As India meanders and navigates its rise in global relevance and animus simultaneously, it would do well to mull over and keep pace with the evolving nature of diplomacy. In the end, Kissinger got away with much to answer for as his fellow Jew, Senator Bernie Sanders once said, "I am proud to say that Henry Kissinger is not my friend", and so went Henry Kissinger. (The writer is a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PROTECTING THE PRIVACY

Sir — Law agencies seize digital devices like laptops, mobiles, and pen drives from the houses of the accused and even journalists in the name of investigation. These agencies even snatch away their financial, personal and professional privacy. The Supreme Court told the government that the nine-member constitution bench of this court has considered the right to privacy as a part of Article 21 (life and personal liberty) under the fundamental rights in the year 2017. The Supreme Court has asked the government to make guidelines regarding the confiscation of personal digital devices and has also stressed that the professional interests of journalists should be kept in mind. On the other hand, due to the use of AI, our privacy is being destroyed within minutes and crime is also being encouraged. Recently, a picture of an actress created with a deepfake went viral. AI is going to make a big contribution to public welfare, especially in education, health, agriculture and other production efforts, but ways will have to be found to avoid the destructive effects of its misuse. Anyway, every new technology is a double-edged sword. A conscious society avoids its ill effects and accepts it. The government will also have to keep privacy in mind while confiscating such devices.

N Ashraf | Mumbai

TAKE STRICT ACTION

Sir — A 15-year-old girl was allegedly raped by her neighbour after holding her hostage in his house in the Pataudi area with the help of his mother on November 29 but came to light on Friday when the victim's mother lodged a complaint at women's police station, Manesar. According to the complaint filed by the mother, her 15-year-old married daughter is living with her. On November 29, the girl was passing through the house of the accused when he called her inside his house, the mother said. After this, the

India's third woman grandmaster!



Vaishali, Pragnanandhaa World's first brother-sister Grandmasters' duo'. We have seen siblings making their parents and country proud in games like Cricket, Tennis, Hockey, Football and Archery, like Dhyan Chand and Roop Singh, Dola Banerjee and Rahul Banerjee, Mohinder and Surinder Amarnath, Vijay and Anand Amritraj, it is the first time in Chess that a brother sister pair have achieved the title of Grandmaster. Finally R. Vaishali has come out of the shadow of his famous brother Pragnanandhaa. In the process she has become India's third woman GrandMaster after Koneru Humpy and Dronavalli Harika. Kudos to their parents who gave it all despite coming from a very poor and humble background. Success story of siblings Vaishali and Pragnanandhaa is true inspiration to thousands of young children in our country to take up this mind sport.

Bal Govind | Noida

accused's mother locked the main gate and he raped my daughter at night. Meanwhile, I kept searching for her the whole night. My daughter managed to escape from captivity on November 30 morning, when the accused was sleeping. She reached home and told me about her ordeal. Then I approached the police with her. This sort of accident occurs from time to time somewhere. Therefore, the police must strictly look into this kind of accident and punish such exemplary punishment so other people can get lessons.

Jahangir Shaikh | Mumbai

PRISONS REFORM

Sir — The Prisons Act, 1894 focused more on retribution and less on reform. So, the Home Ministry's finalisation of the "Model Prisons Act, 2023", is just and reasonable. The provisions of the new Act place emphasis on reform and rehabilitation. India has the third highest undertrial population in Asia. Most of the country's jails are packed with

inmates with little provision for ensuring their health and hygiene. The plight of women and children is excruciating. Delay in trials has overburdened prisons and courts. In the USA, 20% of the prisoners are undertrials compared to a whopping 60% in India. Stress on technology is the right way to go. The new Act should decongest prisons; the rest will fall in line. Segregation of prisoners based on the gravity of the crime, like first-time offence, is an excellent idea. So are the proposals to introduce parole, furlough and remission to undertrials because emotional stability can go a long way. Since legal knowledge and assistance are hard to come by, concessions and incentives to prisoners are most welcome. Special courts and increasing the lawyers-to-prisoners ratio to hasten legal aid can also be considered.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Kissinger had counterparts in Kerala!

The uniqueness of Kissinger was his expertise in making the impossibilities a possibility

Henry Kissinger, the US State Secretary during the Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford era, who breathed his last on Wednesday at the age of 100, was a popular person in Kerala though he had nothing to do with the State and has not visited this part of the country even once in his lifetime. Kissinger, who is credited with a new style and art of diplomacy reigned supreme during the peak of the Cold War and was known as one of the architects of the US-China ties through Ping-Pong (Chinese term for the game of table tennis). The diplomatic ties between US and China got a shot in the arm with the Ping-Pong games between the two countries and this paved the way for the 1972 State visit to China by President Nixon. The former State Secretary was known for his talents to make any unfriendly countries the friends of the US. For him there were no permanent friends or enemies but only permanent interests, that was the US commercial and strategic inter-



ests. Full credit should be given to Henry Kissinger for his farsightedness and visionary-like forecasts. It was Kissinger who warned the world about the impending Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism which would upset peace in Asia and cause damage to India. While addressing the Davos Symposium on 31 January 1980, Kissinger said: "The problem of India has the component that, for India, the existence of a strong, fundamentalist, Islamic state presents problems of its own internal cohesion and may create its own incentives for war. On the

other hand, if India is worried about our policies, it must give some assurances, other than rhetoric, that it will not act in collusion with the Soviet Union and that it will not cooperate in an attack on Pakistan," said Kissinger (Henry Kissinger: For The Record). Kissinger is also known as the person who pointed out the folly behind the Non-Aligned Movement, which he termed as a means to strengthen the hegemony of the then Soviet Union. There was no denying his hatred for socialism and communism. The Kerala media, which was quick in reacting to international developments, especially in singing paeans to Communism and comrades in the USSR and China portrayed Kissinger as a villain. The party cadre, despite their ignorance about the stance of Kissinger viz-a-viz the socialist countries, did not waste even a single opportunity to taunt and ridicule the Nobel laureate. When the Muslim League was split in the early 1970s, the then Congress strong-

man K Karunakaran deputised Baby John, a leader of the RSP to negotiate with the League leadership to somehow avoid the break up in the outfit. Baby John, whose RSP was an ally of the Congress, reached Parappanangadi in Malappuram district, to broker peace between the warring factions. The CPI-M which was in the opposition, wanted the Muslim League to split so that the former would get the support of the breakaway faction. Baby John's brief was to somehow prevent the split and keep the leadership in good humour. The day after Baby John landed at Malappuram, CPI-M mouthpiece had this headline as the lead news: "Kerala Kissinger in Parappanangadi to broker peace in Muslim League". But Kerala Kissinger, despite all his charming manners, failed in the mission and the League was split vertically, though only for a brief period.

(The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, the views are personal)

FIRST COLUMN

HOLD BACK THAT RAGING ANGER!


One needs to overcome the anxiety and fear that lead to anger



SAKSHI SETHI

Nobody likes to feel angry, but all of us experience this kind of emotion from time to time irrespective of age. In the words of Buddha, “Whoever can retain the rising anger, like holding back a moving cart, then he is called a true driver.” Anger is a secondary feeling to deeper, perhaps more vulnerable emotions. It is a normal, natural emotion that not only adults but children of all age groups especially nowadays experience at some point in time. As per recent surveys and studies, it has been found that children in the age groups of 6 to 11 years in the US and approximately 129 million children and adolescents worldwide have been diagnosed with problems of anger followed by other mental health conditions including ADHD, autism, OCD and many more. They tend to yell, scream, get physical and above all say hurtful and disturbing things. But the question arises where lies the root cause for such rising anger among the children? Are we to blame only the technology for this or is it someone else who is to be blamed for such a changed behaviour?

There is no denying the fact that anger can fuel courage, one needs to overcome the fear and protect boundaries that uphold the values. At the same time, it also prevents an individual from thinking clearly. That is why learning how to manage it consciously is vital. Also, if we are to blame only technology in this regard then no one can deny the fact that technology has become so firmly established that it is being widely used in almost all sectors of the economy. In education too, these advancements have provided children of all age groups with various resources that enable them to stay connected everywhere and anywhere with the click of a button which as a result has drifted a child and a parent to a lot many extent, so in so that if a child seems to be in trouble, he or she will prefer to take the help of technology over its parents or guardians which becomes a matter of great concern.



Adults do play a significant role in modelling nonviolent communication and behaviour. Often it is observed that when a child feels that he or she is being heard or understood, they feel safer and braver. They tend to express and experience all emotions with confidence and when such things are performed on repeat, it wires the brain for self-regulation, empathetic responses, rational thinking and even problem-solving. By listening without judgement, parents learn the real reason behind the changed behaviour of their child and the children also feel safe to release the uncomfortable and daunting emotions.

It is particularly important to stay with the child through scary emotions, take them to places of their wish, play with them, engage them in productive activities such as dancing, gymnasium, meditation and many more, problem solve with them when they are ready and then guide them back to peace. Once, everything gets to settle, then is the time to offer them better ways of expressing themselves in the future.

Remember, when a child is upset or dysregulated, they need the elders to be their support system to keep them calm. The best thing one can do for their child is to ensure they never witness anger, fear or conflict at home. Let them grow up in an environment and atmosphere of joy and love. Anger and aggressive behaviour can be a mask for anxiety. When children are overwhelmed by internal feelings, they do not know how to process them, it turns into outbursts and then melt down.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

Balochistan: An undeclared war zone-I

The war between Balochistan-Pakistan raging for years now but it is not visible in the media because there is no media in Balochistan, writes **Mir Khan Baloch**



The schools have been turned into carriages, villages into concentration camps. Houses-to-house search operations have become a daily routine. University and college students are harassed and intimidated on campuses. Women being raped, and female students are sexually molested. Journalists are picked up by the Pakistan army and forces, and later their mutilated dead bodies are thrown on roadsides and barren land across Balochistan. This is what Balochistan looks like today. Baloch youth are facing dire consequences not over charges of drugs or weapons but for having books which are punishable sins in occupied Balochistan. We watch the Hamas-Israel war on TV and media but the war between Balochistan and Pakistan is not visible in the media because there is hardly a single Baloch media outlet in Balochistan. Balochistan is a black hole for information. Smuggling of narcotics and weapons are easy because Pakistan supports it but writing on human rights violations and the ongoing Balochistan war is not easy, Baloch are smuggling the news and publishing them on social media. If any Baloch is found writing on Pakistan's war crimes, he/she is taken away and killed after some time. On 16 November, Pakistan's military and police opened fire on Baloch students of Lasbela Uthal Agricultural University for Water and Marine Science. Dozens of students were injured and the remaining were arrested and taken to undisclosed locations. Video footage of the incident sparked fear, and anger among the people of the area who came to protest on the streets of Lasbela. On 19 November 2023, Pakistan ISI took three Baloch hostages namely Adil, Shahjahan and Nabi Dad, tied their



BALUCH YOUTH ARE FACING DIRE CONSEQUENCES NOT OVER CHARGES OF DRUGS OR WEAPONS BUT FOR HAVING BOOKS WHICH IS PUNISHABLE SIN IN OCCUPIED BALUCHISTAN

hands with rope, put them inside an explosive-loaded vehicle and detonated the car killing all of them in the Hoshab area of Turbat. Two of them were brothers. Three of them belong to the same family who were abducted on 22 August 2023 from Turbat at 3:00 pm city by the Pakistan military during a raid on their homes. This seems a new tactic of the Pakistan army but in the past, there were numerous instances of Baloch hostages thrown out of low altitude flying helicopters. **Balochistan needs world attention** It is the need of the hour that a debate on national and international levels must be resumed. The academic think tanks and institutions of friends of occupied Balochistan should involve Baloch leadership and people to participate and chalk policies towards getting closer to each other and work on unified goals. Let's break the rhetoric of Pakistan's deep state and the army about Balochistan that can't be discussed globally. After the partition of the subcontinent, we have seen India facing border infiltration from Pakistan and China. Beijing's growing aggressive policies towards India indicate that the PLA is not willing to abandon its policy of bleeding India, for the last many decades. China is leaving no stone unturned to encircle India from all fronts. Delhi is not only facing threats from the border but also is being deliberately engaged in internal conflicts where China

is providing all sorts of support to militants who are fighting against Indian national interests. The non-state actors funded by China often get diplomatic backing from Beijing even at the forums of the UN Security Council. Balochistan deserves India's attention. Many people are working tirelessly to this end. The efforts by the overseas diplomatic leadership of occupied Balochistan are bearing fruits and now there are indicators that in coming years Balochistan is heading towards taking a centre point for global powers. India should take advantage of the Balochistan uprising on global forums and lend her full diplomatic, political and other support to help the Baloch for their liberation. To chalk a long-term 100-year policy to secure India's energy needs, and stability and disperse threats to its economy, it is needed that Delhi should open an official channel with Balochistan to pave the way for future cooperation. If India supports Balochistan, it will no longer rely on oil imports from Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela because Balochistan has more oil than the gulf and Venezuela. India's 42% of liquefied natural gas (LNG) requirements were fulfilled from Qatar till 2021 but with Doha's recent court decision to sentence to 8 former Naval personnel, the import of the energy may get disrupted. At this point, India has the option to buy LNG from Balochistan as it has huge reserves of natural gas.

Balochistan is highly rich in minerals and once it is liberated, that would give a boost to India's economy, national security, defence, and global position. The issue of Balochistan is not a political issue. It is the issue of the invasion of Pakistan. We can't accept the false narrative of Pakistan that Balochistan willingly joined Pakistan. No substantial or legal evidence proves Pakistan's claim on Balochistan. I have researched and come to know that Balochistan before the withdrawal of the British from the subcontinent was ruled under the British in a similar way to India was under British occupation. When the British decided to withdraw from the subcontinent, the King of Balochistan's Kalat State announced its independence on 11 August 1947. It is a well-documented fact that Balochistan remained independent for about 7- 8 months. In this period the founder of Pakistan, Mr. M.A Jinnah kept pressurizing the Khan of Kalat Mir Amed Yar Khan that Balochistan should join Pakistan but he refused to join his country into Pakistan. Both the houses (House of Lords and House of Common) of Balochistan unanimously rejected the proposal of Jinnah to join Pakistan. (The writer is a Baloch human rights activist covering Balochistan, Central Asia and the Middle East. Views are personal) This is the first part of a two-part series on Balochistan. To be continued...

Artificial Intelligence: Benefits outweigh the detriments

The calling has been there for the government statisticians to embrace AI albeit with caution and calibration



ROHIT BHARDWAJ



PANKAJ KP SHREYASKAR

With the advent of intuitive machine coherent processes like intelligence, recognition, enlightenment, systematic enquiry, and resolution connected with evolution in data collection, and accumulation, rational investigations, and computer processing power, AI provides occasions to companionship and addition to human intelligence and enhances how the people lead their work and life. In 2018, NITI Aayog developed a National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence namely, # AI for All. This strategy aims to ensure the safe and responsible use of AI. It also focuses on how India can leverage AI for social inclusion and economic growth. The field of AI is vast which includes Machine

Learning, Natural Language Processing, Large Language Models, Cognitive Computing, etc. The usage also is of varying kinds depending on the field in which it is applied. One of the tools of governance, the Official Statistical System is a field where the calling has been there to embrace but the handshake is yet to take place. The collection of data is one of the most important ingredients of Official Statistics. The Collection of data is done mostly through Census Surveys and as a by-product of administrative action like data generated as part of tax collection exercise. While undertaking Census and Surveys, one of the biggest problems faced is data quality and non-response which leads to missing data. With the help of AI,

the task of finding missing and problematic data and imputation i.e. task of altering incorrect values and inserting missing values can be done in a much faster manner by applying the ML models. Another possible use of AI could be the use of a Large Language model-based Chatbot in the data collection process. This Chatbot like Chat GPT would assist in providing information instantly to the enumerator from the fieldwork manual. It would save them from the trouble of going through the voluminous documents time and again which leads to drudgery and monotony in the fieldwork. Another use case in a country like ours which has more than twenty Official languages could be an AI-based utility that helps in two-way

conversation between the enumerator and the respondent which will go a long way in resolving the language barrier faced by our data warriors in the field. Further, the multi-modal bots with the capacity to read images would be of great help as they would be able to give immediate clarification to the enumerator in case confusion regarding definition arises while collecting data. Another potential use of AI, especially ML could be the classification and coding of Textual Data for official statistics. In the context of the coding and classification work in statistical organisations, the given set is typically a text or narrative provided by the respondent from a survey or administrative data source.

For example, it could describe an individual's occupation or the economic activity of the company described in an administrative business register. With the increasing use of new data sources, the text data that statistical organisations might work with could also include product descriptions scraped from the internet or text posts obtained from social media platforms such as Twitter. The aim of classification and coding in this scenario could be to classify the descriptions into international or corporate statistical classification systems, such as Standard Industrial Classification (SIC), and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for easy understanding and quick analysis.

Image data is still a relatively new type of data for statistical organisations but there is a growing need for exploring how image data can be used for the production of statistics. These models could associate the variables of interest (e.g., building type, land cover type) with the images in the training data set and classify new images with reasonable levels of accuracy. Automation (or partial automation) of these tasks can allow a large volume of information in the image data to be processed in a reliable and fast way. The cost of deployment including the computation required is one of the major factors affecting the deployment of AI in an organisation. The other main challenge facing statistical organisations to advance the use of

AI in organisations is bringing together the required skills as AI requires people from Domain, Computer Science and Statistics; all working together on a project together for its meaningful use. The alignment of AI use cases with the vision of the organisation is the most important aspect of the adoption of AI. The development of AI should not be an ad-hoc process but a part of a well-thought-out strategy which has the support of the top management and confidence of all stakeholders as a tool for reducing their burden rather than replacing them or their work. (The writers are Dy Director Generals in the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, views are personal)

MONEY MATTERS

India re-elected to IMO Council

India was re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council with the highest tally on Friday, and the term of council will be for the biennium 2024-25, according to an official statement. The statement said India's re-election falls under the category of 10 states with "the largest interest in international seaborne trade", alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said the highest votes are indicative of the government's determination to strengthen India's varied contributions to international maritime operations. The council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the assembly, for supervising the work of the organization. Between sessions of the assembly, the council performs the functions of the assembly, except that of making recommendations to governments on maritime safety and pollution prevention. According to the statement, under the MIV 2030 to enhance representation at IMO, India aims at appointing permanent representatives at IMO London.



Honda Cars to hike prices of its range

Honda Cars India plans to increase prices of its vehicles from January in order to partially offset the impact of rising input costs, according to a senior company official. The Japanese carmaker sells three models -- Elevate, City and Amaze -- in the Indian market. In an interaction with PTI, Honda Cars India Vice President (Marketing and Sales) Kunal Behl said the company will increase the prices of its models from next month due to pressure on input costs. "The model-wise amount of increase will be finalised by the end of this month. Our new model Elevate which was launched at an introductory price has been very well received by the market with very high customer consideration. The introductory price will be valid till December 23 and price will be revised from January 2024," he noted. Maruti Suzuki, Mahindra & Mahindra and Audi India have also announced plans to hike prices of their passenger vehicles in January 2024 citing reasons, including cost pressure driven by overall inflation and increased commodity rates. Besides, Tata Motors and Mercedes-Benz India are mulling increasing the prices of their models from January.



Pepe Jeans aims Rs 2,000 cr sales

Denim brand Pepe Jeans London is aiming for sales of around Rs 2,000 crore from the Indian market and plans to expand its retail network by adding over 100 stores in the next three years, its India MD and CEO Manish Kapoor said. Pepe Jeans London, owned by Spanish global fashion group AWWG, is "very buoyant" for the Indian market, and aims to grow at 18-20 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in the next three to five years, Kapoor said. As part of the strategy, Pepe Jeans is now focusing on the expansion of its network of brand stores and fast-growing e-commerce channels. Pepe Jeans expects 55 per cent of its business to come directly by selling to consumers from its own sales channels. Over Pepe Jeans' expansion plans, Kapoor said, "We will add 100 odd stores in the next three years and in terms of a turnover, we are looking at a CAGR growth of 18 to 20 per cent. So we should be almost around Rs 2,000 crore of consumer sales in three years." When asked about sales numbers, Kapoor said: "If I look at business in India, last year on a consumer sales revenue we did close to Rs 1,200 crore and book revenue of Rs 562 crore."



RBI to retain 6.5 % interest rate as economic growth comfortable

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank is likely to maintain the status quo on the short-term interest rate in its monetary policy review later this week, with inflation staying in comfort zone and economic growth moving at an accelerated pace, opined experts.

The RBI has left the benchmark policy rate (repo) unchanged in its past four bi-monthly monetary policies. The RBI had last increased the repo rate in February to 6.5 per cent, thus ending the interest rate hiking spree which began in May 2022 in the aftermath of Russia-Ukraine war and subsequent disruptions in the global supply chain resulting in high inflation in the country.

RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to begin its three-day deliberations on December 6. Das would unveil the decision of the six-member MPC on December 8 morning. The MPC meeting is scheduled for December 6-8, 2023.

India retained the tag of the world's fastest-growing major economy, with its GDP expanding by a faster-than-expected rate of 7.6 per cent in the July-September quarter on booster shots from government spending and manufacturing.

On expectations from the RBI's monetary policy, Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist,



Bank of Baroda, said the central bank is most likely to maintain the status quo on rates as well as stance this time.

"The high growth witnessed in Q2 in GDP will provide assurance that the economy is on track. The low core inflation numbers in the last few months will provide comfort that there is no need to increase rates even while headline inflation is likely to be volatile in the upward direction," he said.

Some direction on liquidity will be useful to the market as the system is in deficit for quite some time, he said, and added there can be some upward revision in the GDP growth numbers though will not be very significant.

Aurodeep Nandi, India economist at Nomura, also expects the MPC to unanimously vote to pause at its December policy meeting.

"Of particular interest will be RBI's commentary around OMO sales, which were announced in the previous policy meeting, but tight liquidity conditions have so far made the implementation difficult. Our baseline view is that the RBI will continue with the policy and stance pause for now," Nandi said.

The government has mandated the central government to ensure that the retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) stays at 4 per cent, with a margin of 2 per cent on either side.

While anticipating the status quo on the key benchmark lending rate, R G Agarwal, Chairman of Dhanuka Group, said Indian agriculture must embrace technological advancements and implement farm mechanization to boost crop yields and improve farmers' livelihoods.

"This necessitates both public and private sector investments, which hinge on access to affordable financing. While both the Reserve Bank of India and the government have taken prior measures to address this issue, additional incentives, such as monetary and fiscal benefits, are required to promote farm mechanization," he added. The retail inflation eased to a four-month low of 4.87 per cent in October, mainly due to cooling prices of food items. The Reserve Bank's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), in its October meeting, projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent for 2023-24, a moderation from 6.7 per cent in 2022-23.

Mohit Jain, Managing Director, Krisumi Corporation, opined that this successive pause in interest rate hikes reiterates RBI's commitment to provide broad-based growth in the economy with financial stability. "The policy decision will facilitate a stable ecosystem for economic activity. This will bring a sigh of relief for homeowners since they have been feeling the strain of increased interest rates on long-term loans. In the housing sector, a stable interest rate environment will not only foster confidence among potential buyers but also make housing loans more accessible & affordable," he added.

Half of Rs 1 lakh cr worth of FDI proposals cleared

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has received foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals worth about Rs one lakh crore since April 2020 from countries sharing land border with India and half of those applications have been cleared so far, a top official said.

The remaining are either pending or withdrawn or rejected by the government.

In April 2020, the government came out with a press note under which the Centre made its prior approval mandatory for foreign investments from countries that share land border with India to curb opportunistic takeovers of domestic firms following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan. As per that decision, FDI proposals from these countries need government approval for investments in India in any sector.

After that press note, "proposals worth about Rs one lakh crore have come in and in that, 50 per cent have been cleared and the rest are either pending or withdrawn or rejected. So it's not a complete shutdown for that FDI. We are taking a nuanced view on those applications, depending on whether.

Mkts to focus on outcomes of polls, global trends

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Global trends, trading activity of foreign investors, outcome of state elections and RBI's interest rate decision are the major factors that will drive the movement in the domestic equity markets this week, analysts said.

"Global markets are currently in a fabulous mood. The US 10-year bond yield and the dollar index are also cooling off, which gives strength to the market. These factors will be closely monitored, as they have the potential to influence market sentiment," said Praveesh Gour, Senior Technical Analyst, Swastika Investmart Ltd.

On the political front, the results of assembly elections in five states are eagerly anticipated, Gour said.

"A stable political environment could boost investor's confidence and drive the markets higher. Domestic and global macroeconomic data, trends in global stock markets, the movement of the rupee against the dollar, and crude oil will also dictate trends," he added.

From the macroeconomic data front, PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) data for the services sector will be announced on Tuesday. RBI's interest rate decision will be announced on Friday.

"Markets will react to



domestic and global macroeconomic data, global bond yields, crude oil inventories, movement of the dollar index, foreign institutional investors (FII) and domestic institutional investors' investment activities.

"Upcoming events this week will impact the market such as S&P services PMI data for major economies like India, the USA and the UK, the US initial jobless claims, employment rate, non-farm payrolls and India's interest rate decision," Arvinder Singh Nanda, Senior Vice President, Master Capital Services Ltd, said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,511.15 points or 2.29 per cent, while the Nifty climbed 473.2 points or 2.39 per cent.

On Friday, the Nifty climbed 134.75 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 20,267.90. During the day, the benchmark reached its intra-

day record high of 20,291.55. "Frenzied buying on the back of renewed optimism from FIIs and positive European market cues lifted the benchmark Nifty to a fresh record high.

"India remains a bright spot in an uncertain global economy as the recent data indicators such as strong GDP and manufacturing numbers along with external factors like falling US bond yields are keeping markets in good stead," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd had said on Friday.

Favourable macroeconomic data and continuous foreign fund inflows were the major drivers behind markets' rally last week.

"This week, investors' attention will mostly be directed towards the release of services PMI data from the US, India, and China. Also, the RBI policy meeting.

IOC raises Panipat refinery expansion cost by 10 %

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), the nation's top oil firm, has revised the estimates of cost of expanding the Panipat refinery in Haryana by 10 per cent to Rs 36,225 crore and pushed back completion deadline by more than a year to December 2025.

IOC is expanding its 15 million tonnes a year refinery, about 100-km north of New Delhi, to 25 million tonnes. In a stock exchange filing, the firm said its board has approved "revision in cost of the project for capacity expansion of Panipat Refinery from Rs 32,946 crore to Rs 36,225 crore and revision in completion schedule of the project from September 2024 to December 2025."

Besides expanding the capacity to turn crude oil into value-added fuels such as petrol, diesel and ATF, IOC is also setting up a polypropylene unit and a catalytic dewaxing unit.

Polypropylene is used in packaging, plastic parts for



various industries including the automotive industry, and textiles. Catalytic dewaxing is used in base oil production.

IOC owns and operates nine of the country's nearly two-dozen refineries. The total capacity under its operations is 70.1 million tonnes per annum. In its latest annual report, the firm says, "By 2026, our approved projects will significantly increase our crude oil refining capacity from the current 70.05 million tonnes per annum to 87.9 million tonnes."

In August, the company had awarded a contract to McDermott International Ltd to provide a suite of services for further expansions of olefins and polymers production at Panipat refining and chemical complex.

In a first, NSE - listed companies' Market capitalisation surpasses US\$ 4 trillion mark

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The market capitalisation of listed companies on the NSE has surpassed the USD 4 trillion (Rs 334.72 trillion) mark for the first time ever, with the benchmark Nifty hitting its all-time high of 20,291.55 last Friday.

The benchmark Nifty climbed 134.75 points or 0.67 per cent to settle at an all-time high of 20,267.90 on Friday. During the day, the benchmark reached its intra-day record high of 20,291.55.

The Nifty-500 index also touched an all-time high of 18,141.65 on the same day, indicating that the equity market rally is not restricted to only the large-cap stocks.

"The achievement of this milestone is a testament of the vision outlined for the Amrit Kaal which includes a technology-driven and knowledge-based economy with strong public finances, and a robust financial sector," NSE said in a statement on Sunday.

The journey of market capitalisation of listed companies rising from USD 2 trillion (in July 2017) to USD 3 tril-



lion (in May 2021) took about 46 months, whereas the last USD 1 trillion i.e., from USD 3 trillion to USD 4 trillion took only about 30 months, it said.

"NSE listed companies' market capitalisation surpassing the USD 4 trillion mark is an important milestone in the country's journey towards the USD 5 trillion economy. The positive sentiment in the economy has provided a thrust to the capital markets," Sriram Krishnan, Chief Business Development Officer, NSE, said.

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the BSE also reached the USD 4 trillion-milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday (November 29).

The market cap of listed companies increased at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.5 per cent in the last 10 years, the exchange said.

The top three companies by market valuation - Reliance Industries Limited, Tata Consultancy Services and HDFC Bank - retained their positions when NSE's valuation hit the USD 2 trillion, USD 3 trillion, and USD 4 trillion mark, it added.

"While India ranks amongst the top five nations based on market capitalisation, the market cap of listed companies on the NSE to India's GDP stood at 1.18 or 118 per cent, which is lower as compared to developed markets such as the United States of America or

Japan," NSE said in the statement.

The share turnover velocity at NSE for the year 2023 as on date stood at 47 per cent, which is way below some of the global markets such as the US, Japan, South Korea, China and Brazil, it noted.

A very low percentage of companies listed on the exchange and comparative lower share turnover velocity, indicates an immense growth potential for deepening of the Indian market in the years to come, the NSE added.

While the USD 4 trillion market capitalisation is an important milestone, data suggests that only 0.35 per cent of the total private companies registered with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, are listed on the exchanges indicating an enormous number of companies which can tap the equity market for their funding needs, it noted.

The daily average turnover has seen a year-on-year growth of 27 per cent in the equity segment and 5 per cent in equity derivatives in this financial year as compared to the previous financial year.

Biogas blending with natural gas can cut LNG imports

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed 5 per cent blending of biogas with natural gas supplies in the country can cut LNG imports worth USD 1.17 billion annually, says a study by the Indian Biogas Association (IBA).

The study comes against the backdrop of the government's recent mandate to blend one per cent biogas with piped natural gas (PNG) supplies in the country from April 1, 2025 under the compressed biogas blending obligation (CBO) scheme.

The biogas blending is proposed to be further increased to 5 per cent by fiscal year 2028.

29.

According to the study, this blending initiative gels well with the government's macro-level move to make India a gas-based economy, with a target to increase the current share of gas in the energy mix from 6 per cent currently to 15 per cent by 2030.

The IBA estimates show that 5 per cent blending of biogas with natural gas can reduce LNG imports worth USD 1.17 billion. This can also bring down per capita CO2 emissions by two per cent, benchmarked to the 2019 figure, which was 1.9 metric tonne of CO2 per person in India.

Additionally, the body says



preventing organic waste going to landfills can bring innumerable benefits.

The CBO scheme shall encourage investment of

around Rs 37,500 crore and facilitate the establishment of at least 750 compressed biogas (CBG) projects by 2028 29, as per government estimates.

This is going to improve India's energy security, as it is currently heavily reliant on imported natural gas to meet its energy needs.

Blending biogas with PNG and CBG can help reduce this dependence, which is invaluable.

Biogas blending has the potential to demonstrate a positive correlation with agricultural income growth too, which is the case with ethanol as well.

Every additional large-scale plant can ensure that almost 1,000 acre of nearby biogas plant area can be converted into organic agriculture.

Biogas can be produced

from various organic waste sources, such as agricultural waste, municipal solid waste, and food waste.

This can create new economic opportunities for farmers, waste management companies, and other stakeholders involved in biogas production. Blending of biogas with natural gas will streamline the market for biofuels, making it more investor-friendly by reducing capital and operational costs, the body says.

It also needs to be emphasised that selling biofuels in the market will become smoother, and the ecosystem will benefit from increased investor confidence, IBA stated.

Practro aims profitability next fiscal; plans IPO soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tencent-backed healthcare and diagnostics app Practro is aiming to turn profitable in next fiscal and is looking at a stock exchange listing with an initial public offering (IPO) soon, its co-founder and CEO Shashank ND said.

Practro is looking to enhance presence in smaller cities and towns and leverage AI to analyse data and provide much better analysis and outcomes in healthcare.

In an interview with PTI, Shashank said the startup is already cash flow positive. "This year we will grow by a

good healthy margin... Our EBITDA would have improved dramatically from last year. We will be near break-even this year and next year is when we really will be able to show significant profits."

Founded in 2008, Practro connects doctors with patients and offers several ancillary services such as telemedicine.

Income from diagnostic and consulting services formed 50 per cent of the total operating revenue. In the 2022-23 fiscal (April 2022 to March 2023), the Bengaluru-headquartered firm halved its losses to Rs 93.68 crore.





Lesley Nicol saves 130 abused bears after video moved her to tears

Downton Abbey star Lesley Nicol, who played the bustling cook Mrs Patmore in the show, said: "I just burst into tears," when she learned of the plight of Asia's black bears who are held in cruel conditions and farmed for their bile.

Nicol saw a video of the abuse of bears 6,000 miles away in Vietnam and China she knew instantly she had to do something about it, reports mirror.co.uk.

It led to the star becoming a key ingredient in a campaign to save them – and, in typical Mrs Patmore fashion, she rounded up fellow cast members to help out too.

Now their efforts have helped save 130 Asiatic black bears caught and farmed for their bile, which is used in traditional Chinese medicine. And the power behind their success has been driven by the massive fan-base Downton Abbey has in Asia.

"It showed one of these bears being released from its cage, swim-

ming around in a pool, and I just burst into tears," said Nicol.

"That bear hooked my heart. I told Darbs we just had to do something," she contacted Jill Robinson, the founder of Animals Asia which leads a campaign to end the farming trade for bear bile.

"Downton had a Chinese audience of 160 million, so Jill was delighted to have me on board," the actress, 70, said.

"I promised to rope in other actors from the series and they all jumped on board too, making videos. Saving these bears became everything to Darbs and me. They are snatched from the wild, trapped in tiny cages, unable to stand on all fours."

"They exist in unimaginable pain, their bodies abused and broken. And they are kept in a constant state of hunger and thirst, as it's said to make their bile more effective for traditional remedies."



Sonakshi Sinha, Jacqueline Fernandez, Athiya Shetty lend their support to Adoptathon 2023

Recently, celebs from Bollywood, TV, and OTT came together to support a beautiful initiative about animal welfare. Lending support to the cause endorsed by World For All Animal Care, many celebs took to social media giving a shoutout to the upcoming in Mumbai. Celebs who supported the cause are, Sonakshi Sinha, Jacqueline Fernandez, Athiya Shetty, Amyra Dastur, Krishna Shroff, Karan Wah, Jannat Zubair, Padmini Kolhapure, Priyank Sharma, Tejaswini

Kolhapure, and many more. World For All Animal Care and Adoptions (WFA), a Mumbai-based NGO, is organizing Asia's largest adoption camp for Indian breed puppies and kittens. The 2-day adoption camp is returning after 3 years in a bigger and better way. The camp will have over 200 healthy Indian breed puppies and kittens. Over the past, the NGO has helped 250 puppies and kittens a safe shelter. With this camp, they aspire to at least help 120 puppies and kittens get adopted. Not just that,

WFA also helps new pet parents with animal care and assistance if required. This fun-filled event that has received support from Bollywood celebs and socialites will happen in Bandra, Mumbai on the 9th and 10th of December. With this, WFA will also provide a platform for individuals and NGOs to register their rescued animals. The event will also have some fun stalls for pets and humans, there will also be a wide variety to shop from and some food stalls too.

what's brewing?

Manoj Bajpayee braves ruthless weather conditions during the shooting of *Joram*

In the unforgiving heat of Jharkhand's iron ore mines, Manoj Bajpayee, the powerhouse of talent, endured extreme conditions for his survival thriller, *Joram*. Director Devashish Makhija recently unveiled the behind-the-scenes challenges that turned the shoot into a battle against nature.

Initially delayed due to the pandemic, the team found themselves in the scorching heat of Jharkhand in May, facing temperatures soaring to 51-52 degrees. The team had to take safety measures similar to miners to protect themselves, turning the shoot into what felt like "going to war." Despite the extreme circumstances, the team embraced the challenge, mirroring the resilience of the miners they were portraying.

Speaking of extreme weather conditions director Devashish said, "As a result of Covid we had to push our shoot to May last year, which is the hottest month of the year in the hottest state of the country, Jharkhand. In the iron ore mines which is the hottest, dustiest and most extreme place with no green cover in Jharkhand. It was 51-52 degrees. The day we began shoot there was a terrible sandstorm. And this is not mud or soil, it's rusted ferrous oxide. It was an inhabitable atmosphere."

Despite the challenges, Makhija expresses determination, stating, "We arguably maybe the first Indian film to shoot inside a working iron ore mine. Nothing prepares you to shoot in such extreme conditions. But we were a determined group and we did our best."

Manoj Bajpayee shared his thoughts as he added, "We faced unpredictable challenges in Jharkhand while shooting. We had to take necessary precautions to protect ourselves from these extreme conditions. I'm so proud of the cast and crew, and also the local production team who put in incredible efforts. They did an amazing job, and their hard work made our project special, even with the tough situations we had to deal with."

As *Joram* gears up for a December 8 release, the film promises an intense portrayal of survival, with Manoj Bajpayee in a commanding role as a father on the run. The trailer, already causing a stir nationwide, sets the stage for a groundbreaking collaboration between Bajpayee and Makhija. Brace yourselves for a cinematic journey that transcends the screen, showcasing Manoj Bajpayee's exceptional commitment to his craft and his ability to thrive amidst adversity.

Directed, written, and crafted by Devashish Makhija and produced by Shariq Patel, Ashima Avasthi Chaudhuri, Anupama Bose, and Devashish Makhija. The film stars Manoj Bajpayee and Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub, under the cinematic vision of Piyush Puty and the editing mastery of Abhiro Banerjee. The soul-stirring music is composed by Mangesh Dhakde. A collaborative effort between Zee Studios and MakhijaFilm, *Joram* is set to become a cinematic milestone, eagerly awaited by fans and critics alike and is set to release on 8th December.



Dua Lipa breaks up with Romain Gavras, won't 'slow down' her career for anyone

Singer Dua Lipa has broken up with filmmaker Romain Gavras, with whom she first sparked dating rumours in February.

"Dua and Romain have gone their separate ways after a summer of love. She has blinkers on when it comes to her career and the pair ended the relationship before things turned sour," said a source. "Romain considered Dua to be a workaholic but she doesn't plan on slowing down for anything or anyone," the source told the Sun on Sunday's Bizarre column, reports aceshowbiz.com.

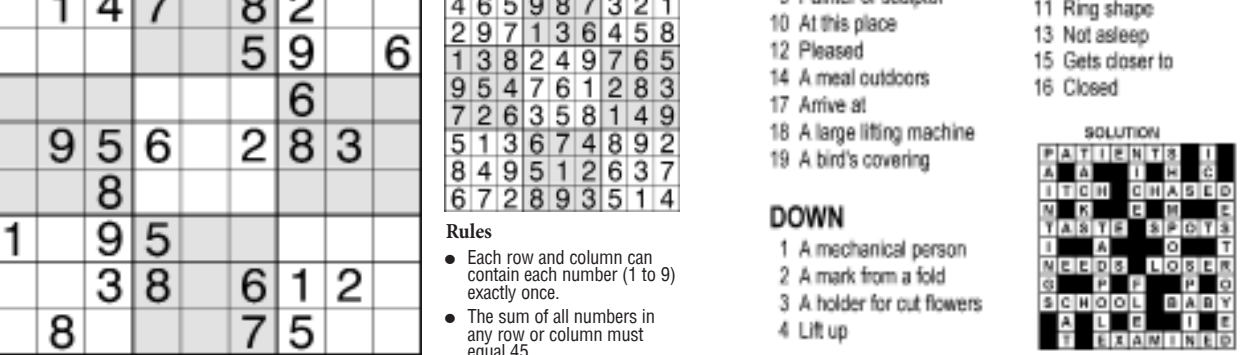
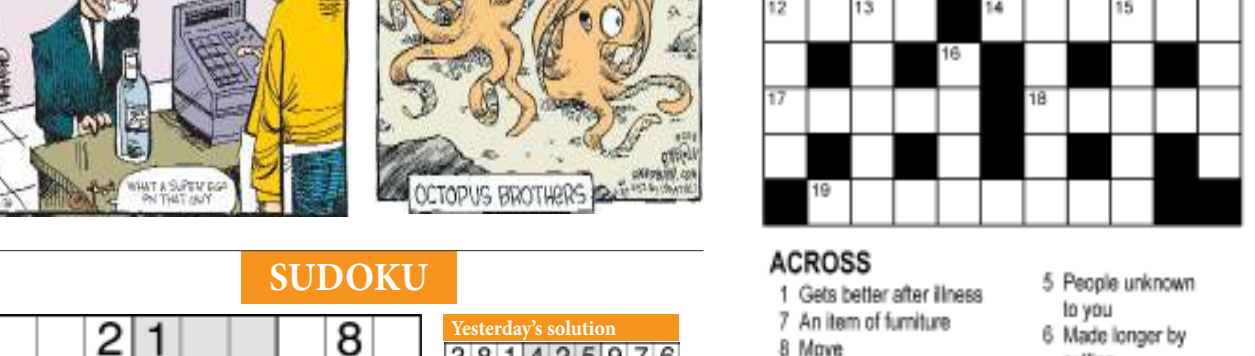
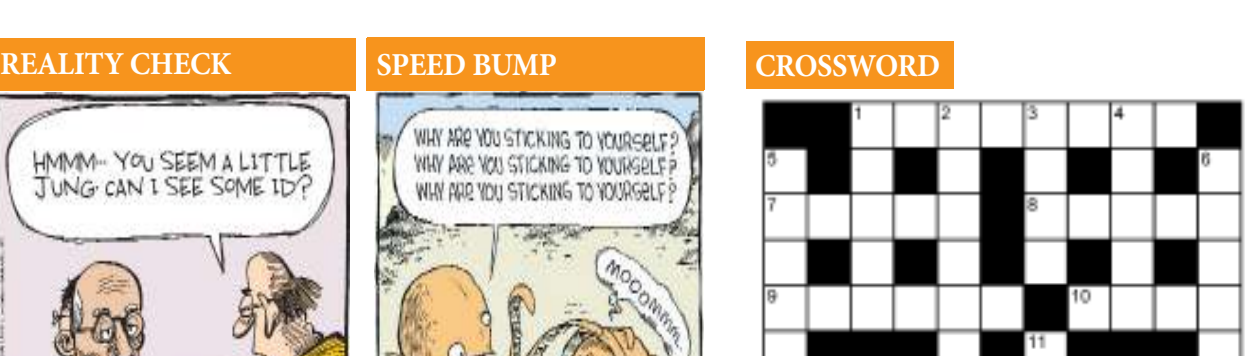
Meanwhile, Lipa had previously claimed that she learned "so much" about herself while she was single after splitting from Anwar Hadid in 2021.

She told the *Check In* podcast: "I think you get to learn so much about yourself." "I think a lot of people wish their singleness away looking for someone else, but I think the whole point of spending that time alone is to really figure out what you need, and who you are in the silence and who you are without someone. I think that's the best bit, and then, of course, just enjoying your girl time or whatever it is."

Lipa's experience of the single life taught her a lot about herself. She shared: "You're discovering yourself, you're figuring out what you like, what you don't like, what you deserve, what serves you and doesn't in certain instances."



FUN



‘KADAK SINGH HAS ONLY 1% OF THE ‘PANKAJ TRIPATHI’ ESSENCE IN IT’



TEJAL SINHA

Never a dull moment every time he's on screen, Pankaj Tripathi makes sure to create a lasting impact on the viewers with his essence. Basically, one thing that unites all of his films, and series throughout the years: they have all featured a wide range of genres and characters. But there's for sure a pinch of 'Pankaj Tripathi' element within. And so did we thought, it would be in his upcoming project, *Kadak Singh* on Zee 5, on December 8. At least that's what it seemed like through its trailer. Isn't it?

But that's not the case this time! Because this time we gotta see him going slightly away from his comfort zone. "Aap sab sunayega, which you see in the trailer, is the only element you will see of 'Pankaj Tripathi', and that's just 1 %. Apart from that, there's nothing that you'll get to see of how it's been in my previous films. Luckily, that is something that has been put up in the trailer. There are two sets in this film, and one of them has a light reference touch of me for the audience, so they don't feel it's someone else. But then, altogether, it's a new story, a new character, and a very interesting film."

So, that's an obvious thing that we are going to see him in a never-seen-before character. And so does he feel, "This is an experiment that Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury made me do. This story was written by the producer, Viraf Sarkari 8 years back. He had it in his mind for 2-3 years that

no one else would play the character so I am grateful that he thought of me."

During our exclusive chat with the *Mimi* actor, he also revealed that it was during the quarantine that he read the script. In fact, he read the script in the night, and the next morning itself, he called the team to inform them that he'd be doing the film. Well, this also shows his dedication towards the art, and following the path of how people know him as an actor.

But with a whole different project and character—an experiment—was there any hesitation? We wondered. And he gleefully answers, "No, not at all. I loved the story and would connect with a story only then. The USP in this story was that I'd get to experiment. I'm not an actor who would not at all fear experimenting, and never think that this is not in my comfort zone or not anything of my image. For actors like us, there's complete freedom to experiment without fear and the result of that is amazing. And so has it been with *Kadak Singh*."

Kadak Singh delves deep into the enigmatic world of retrograde amnesia, intricately portrayed through its protagonist's journey. This central theme propels the character into a vortex of disjointed recollections and obscured realities. Talking to us about it, he reveals, "This medical term is used in just a couple of scenes. The entire story is based on this man; *Kadak Singh* (aka AK Srivastava), if he'll be able to recall or not, there seems no chance for it. And with all the chaos, how will the puzzle be solved is a big question. Some parts

of his past have been faded away from his mind. Like in the trailer, you get to see how his daughter comes, and he's like, 'I don't have a daughter' and she's like, 'I'm your daughter.' You can just not imagine a human drama where a dad does not remember having a daughter and what the daughter would be going through when her father is not able to recognise her." The actor who shares that he is not a 'Kadak' person in real-life, further goes on to recall how for a while his father couldn't recognise him: "I remember 6 months back, I had gone to my village and my dad in Bhojpuri asked, 'Hai ke ha?' (who is this). I was like, 'I'm Pankaj, your son, and he was like *Acha acha woh Bombay waale film wale* (Oh that Bombay film guy). So he was able to recall a bit. But at that moment, mere paun ke tale zameen ghisak gayi (I was utterly dumbfounded). And I recalled that moment, and thought that the entire story is based on a somewhat similar situation. How much human drama can you even put into a situation where a father cannot recognise his daughter? This is a very interesting plot, and if, in the middle of seeing the movie, you end up reading even two WhatsApp messages, you'll have to come back and watch the film from the beginning. This film also needs the audience to pay attention."

An overwhelmed, twice-a-time National Award-winning actor who feels privileged to get the National Award from our president shares, "I've always kept all my awards very nicely. My dad used to really get proud. In

fact, there was a time when we used to do theatres and Manoj (Manoj Bajpayee) used to get awards; we used to think, 'Yaar humae kabhi milega kya award?' (Will we ever get an award?) So for me, it's like how you say a 'dream come true'."

In fact, during the ceremony, fortunately, he got to meet Waheeda Rehman. And an extremely excited Pankaj Tripathi says, "I got to have lunch with her. She told me that she really liked me, and I was really shocked. *Arey Waheeda ji Mujhe jaanti hai* (Waheeda ji knows me). I told her that I really loved her film, *Teesri Kasam*, which I saw 3-4 times, and I was speaking about it. Then there's a Satyajit Ray film called *Abhijan*. I have watched very few films, and out of those, were the films that I saw of her and I became a really big fan of her. And I was glad I got to meet her."

As we headed towards the end of this interesting tête-à-tête, we were really keen to know about the love he receives, irrespective of his low profile. He signs off the chat on a brighter note, saying, "I just try to show the people of my fraternity that *iske bina bhi acting ho sakti hai* (Acting can be done even without this) (welaugh). I'm a very private person and after my work, I do not want to be seen anywhere, and just go directly to my house and live my life. But then again this is a part of films, where you have to go to your own film screening. *Mujhe bass aisa hai ki kaam karro aur gayab hojao* (I just want to work and disappear.)"



COMING UP WITH AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT CHARACTER, NATIONAL AWARD-WINNING ACTOR PANKAJ TRIPATHI IS COMING UP WITH *KADAK SINGH* ON DECEMBER 8 ON ZEE 5. AHEAD OF ITS RELEASE, THE ACTOR, WHO IS ALL EXCITED FOR THE PROJECT, GETS CANDID WITH *THE PIONEER* SHARING SOME INTERESTING INSIGHTS ABOUT THE FILM AND MORE.

Fostering genuine emotions and empathy through art

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Her work is vibrant, playful, and full of life. She is working for some of the biggest brands in the country. We are excited to have Poornima Sukumar here to talk about his work, her career, and her creative process. Passionate about what she does, her latest venture Aravani Art Project—is allowing her to push her craft just by looking at things she wants to create. Dismantling societal taboos, the priority, she is more happier working on it.

For instance, she shared, "Walkers & Co. testifies to the idea that progress is not a solitary endeavor; it's a collective journey. It's about embracing identity, forging your path, and making a bold impact on the world as you keep walking. The upcoming campaign is yet another such step of enablement. As the founder of Aravani Art Project, the platform has provided us with the space to showcase my art on their billboards, offering unique and compelling perspectives on life, identity, and progress." Well, understanding the larger association with Johnnie Walker and the impact that her collective is creating across the society! Her stories of resilience and empowerment are some things he loved to talk about and worked on in his collaboration. Empowerment is key here. The world right now is in need of art and most importantly support and solidarity according to her.

She continues, "For the first time, we worked on huge cloth collages which depicted community, intersectionality, our oneness with nature, importance of togetherness, colours, flowers and birds. All of this amalgamated into huge pieces of artwork. This definitely pushed us beyond our comfort zone." In 2014 while working as a freelancer, she was approached by a documentary filmmaker who was making a film on the transgender community. It was this opportunity that changed Poornima's life. She recalls, it took about three-and-a-half years to finish the documentary and by then she was completely disgusted by how society turned a blind eye. The transgender community was a thriving pool of beautiful human beings but never seen as that.

"I met brave women and formed deep friendships with each one of them. I am still so moved by each of their struggles and how they face their miseries every single day, simply to be true to how they feel. It motivated me to see the positive aspect of their existence and their boldness to stand up against the rest of us," added the founder.

So after the documentary was completed, she felt guilty about taking so much from the community and hence, decided to give back. Using art she decided to take up public projects not just to get the community involved but also use



In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, Poornima Sukumar, founder of Aravani Art Project, gets candid about her art, creative process, and more.



the opportunity to observe them, understand their interactions with each other and be a part of their lives and challenges. The collective began to simultaneously resist the misogyny and to keep moving ahead creating spaces for ourselves and for the world to be a part of! "What is distinctive exactly? Our artwork is influenced by everyday life, people, patterns and there is a lot of extraordinary sights we can see in the ordinary. Slight glimpses of affection, kindness, laughter, joy and mystery. We tend to overlook this in our everyday life, but with regard to our artwork we like to focus on the things people tend to otherwise turn a blind eye to. Another set of elements are the lives and stories of the transgender people. We are always in awe and are inspired to create artworks with regards to their lives and stories."

The audiences and bystanders till now have been open to listening and observing what she has to say through her art. She believes in

humanity, acceptance and love towards all gender. When she paint in red light districts or in slums, she focusses on the stories that create a space to celebrate the similarities and appreciate the differences! "As a person I was an introvert—I slowly became an ambivert as years passed and have always had a keen interest to bridge the gap between art and social work. I have always been an empath and art allowed me to express myself and the need for the practical aspect to kick in. Being open to all sorts of opportunities growing up and landing up being part of a documentary, making friends with the transgender women and to start a collective and be a part of it for almost ten years now has been more than just shaping me. It has become a way of life and although we have a long way to go in terms of changing perspectives of people at large, a small part of me is happy that I am able to change minds of my immediate circle and educate them about gender, the stereo-

Changing your home's overall vibe with the right flooring

The choice of flooring in a home is akin to the selection of ingredients in a culinary masterpiece – it sets the tone and flavor of the entire experience. Beyond being a mere foundation, flooring has the remarkable ability to redefine the ambience of your living space. Let's explore the artistry behind this transformation and delve into the subtle nuances that make a house truly feel like a home.

THE SYMPHONY OF COLORS AND TEXTURES

Soft hues and natural textures can create a serene, welcoming atmosphere, while bolder choices can infuse energy and personality into a space. LVT flooring designs and patterns can be meticulously repeated, resulting in a strong aesthetic consistency. Step into luxury with the Embedded EMT? Core Technology, enhancing functionality, comfort, and aesthetics. Revel in vibrant designs with high color-fastness properties, a true blend of form and function. It's a dance of colors and textures that, when orchestrated with finesse, can elevate the overall aesthetic of your home.

COMFORTABLE FLOORING AND SERENE SOUNDS: CRAFTING A COZY HARMONY

Imagine stepping onto a floor that exudes warmth and comfort, turning your home into a cozy haven. Whether it's the soft touch of carpet or the warmth of wood, the right flooring invites you to kick off your shoes and relax. This tactile experience goes beyond visual aesthetics, creating a homey vibe that resonates in every corner.

Often overlooked, the acoustics of a room play a pivotal role in shaping its ambience. Flooring materials of superior quality adeptly soak up sound, diminishing echoes, and cultivating a tranquil environment. In the seamless incorporation of Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT) flooring into your space, this unobtrusive yet impactful addition actively enhances the overall ambience.

RESILIENCE: BEAUTY THAT WITHSTANDS TIME

A home should be a testament to enduring beauty, and the selection of



flooring plays a pivotal role in achieving this vision. Enter Prime Tile, highly realistic, stylish, versatile, and eco-friendly LVT flooring that epitomizes the perfect fusion of aesthetics and durability. Crafted with the finest designs, featuring wood, stone, and captivating design lines, Prime Tile is a representation of timeless elegance. What sets it apart are its unique features, including the revolutionary EPTTM Shield, providing an extra layer of protection against wear and tear, and the EMTTM Core – 5L, ensuring stability and resilience in both commercial and residential settings. This robust composition guarantees longevity without compromising on style. The proven Click LVT, a part of Prime Tile, stands as an epitome of stability, seamlessly catering to heavy commercial and residential needs. It withstands the test of time, maintaining its allure even in high-traffic areas.

EFFORTLESS INSTALLATION AND MAINTENANCE: A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

In the masterpiece of home life, the last thing you want is a discordant note of installation and maintenance stress. The revolutionary 'Click'n go and Drop'n go!' joint systems of ECOCLICK+ ensures a breeze of an installation, prioritizing indoor air quality with low VOCs and non-phthalate technology. LVT flooring steps in as the virtuoso performer, requiring minimal upkeep. Its smooth surfaces resist stains and spills, and are remarkably water resistant. Also, the specially engineered flooring makes it a very hygienic product with anti-bac-

terial and anti-fungal properties, allowing you to spend more time enjoying your home and less time worrying about its upkeep.

RECYCLABLE AND ECO-FRIENDLY DESIGNS

The environmentally conscious homeowner will appreciate that the highly stylish LVT flooring is recyclable, making it versatile and eco-friendly. It features designs that showcase the finest wood, stone, and design lines, all while being slip-resistant.

INNOVATIVE FLOORING TECHNOLOGIES FOR LASTING PERFORMANCE

Embrace the future of flooring with cutting-edge solutions, where advanced technologies converge with innovative features for enduring performance. The proven Loose-Lay System, exemplified by products like ECOLAY+, ensures unparalleled dimensional stability with a 'No Stick, No Click, Just Lay' approach, simplifying installation and introducing sophistication through the HD design print layer. One of the standout offerings in the market, LOOM+, is embedded with EMT? Core technology, providing enhanced functionality and comfort. Revel in unique, vibrant designs with multiple tones and yarn thicknesses, a true design woven with technology. What sets LOOM+ apart is its commitment to well-being, boasting features like the absence of Nano-silver (known for controversial health concerns) and the incorporation of EPTTM, removing 99.9% of bacteria. These technological advancements underscore the commitment to delivering reliable and visually striking flooring solutions, setting new standards in flooring excellence.

In conclusion, the flooring you choose for your home is a silent maestro, conducting the ambience that defines your living experience. Whether it's the soothing tones of carpet, the timeless appeal of wood, or the discreet elegance of LVT flooring, each has its own unique way of contributing to the harmony of your home. So, as you embark on the journey of home design, remember that the floor beneath your feet is not just a surface but a canvas waiting to tell the story of your home.

(The author, Manoj Lohia, is the Director, of Merino Industries Ltd.)

GUWAHATI HOSTS HALF MARATHON

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Thousands of runners from all across the country on Sunday participated in a 'Half Marathon' in the capital city of Assam, showcasing the grit, determination and enthusiasm of people. The 'Coal India Guwahati Half Marathon' was organised under the aegis of Eastern Command of the Indian Army in association with the Assam government and title sponsor Coal India Ltd. Nazeem Pulikkal and Phurba Tamang won the race in men's and women's categories respectively, an official said. Emphius Nongrum and Teiboklang Biam came second and third among the men, while Bandasharai Marwein and Fulmoni Urang won the second and third positions among the women respectively, he added. "The event witnessed participation of over 5,000 participants under the categories of 21 km, 10 km and 5 km in different age groups. The determination and grit shown by the differently

Over 5,000 participate



abled who participated in the 5 km run further added to the spirit of the event," Defence PRO Lt Col Mahender Rawat said. Over 800 women and girls participated in the run in various categories, reflecting 'Naari Shakti' in the true sense, he added. The Sarusajai sports complex was decked up in colourful themes, symbolising celebration and festival. The route of the run was interspersed with cheering zones, dance troupes and bands all along, thereby keeping the adrenaline of the runners pumping high. "The unwavering commitment and tireless efforts of Army's Eastern Command and the Assam government have laid the foundation for many such future events in Northeast India, forging a legacy that will be remembered for years to come," Rawat said. The run represented a shared dream of unity, fitness, sports adventure and above all peace and prosperity across the region, he emphasised.



Scheffler primed to win his maiden HWC title

Woods pleased with his recovery

PTI ■ NASSAU

World number one golfer Scottie Scheffler maintained his lead in the Hero World Challenge with a 7-under 65, his best round of the week thus far, on the moving day here on Saturday. Scheffler, who finished runner-up to Viktor Hovland in the previous two editions, had shot a 69 and 66 on the first two days. He will be challenged by Matt Fitzpatrick on the final day as the Englishman jumped three spots to be second with a 7-under 65. With the overall aggregate of 203, he is three shots behind 2022 Masters winner Scheffler. Justin Thomas is two shots behind Fitzpatrick after a 4-under 68 in the third round. Fitzpatrick's 46-foot eagle putt on the 15th stood out. Another big mover on the day was Jason Day who gained four spots to be Tied-4th alongside Tony Finau, who both have tallied 206 for the week. Tournament host and 15-time major winner Tiger Woods is way back in the 20-man field but he is happy with how his body has responded in his first event since April. He is Tied-16th alongside Hovland after carding a 1-under 71 on Saturday. Woods, who is 16 shots behind the leader, had managed 75 on the opening day before improving to a 70 on Friday. "I still have the game. It's whether or not the body can do it. I'm very pleasantly surprised at how I've recovered every day. My activations in the gym have been good," said Woods. "To be able to knock off some of the rust as I have this week and showed myself that I can recover each and every day, that was kind of an unknown. 'I've walked this far. I've done all my training. But add in

playing and concentration and adrenaline and all those other factors that speed up everything, I'm very excited how the week's turned out," added an upbeat Woods, who plans to play one tournament a month next year if his body permits. Leader Scheffler has been consistent through the week and is primed to win his maiden HWC title. He is particularly pleased with his putting having made a change to his putter this week. Scheffler was on fire from the get go and collected two eagles and four birdies before losing a shot on the 18th hole. "Like I said at the beginning of the week, I feel as if I'm much more clear in what I need to be working on and a lot of that has to do with how I'm set up over the ball. "When I'm set up in the right position, then I feel like my mechanics are really good. That's what I'm focused on. I'm not focused on setting up perfectly. "I have my feels that I'm trying to get to in the setup and then not trying to be perfect, just trying to hit good putts," he said. Scheffler is much better placed to lift the trophy having missed out on the last two years. He is backing himself to go all the way. "Yeah, I think I've been kind of on the outside looking in going into Sunday. I could be wrong, but I remember it being I had two really good back nines to give myself kind of an outside chance. "The first year was definitely outside chance. I think last year I maybe was one or two back going into 18. Like I said, I was kind of on the outside looking in going into the tournament -- sorry, going in the back nine. "Yeah, it's nice to be in position this week to win," added the Texan.

Nantes supporter dies before game



AP ■ NANTES (FRANCE)

A supporter from Nantes died on Saturday following a fight that took place before the club's 1-0 win over Nice in the latest outbreak of violence to mar French soccer this season. Nantes said in a statement overnight that the fan was "fatally injured" close to the club's stadium. According to the L'Equipe newspaper, the fan was a member of the Brigade Loire, Nantes' main group of diehard fans. "In circumstances which are the subject of an ongoing judicial investigation, the 31-year-old collapsed, hit in the back," the club said. "Despite the intervention of emergency services, the fan could not be saved." Nantes said the public prosecutor's office has launched an investigation into voluntary manslaughter. Nantes public prosecutor Renaud Gaudel said the incident took place shortly before 8 PM local time when several private hire vehicles carrying Nice fans on their way to the match were attacked by groups of Nantes supporters. "The very first forensic investigations show that the victim had a wound on his back, possibly caused by a bladed weapon," the prosecutor said, quoted by French media. Local newspaper Ouest

France said the suspected assailant initially fled the scene before turning himself in at a police station. French sports minister Amélie Oudéa-Castéra expressed her "great sorrow" in a message posted on X, the social network formerly known as Twitter. "My thoughts are with his family, his loved ones and his friends in the stands," she wrote. Nantes coach Jocelyn Gourvennec, who was appointed this week, said he only found out about the supporter's death after the match. "I can't imagine how you can go to a soccer match, sometimes with your family, and be between life and death after a match," he said. "It's inconceivable. The players talked about it a lot in the dressing room, they were very touched." The French soccer league has been making headlines for all the wrong reasons this season following an upsurge of violence in stadiums over the past two campaigns. According to Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, more than 100 police officers were injured in soccer-related incidents last season. In October in Montpellier, a match was stopped in added time after fans threw a firework from the stands that landed next to Clermont goalkeeper Mory Diaw.

AFI to stop national camps after Paris; will leave door open for public, private entities

PTI ■ AMRITSAR

In a significant development, the Athletics Federation of India on Sunday decided to stop running national camps for elite athletes after the Paris Olympics, leaving the door open for public and private entities to take care of the top players. "We have decided to wind up national senior training camps after Paris (next year). We have communicated this to the sports ministry, which has appreciated our move," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla said on the concluding day of the federation's AGM here. "There are so many good facilities at SAI NCOEs (National Centres of Excellence). Reliance, JSW, Tata and other private entities also have good facilities. They have made huge investments and appointed foreign coaches. "They can train athletes at their facilities. Not only the private entities, the Army Sports Institute, Railways, Air Force, Navy, ONGC, other public sector entities and even state governments can also train their athletes. "We have 5-10 SAI centres but we can have 200 such centres (for training with public and private entities' participation). The athletes will have more access, they can stay at their homes and not at camps for training." The AFI's move would mean that top athletes like Neeraj Chopra, Murali Sreeshankar and Avinash Sable will not train under the aegis of the AFI after 2024 Paris, though it will continue to monitor them. The athletes can now come directly under public and private entities, including states such as Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, which have also appointed foreign coaches. The AFI will, however, monitor the athletes through a team



of coaches. Currently, the AFI conducts centralised national training camps of around 130-150 elite athletes under the supervision of 50-60 support staff, mainly at NIS Patiala, Bengaluru SAI Centre and LNCPE in Thiruvananthapuram. Chopra mainly trains outside India while Sreeshankar is coached by his father S. Murali in Kerala. Both are supported by JSW. Sumariwalla said the idea is to decentralise the camps and spread them through the country so that the athletes can train closer to their homes. The AFI is, however, yet to chalk out the modalities of how the public and private entities will take charge of running the training camps and how the federation will monitor the athletes. Junior programme, 4x400m relay teams to remain under AFI The junior national training

camps, being held at the National Centres of Excellence (NCOEs) in collaboration with AFI, will remain with the federation. The AFI added that it will continue to train the men's 4x400m, women's 4x400m and mixed 4x400m relay teams. "The three relay teams will have to be under the direct supervision of AFI as the relay members cannot train separately as they need coordination. We will also continue to hold competitions," AFI Planning Commission chairman Lalit Bhanot said. The AFI will also take care of the athletes during foreign exposure tours. The federation's decision to stop running national camps would mean less control over dope testing of athletes. The AFI, while admitting this, said the pros outweigh the cons. One reason behind the move to

allow public and private entities to enter the training domain is to increase the size of the athletes' pool, which currently stands between 100 and 150. "If the training camps are spread across the country, they will be accessible to a lot more athletes. The pool of elite athletes will be more and the competition will be tougher. We hope this will produce more world beaters," said Bhanot.

It's in the best interest of athletics: Anju Legendary athlete and AFI senior vice-president Anju Bobby George said the exit of the AFI from running training camps was the right decision and the way forward to achieve more success on the international stage. "The study (academics) of athletes was also a major concern. If an athlete is training at NIS or Bengaluru or Thiruvananthapuram for 11 months in a year, it is very difficult for them to study. Now they can train closer to their homes and can also study properly," said the 2003 World Championships bronze medalist long-jumper on the sidelines of AFI's AGM. "Not just the athletes, the coaches also have to leave their families and stay at the national camps for 11 months in a year. They can now opt for training camps near their homes." She admitted that there could be issues during the initial months but it would take Indian athletics forward. "Currently, the AFI can call anybody from any part of the country for camps at NIS or Bengaluru. But now what will happen if for example an athlete from Tamil Nadu wants to train in Kerala? These kinds of things we will have to deal with initially but ultimately it will, hopefully, lead us to a better system," she said.

AP ■ LONDON

Ravaged by injuries and hurtling from a cruel VAR call in midweek, Newcastle was hardly in ideal shape as the same 11 players were sent out by manager Eddie Howe for a third straight game for the English Premier League meeting with Manchester United on Saturday. You'd never have known. Newcastle's dominant 1-0 win at St. James' Park was testament to the unwavering spirit in a squad being stretched to the limit as the Saudi-owned club challenges for trophies on all fronts. At the same time, it was a reality check for Man United after its recent revival in the league marked by narrow, scrappy wins and sensational goals. Anthony Gordon's 55th-minute goal proved to be enough for Newcastle, which - in the space of a week - has beaten Chelsea and Man United either side of being denied a famous Champions League win at Paris Saint-Germain because of a roundly condemned handball decision. "It's been a massive week for us," Gordon said. "The same 11 players have played three games on the bounce and we've pulled through.

Newcastle defies long injury list

To earn dominant win over Man United, Arsenal leads by 4 in EPL

"It's not just the guys who are injured - the guys who are playing are injured. We've got kicks and bruises all over." Indeed, injuries are really starting to bite. The list was already into double figures before goalkeeper Nick Pope went off in the 86th minute with a suspected dislocated shoulder, sustained when he dived to stop a shot that never actually reached him. The schedule doesn't get any easier, though. Newcastle doesn't have a midweek off in December, during which the team plays in the League Cup quarterfinals and finishes off its Champions League group campaign. Its remaining fit players are running on fumes but are still decently placed in fifth - seven points behind Premier League leader Arsenal, which beat Wolverhampton 2-1 on Saturday. United, which had won five of its previous six league games, dropped to sev-



enth place and had only one shot on target in a tired-looking display coming three days after a 3-3 draw at Galatasaray in the Champions League.

FOUR POINTS CLEAR Arsenal stretched its lead to four points after scoring early goals through Bukayo Saka and Martin Odegaard before

hanging on against Wolves. Manchester City and Liverpool - the teams who started the weekend placed second and third - are in

action on Sunday and can trim the gap back down to one point. Both of Arsenal's goals were well worked, with Saka scoring in the sixth minute after a buildup including Gabriel Jesus and Takehiro Tomiyasu and Odegaard converting a cross from Oleksandr Zinchenko from the left. Zinchenko was at fault for Wolves' goal, scored by Matheus Cunha in the 86th, and there were some nervy moments in stoppage time. "The team was extraordinary again today," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said of his players, who were coming off a 6-0 win over Lens in the Champions League in midweek.

15-SECOND GOAL

Jay Rodriguez got the ball rolling for Burnley in its 5-0 thrashing of 10-man Sheffield United by scoring inside 16 seconds, yet that wasn't his fastest goal in the league.

Almost 10 years ago to the day, the striker netted after just 13.58 seconds for Southampton against Chelsea. No other player in the competition's history has two goals that quick. It was a dismal start to a forgettable match for Sheffield United, which was 2-0 down by the time Oli McBurnie was sent off in first-half stoppage time for collecting two yellow cards. Both of them were for elbowing Burnley defender Dara O'Shea in the face. Burnley scored three goals in a seven-minute span from the 73rd to tie for the biggest ever league win by a team that started a match in last place. The win ended Burnley's record seven-match losing run at home to start this season. That losing streak at home was nine matches in total in the Premier League, taking in the final two games of the 2021-22 campaign when the team was relegated.

Sheffield United dropped to last place and has conceded 39 goals in 14 games.

EVERTON'S MISSION

Everton was plunged into the relegation zone on the back of its record 10-point deduction for financial mismanagement. The team is unlikely to stay there for long. A 1-0 win at Nottingham Forest gave Everton its first points since the sanction and lifted Sean Dyche's side to within two points of safety. With Luton - which lost at Brentford 3-1 - immediately above and Burnley and Sheffield United below, Everton can capitalize on there being three weak teams near the bottom of the league. Dwight McNeil scored Everton's winner at the City Ground, arrowing a diagonal shot into the top corner in the 67th minute to cap a strong display by the visitors. There were jeers from the home fans at the final whistle. Forest manager Steve Cooper joins Sheffield United's Paul Heckingbottom in being under big pressure after 14 games, with - somewhat unusually - no coaches having been fired so far this seas

JANHVI KAPOOR ‘FEELS LIKE HOMECOMING’ WITH HER TELUGU DEBUT *DEVARA*

Janhvi Kapoor is indeed one of the most talented actresses in the young generation of actresses. Currently, the actress is gearing up for her Telugu debut titled *Devara* opposite Jr. NTR. The name of her character from the film was revealed ‘Thangam’ along with her first look that gave the exact resemblance of her mother late legendary actress Sridevi.

Talking about her Telugu dominance and how her mother played a significant role in the same, Janhvi said, “It’s my first Telugu film. So I had spent a lot of my time in learning the dialogues, as

I don’t speak the language. My mum spoke to us in Hindi and English at home. But whenever we went to Chennai (Tamil Nadu), more often than not, she would speak in Tamil. I am more familiar with Tamil than I am with Telugu.”

Janhvi shares that working on the film feels like “homecoming”. “I feel like I have come back home. Everyone on set feels like my own. I don’t know if it’s because of my intense emotional attachment to mum or if I am feeling attached to her by doing a film down South. It’s spiritual,” she added further.

With her foot in both the entertainment industries; Hindi and South, Janhvi is indeed taking the legacy of her late mother, Sridevi. The way Sridevi gave blockbuster films in both South and Hindi cinema, Janhvi is also stepping up on the same road. While Janhvi has delivered some amazing films in Bollywood, she is now gearing up for her Telugu debut, *Devara*, which will be released in April.

Meanwhile, on the work front, Janhvi will next be seen in *Mr. and Mrs. Mahi*.



Gautham Karthik to play a key role in *Thug Life*

Ulaganayagan Kamal Haasan and esteemed director Mani Ratnam are poised to reunite after nearly 17 years for their upcoming project, *Thug Life*, currently in the dynamic stages of pre-production.

Amidst the anticipation, speculation has been rife on social media regarding Gautham Karthik, initially introduced to the industry by Mani Ratnam in Kadal (Kadali in Telugu), potentially playing a significant role in the film. However, an official confirmation from the team is still pending.

The commencement of filming for *Thug Life* is expected in February 2024. The stellar cast includes confirmed names such as Trisha Krishnan, Dulquer Salmaan, and Jayam Ravi, each set to bring essential characters to life in this biggie.

Produced jointly by Kamal Haasan, Mani Ratnam, R. Mahendran, and Siva Ananthi under Raaj Kamal International Films and Madras Talkies banners, the movie will feature music by the talented AR Rahman.



KATRINA KAIF: *MERRY CHRISTMAS* is by far the most difficult film I’ve done

Actress Katrina Kaif is currently in Jeddah for the Red Sea International Film Festival 2023. The actress even had a brief interaction about her career and her upcoming movie *Merry Christmas* with Vijay Sethupathi, which is helmed by Sriram Raghavan. During the interaction, Katrina Kaif said, “It was always on my bucket list and one of my dreams to work with him (Sriram Raghavan), and I got the opportunity in *Merry Christmas*, and it was phenomenal. This is, by far, the most difficult film I have ever done. Definitely, the character took a lot out of me, but the experience was something like he really challenges

you as an actor. Also, it’s a bilingual film. We shot the film in Hindi and Tamil. In the Tamil version, I have actually spoken in Tamil. So it was two takes for whatever you were doing, and that was really challenging but exciting.”

Katrina Kaif also added, “My co-star Vijay Sethupathi is so phenomenal. When we would do the Hindi take, he would be fantastic, but when we would do the Tamil take, I would see a different actor.”

Produced by Ramesh Taurani and Jaya Taurani Sanjay Rouray and Kewal Garg’s *Merry Christmas* is a collaboration that combines the vision and expertise of Tips Films and Matchbox Pictures. The film is gearing up for a grand release on January 12, 2024.

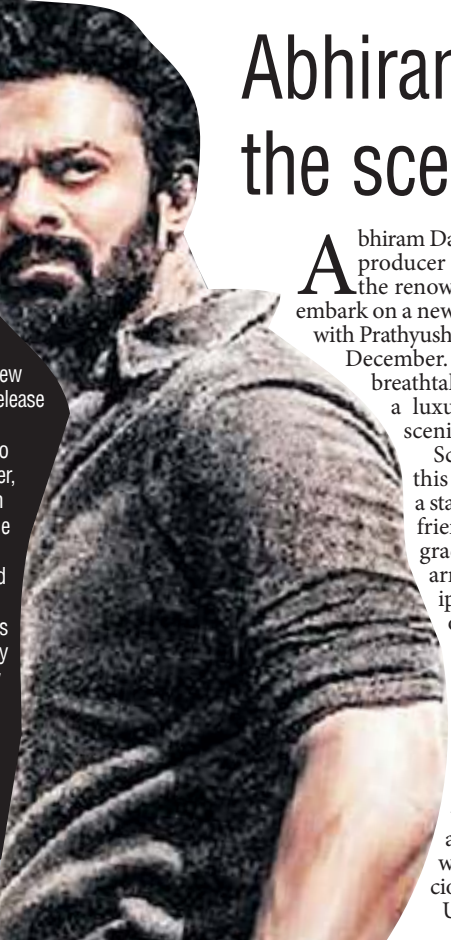
Salaar makers to release new action-packed trailer

It is widely known that the trailer of the much-awaited film *Salaar* was released recently. *Salaar*’s trailer broke *KGF 2* records and created a new benchmark by receiving 110 million views in 24 hours. *Salaar* 2nd trailer release details have been doing rounds in the industry circles.

The first trailer of *Salaar* focused on the story plot, and Prabhas was also revealed after 2 minutes in the clip. The team plans to release the 2nd trailer, which is said to be an action trailer and is expected to be released on 16th December. So, the fans of Prabhas will have another massive glimpse of the film and be happy as the details of *Salaar*’s 2nd trailer release are out. Apart from this, Amid this, the discussions began on when Prabhas would be making an entry in the movie.

Of late, the filmmakers are cutting the trailer frames in the same order as the screenplay and cinema graph. The trailer has Prabhas entering only after more than two minutes in the trailer and that hints at the entry of him in the movie also will be a little late.

The hero entrance episodes could be coming after the childhood episode, Khansaar setup, and of course the conflict establishment. However, the fans are hoping to get high with Prabhas’ menacing action blocks without much delay after the movie begins.



Abhiram Daggubati to tie the knot in the scenic landscapes of Sri Lanka

Abhiram Daggubati, the younger son of esteemed producer Suresh Daggubati and the sibling of the renowned actor Rana Daggubati, is set to embark on a new chapter in his life as he ties the knot with Prathyusha Chaparala in a grand ceremony this December. The wedding will unfold against the breathtaking backdrop of Anantara Kalutara, a luxurious 5-star resort nestled in the scenic landscapes of Sri Lanka.

Scheduled for December 6 at 8:50 pm, this auspicious occasion promises to be a star-studded affair, with nearly 200 close friends, family members, and celebrities gracing the event. The guests are set to arrive in Sri Lanka today, eagerly anticipating the commencement of the joyous wedding celebrations.

The festivities will span three days, commencing with a lavish dinner party on Monday (Dec 4) at 8:30 pm. Tuesday will witness the vibrant Mehendi ceremony at 4:30 pm, followed by an enchanting dinner. On Wednesday, the day will unfold with the traditional Pellikuthuru ceremony at 10:30 am, paving the way for the main wedding ceremony at 7 pm. The auspicious Sumuhurtham is set for 8:50 pm. Upon their return to Hyderabad, the



illustrious Daggubati family plans to host a grand reception, adding another illustrious chapter to the celebratory events surrounding Abhiram and Prathyusha’s union. This high-profile wedding is poised to be a memorable and glamorous affair, capturing the essence of love and tradition in a splendid setting.



‘I wanted a ballet like *Kasam Se*, which was missing in my album’

Armaan Malik, the Prince of Pop, took fans behind the scenes of his song *Kasam Se*, a standout track from his latest album *Only Just Began*. The album, comprising 8 diverse songs, showcases Armaan’s musical versatility, with *Kasam Se* emerging as a fan favorite for all the right reasons.

The song *Kasam Se* holds a special significance for Armaan as he created this song to propose to his then-girlfriend and now fiancé, Aashna Shroff. As soon as the song was released, there was curiosity among the listeners to know the back story of the song. Armaan who is currently busy promoting his album *Only Just Began* recently in an interview unveiled how he came up with this song. He shared, “I created this song intending to propose to Aashna. When the song was ready, it was so beautiful that I felt a ballet like this was missing from my album. I decided to add it to my album, making it a cherished memory.”

He added, “The ideation started with the word *Kasam*, which means promise. The essence of a proposal is making a promise to the love of your life. The way we say “*Kasam se tera hi hoon, Kasam se*, inspired me, so I approached Amaal and Kunal (Amaal Malik and Kunal Verma). I shared this moment and idea with them, asking them to create something beautiful, and that’s how *Kasam Se* came to be.”

The song *Kasam Se* along with seven more beautiful songs is part of his album *Only Just Began*.

‘I was looking for an opportunity to work with Sandeep Reddy, and was selected by him only for *Animal*’



Veteran actress Indira Krishnan, who is seen essaying the role of Rajmata Durgavati in Fantasy Romantic Drama *Dhruv Tara – Samay Sadi Se Pare*, has shared her experience working in action-thriller film *Animal* directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga.

She said : “It was an amazing experience to be part of the film. I was looking for an opportunity to work with Sandeep Reddy. Interestingly, I was selected by him only. He wanted to cast all natural actors. He spotted me on TV screens. I played the role of Rashmika Mandanna’s mother in the story.”

Indira is known for featuring in movies like *Holiday: A Soldier Is Never Off Duty* and *Tere Naam* among many others.

Sharing her experience of sharing screen with Rashmika and Ranbir she continued: “Rashmika is just a beautiful doll, we shared a cute bond. Ranbir is again a sweetheart. The immense respect and dedication they had.”

“Rashmika used to ask me to help her at times, very down rooted. They would to stand and greet actors. The young generation should learn a lot from them. I enjoyed my association with the team throughout.”

The film also stars Anil Kapoor, Bobby Deol and Tripti Dimri.

MEENAKSHII CHAUDHARY KICKS HER ‘STRESS AWAY WITH FUN’ WITH MMA

Meenakshii Chaudhary, currently one of the most sought-after actresses, is experiencing the zenith of her career with notable projects such as *Guntur Kaaram*, *Thalapathy 68*, and other significant ventures under her belt.

In a recent Instagram post, she shared a captivating video, stepping into the realm of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) for the first time under the expert guidance of coach Nasar Bin Ahmed Alay. She commented that it helped her fight the stress. Meanwhile, the video is creating waves across various social media platforms.

Balancing her commitments, Meenakshii is actively involved in the concurrent production of both *Guntur Kaaram* and *Thalapathy 68*, both poised for release next year.

