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Annapurna Scheme

**Sanna
Biyyam** for white ration
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**Pension for
the disabled**

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increased to
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per month



KTR recounts close ‘shave’ by Pulivendula barber on ‘Deeksha Diwas’

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS observed Wednesday as ‘Deeksha Diwas’. While KTR donated blood at Telangana Bhavan, BRS activists of Osmania University sat at Gun Park.

Recounting his moments during Deeksha Diwas when KCR took up a fast unto death demanding formation of Telangana state, KTR said on Wednesday, “The only day I was jailed was on November 29, 2009. I wasn’t even six months into becoming the Sircilla MLA. Police broke the convoy and took KCR on a different route. At Manair Bridge the convoy was stopped and divided into two by the cops. KCR, Nayini Narasimha Reddy, Lakshmi Kanth Rao and others were lifted while Professor Jayashankar was left out. I tagged along with the Professor. Without knowing where KCR was being taken, we reached Hanamkonda where student Srikanthachary of the Kakatiya University immolated himself. We joined the protest at the university,



was eventually arrested by the police and lodged in the Warangal Central Prison.” KTR said that he was allowed to stay at the prison clinic. He was woken up as per the prison schedule and a constable asked him if he needed a toothbrush and paste to which the TRS leader readily agreed.

As soon as he finished that

another cop came and asked if he would want to shave. KTR expected that the cop would give him a shaving kit.

“A constable escorted another person and said that the person he had brought was a barber and he would do the shaving. As he began shaving to strike up a conversation with the barber, I asked him, “Which place do you hail from

brother and he said, Pulivendula. The razor was exactly on my throat. That was a wrong question at the wrong time. However, the barber eased the situation by saying, “Sir, we are grief-stricken after the death of Dr YS Rajasekhara Reddy. Your agitation is a genuine one and you will achieve Telangana State.” KTR thanked the barber

who was a convict serving time in the prison. After he was released on bail that evening, he went to NIMS hospital. He saw that his father K. Chandrasekhar Rao was holding a piece of glass taken from a glass door to slit his wrist and commit suicide. Nayini Narasimha Reddy and Lakshmi Kanth Rao were trying to stop a battalion of police.

The police were not allowing KCR to make a media statement after a message came that KCR had given up his fast unto death. After a lot of negotiations, a video message was recorded.

Prof. Jayashankar, after discussing with legal experts, drafted the statement that KCR was expecting from New Delhi and P. Chidambaram, the then Union Home Minister, announced, “The process of formation of a Telangana state has commenced.” Soon after, KCR ended his “Deeksha.” He had asked KTR to take a delegation to thank TDP floor leader N. Chandrababu Naidu and Speaker N. Kiran Kumar Reddy.

GE-2023 ELECTORS				
Type of Voter	Male	Female	TG	Total
General Voters	1,62,98,418	1,63,01,705	2,676	3,26,02,799
Service Voters	14,850	556	0	15,406
Total Voters	1,63,13,268	1,63,02,261	2,676	3,26,18,205
Young Voters (Age 18-19)	5,70,274	4,29,273	120	9,99,667
Senior Citizens (Age 80+)	1,89,519	2,50,840	12	4,40,371
Overseas Electors (NRI)	2,380	563	1	2,944
PwD Electors	2,90,090	2,16,815	16	5,06,921

Indian equity market reaches US\$ 4-trillion milestone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market valuation of all listed companies on the leading stock exchange BSE reached the USD 4-trillion milestone for the first time ever on Wednesday, mirroring a positive trend in equities.

What is remarkable about this feat is that it took just two-and-a-half years to hit the USD 4 trillion landmark after the market capitalisation (m-cap) of all listed companies on

the BSE touched the USD 3-trillion mark on May 24, 2021.

The total valuation of exchange-listed companies went past the USD 1 trillion level on May 28, 2007.

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

years for the exchange to reach from USD 1 trillion level to USD 2 trillion in market capitalisation.

From there, it took 1,255 days to go past the USD 2.5 trillion mark on December 16, 2020. In the equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 727.71 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 66,901.91 after beginning the day on a positive note. During the day, it zoomed 772.08 points or 1.16 per cent to 66,946.28.

Rahul shares humorous campaign tale on translation troubles

PNS ■ KOZHIKODE

After an intense campaign in Telangana to garner votes for his party in the assembly polls, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi shared a humorous story on Wednesday about how the translator of one of his speeches faced some challenges.

Gandhi made this remark at a book release event organised here, where IUML MP Abdussamad Samadani, a well-known orator, was present to translate his speech.

The Wayanad MP jokingly stated that being his translator “can be a dangerous job.”

Citing his recent speech at a poll rally in Telangana as an example, the Congress MP

“I was saying something and he (the translator) was saying something else. Then, after some time, I started counting my words, you know. He was speaking in Telugu. So, I thought if I say five words in Hindi, it would take five or seven words in Telugu. But he would speak 20, 25, 30 words.”



said that the translator “got into a lot of trouble.”

“I was saying something and he (the translator) was saying something else. Then, after some time, I started counting my words, you know. He was speaking in Telugu. So, I thought if I say five words in Hindi, it would take five or

seven words in Telugu. But he would speak 20, 25, 30 words.

“Then sometimes I would say something quite boring and the crowd would jump, getting very excited. Then I would say something exciting and the crowd would keep quiet. And at the same time, I cannot get angry.

‘Kavach’ fully functional on 1,500-km route

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The indigenously-developed automatic train protection system ‘Kavach’ has been fully installed on 1,500 km of train route, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Wednesday, adding a significant progress has been made to increase its coverage.

“We started our journey with the Kavach system in 2016 and till 2020, its pilot work, testing, modification and version enhancement were done. It was in the beginning of 2022, its production and installation started on a large scale,” Vaishnaw said during an interaction with

journalists.

“Today, we have installed the system on 1,500-km route and a significant progress has been made (for its installation) on another 3,000-km route on the Mumbai-Howrah and the Delhi-Howrah route,” he said.

‘Kavach’ is an automatic train protection system for enhancing safety of running trains. It has been developed indigenously by the Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) in association with three Indian vendors. ‘Kavach’ not only helps loco pilots to avoid signal passing at danger and overspeeding but also helps in train running during

inclement weather such as dense fog, leading to enhanced safety and efficiency of train operations.

Some features of the system are controlling speed of trains by automatic application of brakes in case loco pilot fails to apply the brakes and repeating line-side signal in cab which is very useful for higher speeds. Vaishnaw said that with continuous efforts, the railways has made a significant capacity enhancement to install ‘Kavach’ on 1,500-km route every year.

Elaborating about the system, he said that it is not a device which can be installed in locomotives only.

ECI suspends 3 cops...

Continued from page 3

The ECI received a report from Special Observers on November 39 regarding the seizure and recovery of Rs 18 lakh along with mobile phones and chequebooks. The three police officers instead of taking proper action against the culprits tried to dilute the case and mislead the investigation by not naming the accused.

The police seized Rs 18 lakh from the Santhosh Elite

Apartments in Musheerabad PS limits on Wednesday. But the cops booked the wrong case under Section 102 of Cr.PC (money seized from unknown persons) from a vehicle carrying the registration number AP 28 CH 6759.

The Mancheril District Collector and Electoral Officer, Badhawath Santhosh, issued an order transferring Bellampally Municipal Commissioner K. Sammaya for wilful violation of election rules.

Cabinet approves continuation of fast track special courts for another 3 years

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet has given its nod for continuing fast track special courts for another three years for delivering swift justice in cases involving sexual offences. After the passage of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act in 2018 in

the aftermath of the Nirbhaya gangrape case in Delhi, the Centre had decided to set up 1,023 fast-track special courts, including 389 to deal exclusively with cases related to violations of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, in 31 states and Union

territories. The scheme was launched on Gandhi Jayanti in 2019 for one year and was later extended for an additional two years until March 31 this year. A government functionary had earlier said despite the Centre’s efforts, only 754 of the 1,023 courts were operational.

Cong leaders...

Continued from page 3

Under the Rythu Bharosa scheme, land-holding farmers and tenant farmers would get Rs 15,000 per acre, Rs 12,000 for agricultural labourers and Rs 500 bonus for paddy.

The party said that 200 units of electricity would be given free to every family under the Griha Jyoti scheme, house sites would be given to the homeless under the Indiramma housing scheme, Rs 5 lakh and a 250 square yard house site would be given to the families of Telangana martyrs.

Sonia announced at the Vijaya Sankalpa Sabha that under the Yuva Vikasam scheme, a Rs 5 lakh Vidya Bharosa card would be given to students, a pension of Rs 4,000 would be given under

the Cheyutha scheme and an insurance cover of Rs 10 lakh would be provided under the Rajiv Health Insurance scheme.

During the election campaign, the Congress had widely publicised these six guarantees. Congress leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge, Revanth Reddy and Bhatti Vikramarka announced during the campaign that they would pass the six guarantees law at the first cabinet meeting if the Congress came to power. Revanth Reddy, AICC in-charge Manikrao Thakare and others conducted special prayers at the Nampally Dargah and at the Birla Mandir Venkateswara Swamy Temple and swore to implement the six guarantees and the Congress Manifesto.

Voters on stage...

Continued from page 3

BRS has fielded candidates in all 119 seats. As per the seat sharing agreement, BJP and actor Pawan Kalyan-headed Jana Sena are contesting in 111 and 8 seats respectively, while Congress has given one seat to its ally CPI, and fighting from 118 others.

Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has put up candidates in nine segments in the city. The BRS is keen on extending its winning run that started in 2014, while the Congress is putting up a spirited fight to win the polls having tasted defeat in 2018 and four years earlier, when the previous UPA government granted statehood to Telangana.

CM KCR is contesting from two segments-- Gajwel and Kamareddy. He represents Gajwel in the outgoing

Legislative Assembly.

Kamareddy and Gajwel are witnessing exciting contests.

Congress has fielded its state president Revanth Reddy to take on the chief minister in Kamareddy, while BJP candidate Venkata Ramana Reddy is no pushover either.

In Gajwel, BJP has deployed its election campaign chairman Eatala Rajender against CM KCR. Revanth Reddy, a Lok Sabha member, is also contesting from Kodangal which he had represented earlier.

BJP’s Rajender is seeking re-election from Huzurabad.

Besides its election manifesto, BJP highlighted its promise to make a backward caste leader as CM and empowerment of Madigas and arranging free visits to Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya during its campaign.

The saffron party’s cam-

paign stressed on the necessity of electing a “double engine government” and pointed to the “family rule” of KCR and alleged corruption.

For BRS, CM KCR addressed as many as 96 public meetings during the campaign. BRS working president and KCR’s son K T Rama Rao also campaigned extensively for BRS. The party’s campaign centered around the previous Congress regime’s failures and ongoing welfare measures for farmers and women and other sections of society. Rao also highlighted his struggle to achieve Telangana statehood.

Congress has come up with an elaborate and meticulous campaign.

The grand old party’s campaign was led by its leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Revanth Reddy.

UNLF signs peace pact with govt, Shah calls it historic milestone

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government on Wednesday signed a peace agreement with United National Liberation Front (UNLF), Manipur’s oldest militant organisation dominated by the majority Meitei community, under which the rebel group has agreed to renounce violence.

The development comes

days after the ban on the group under the stringent Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) was extended for five years earlier this month.

Representatives of the UNLF signed the agreement here with senior officials of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs and Manipur government, an official spokesperson said.

While political settlements have been finalised with several ethnic armed groups of the Northeast as part of conflict resolution initiatives of the Centre, it is for the first time a valley-based Manipuri armed group has agreed to return to mainstream by abjuring violence and agreeing to honour the Constitution of India and laws of the land.

‘Free grain

Continued from page 3

In December 2022, as PMGKAY came to an end after multiple extensions, it was subsumed under the NFSA providing ration free for one year.

Under the NFSA, up to 75 per cent of the rural population and 50 per cent of the urban population are being covered under two categories -- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and priority households. While AAY households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, are entitled to 35 kg of foodgrains per family per month, priority households get 5 kg per person per month.

Terming it as a historic decision, the government said the extension of free grain distribution under the PMGKAY for next five years reflects the long-term commitment and

vision of the government for addressing national food and nutrition security.

This should help mitigate any financial hardship of the affected strata of society in a sustainable manner and ensure long term pricing strategy with zero cost to the beneficiaries, which is vital for effective penetration of the Public Distribution System, it said in a statement.

For example, the economic cost of 35 kg rice for an Antyodaya family comes to Rs 1,371, while the cost of 35 kg wheat comes to Rs 946, which is being borne by the central government under PMGKAY, and the foodgrains are provided completely free to the families, it said.

Thus, the monthly savings of ration card holders are significant, on account of the free foodgrains, it added.

○ All set for polling in Telangana today

of high-decibel campaigns, all parties are confident of getting green light from the people. What is in a typical voter's mind is something that nobody knows.

BJP and actor Jana Sena are contesting in 111 and 8 seats respectively.

"Keeping in view welfare of the beneficiaries and in order to strengthen the food security in terms of accessibility, affordability and availability of foodgrains for the targeted population, and to maintain uniformity across the states, the decision has been taken to continue providing foodgrains, free of cost, under PMGKAY for five years," an official release said. PMGKAY was introduced in 2020 as a pandemic relief measure, under which 5 kg of free foodgrains per beneficiary per month was provided in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrain under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

RTC buses packed as people rush for voting to hometowns

CHITHALURI REVANTH
■ HYDERABAD

People in Hyderabad are facing problems due to lack of buses at the bus stations which are packed with passengers who are going to their villages to vote on November 30.

After the office hours on Wednesday, many of the unorganised and organised workers are leaving the city to their hometowns. On Wednesday the number of passengers has increased as there is no place to stand in the buses.

Taking advantage of this situation, private cabs are asking twice and thrice the bus fares. Private cabs are charging Rs 600 fromr LB Nagar to



Suryapet, Rs 1,000 from Uppal to Hanamkonda and Rs 300 from LB Nagar to Miryalaguda. These fares are twice or thrice of the RTC bus fares.

Raju, a passenger, said, "I came to LB Nagar two hours ago. Every bus which goes to

Suryapet is being packed before it comes here. When I asked the private cab he was asking Rs 600, which is more than twice the RTC fare."

A passenger at the Mahatma Gandhi Bus Station (MGBS) Abhishek, said, "I did not expect this much crowd in the

bus stops and railway stations. The government should have facilitated more buses to the passengers, who are going to vote."

TSRTC Executive Director Munishkhar said, "In all, 1,450 buses have been given for election duty. On normal days 3,280 buses run from MGBS. In addition to that 750 more buses were run on Wednesday." Rangareddy Regional Manager said, "There is equal traffic in all the routes in the nine erstwhile districts of the State. There are more youth under the age of 25 who will be voting for the first time.

TSRTC officials said, "For the convenience of the passengers we are using city service



buses as district services. Around 200 buses are running between Hyderabad and Karimnagar and Nizamabad, 200 buses to Hanamkonda, 200 city buses are operating between Hyderabad and Suryapet, Miryalaguda, Kodad and 60 buses are allocated to Mahabubnagar.

Voters can get status of queue lines

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad District Election Officer (DEO) Ronald Rose said that the voters can get the status of the queue line at their polling stations in their houses through the 'Poll Q route' portal which will be activated on polling day in GHMC website and My GHMC application.

This initiative covers all polling stations in the 15 Assembly constituencies of the Hyderabad district. The DEO said that to access the facility voters should select the Constituency, polling station and polling centre in the 'Poll Q route'. Then it navigates the route and line at the polling station and waiting time.

"Sector officer updates the queue line in that portal. This app has been created with the intention that everyone can exercise the right to vote.. Everyone whose name is in the voter list is requested to vote on the polling day", he added.

Awareness drive on AIDS to be held on Dec 1

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State AIDS Control Society (TSACS) on Wednesday announced that it would observe World AIDS day on December 1.

The programme will be conducted at the Indian Institute of Health & Family Welfare, Vengal Rao Nagar from 10 am to 1 pm. Principal Secretary for Health & Family Welfare Department, Government of Telangana, Syed Ali Murtuza Rizvi will be the chief guest at the event. It aims to end stigma and discrimination faced by the affected and to improve the quality of life of people living with HIV. NGOs participating in awareness campaigns regarding AIDS will be a part of the programme.

All arrangements in place for polling

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Cyberabad Commissioner of Police Stephen Raveendra said that polling arrangements have been completed. The commissionerate is covering 13 Assembly constituencies under four districts, which are Ranga Reddy, Medchal, Sangareddy and part of Hyderabad district with a total of 34,42,219 voters.

All total licensed arms which are in Cyberabad Commissionerate have been deposited. Total 3,202 polling stations are covering 1,191 polling locations. In all, 130 flag marches were conducted in all mixed localities and trouble-some areas to instill confidence among the voters. The Armed Forces are guarding

EVM and VVPAT machines at six distribution, six reception and two counting centres.

Quick response mechanism is established to ensure response within 5 minutes in urban and within 8 minutes of time in rural areas. Identified 199 polling locations covering 655 polling stations as critical.

On Wednesday, District Election Officer Ronald Rose inspected the distribution and reception centres in 15 constituencies. He said that web-casting will be done in 4,119 polling centres in the district, CCTV cameras are being installed around the polling centres in some locations. During this election, 312 candidates are contesting and 369 sector route officers have been



Election authorities distributing EVM's to polling officers at Nizam College in Hyderabad on Wednesday

appointed in all 15 constituencies. Polling officials said that there is no shortage of personnel.

Gold worth Rs 63L seized at Hyd airport

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Customs officials at the RGI Airport in Hyderabad seized gold worth Rs 62.94 lakh in separate incidents over the last two days.

On November 28, the officials intercepted an Indigo flight (6E-48) in the early morning hours and seized two gold rods worth Rs 24.50 lakh. The rods weighing 394 grams were concealed under two different seat cushions on the flight.

On November 27, Customs officials intercepted a flight



coming from Dubai based on passenger profiling. Upon checking, gold in powdered form was found inside two cartons. The gold weighed 602 gms and was valued at Rs 38.44 lakh.

Rainy election day likely in TS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana is likely to witness a rainy election day as the Indian Meteorological Department predicted rains from November 30- December 2.

The low pressure formed in South East Bay of Bengal turned into a cyclone on Wednesday. It is likely to move north-westwards in the Bay of Bengal and become a cyclonic

storm within 48 hours, which will bring light to moderate rains across Telangana.

The IMD predicts cloudy weather in Hyderabad and moderate rains in surrounding areas. Districts including Adilabad, Nirmal, Nizamabad, Kamareddy, Sangareddy, Vikarabad, Khammam, Nalgonda, Bhadradi Kothagudem and Warangal are expected to receive light rains.

28.93 lakh IT employees to vote in TS polls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Information Technology Association (TITA) on Wednesday announced the participation of 28, 93,500 Information Technology (IT) professionals in the Telangana Assembly elections.

The work force comprises 6,25,000 skilled employees and 22,68,500 support staff. In a statement TITA President Sundeeep Kumar Makthala, said, "Contrary to speculation, the IT community is poised to make a resounding impact on polling day. TITA's voter awareness campaigns have dispelled any notion that the long weekend will deter IT employees from exercising their right. On November 30, we anticipate heightened participation, facilitated by the streamlined work-from-home options already in place."

T-Hub starts 3-month joint mentorship with Global Wales

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

T-Hub, a startup incubator, announced a comprehensive three-month joint mentorship programme with Global Wales, supported by the Welsh Government and Universities of Wales dedicated to fostering cross-border entrepreneurship and innovation on Wednesday.

This alliance aims to strengthen connections between Wales and India by harnessing the innovation ecosystems of both regions to nurture and support startups.

The programme is tailored to empower startups in Telangana, focuses on diverse sectors such as Health Tech, Fintech, Enterprise SaaS, EV, Sustainability, and Sports Tech. 14 startups from T-Hub have been selected to participate, showcasing a spectrum of innovative ideas at various stages of development.



Technologies Private Limited, Yeshbio Solutions Pvt Ltd, HeartHealth Technologies, Docturnal Private Limited, Acuration Private Limited and Better Analytics Private Limited.

These startups will receive comprehensive mentorship, covering vital aspects like product development, problem-solving, competitive research, business modeling, and technical solutions. The programme incorporates discussions on Lean Startup methods and Agile principles, offering access to essential tools, resources, and connections. Additionally, they will benefit from personalized guidance by product specialists and gain access to industry mentors, experts, and partners through curated sessions.

Global Wales will facilitate employability opportunities between Indian and Welsh organisations, leveraging T-Hub's vast network and knowledge for future industry engagement and potential graduate employment while T-Hub will be leading initiatives.

MSR, CEO, T-Hub, said, "The three-month engagement aims to foster a culture of collaboration and innovation, laying the foundation for long-term partnerships between T-Hub and Global Wales. The collaboration reflects our commitment to support and empower startups, ultimately contributing to the growth of the Indian startup ecosystem."

Gwen Williams, Head of Global Wales Programme, Global Wales said, "It has been amazing to see how much can be achieved in over a year since we launched our partnership with T-Hub in October 2022. We have been delighted to support this collaboration between colleges, universities and T-Hub, a partnership that has supported developments in electric vehicles, health technology and digital for Wales and Telangana."

Charminar, Zoo Park, museum to remain closed today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Nehru Zoological Park and the Salarjung Museum will remain closed on Thursday in view of the Telangana Assembly elections.

In addition to that, all the schools and other educational institutions in Hyderabad will also remain closed. Earlier, the government announced November 30 as a public holiday for all Telangana employees and workers in view of Assembly elections in the State.

Apart from that, Telangana CEO Vikas Raj directed the Labour Commissioner to take stringent action against IT firms not giving a holiday on November 30. Meanwhile, the State is all set to go to polls on Thursday while the counting of votes is set to take place on Sunday, December 3.

Meanwhile, the historical Charminar and all HMDA parks will be closed on November 30.

The Additional Commissioner



of Hyderabad City Police asked the Department of Archeology to close Charminar for a day in view of the elections. On the request of the Hyderabad police, permission will be denied to visitors near

Charminar on Thursday. In the same way, the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) has announced that all parks will be closed on Thursday during polling.

Some schools working, though government declared holiday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Ahead of Telangana Legislative Assembly elections, various schools are working in other districts except for those in Hyderabad on November 29.

The government officials have issued a circular stating that all schools and colleges in Hyderabad district should be closed on November 29 and November 30 due to elections. Due to this, all the educational institutions are closed.

Mohd Ahmed Khan, a government teacher at GBHS, Dareechemata, said, "All the govt schools including ours are closed as per the instructions issued by the government officials."

Naresh Somaiahgari, a government school teacher said, "Our govt school is open as the school is allocated as a polling centre. Only appointed staff are



working here for making arrangements for polling day which is scheduled tomorrow. It is a holiday for students as per the instructions issued by the government officials."

Arun, Principal of ZPHS LB Nagar, said, "Since our school is not allotted for polling centres, the school is open to students but those which are allotted for polling centres are closed."

Bheema Rao, a government school teacher from Nizamabad district said, "Our government school is working as the polling centres are not present in the nearby surroundings. The govt officials have issued a circular on November 28 stating that except for Hyderabad district, rest of schools where polling stations are not present, they should be working."

Sterilisation tech to combat hospital-acquired infection

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Enbio Group has introduced new sterilisation technology in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh to cleanse hospital equipment and prevent infections.

Despite significant improvement in healthcare, including being recognised as the third best-performing State in India by NITI Aayog, Telangana faces challenges with hospital-acquired infections. In response, the government has



initiated monthly infection control reviews, and Andhra Pradesh has taken proactive measures. Enbio's Class B autoclaves represent a significant stride in providing efficient, state-of-the-art equipment for infection control

within hospitals, healthcare centres and specialty clinics.

According to the latest annual report from the Telangana Health Department, only 10 out of 300 hospitals in the State have a mechanised laundry system, and only 204 facilities have National Quality Assurance Standards (NQAS) certification. Enbio's autoclave sterilizers aim to fill these gaps by providing reliable and portable sterilisation solutions, ensuring the safety of patients and healthcare providers.

‘Dialogue-in-the-dark’ facilitates 4,000 disabled people to get jobs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Ladies Organisation (FLO), Hyderabad Chapter, organised a programme called "Dialogue-in-the-dark" as part of the "Sustain-Her-Ability" goals of the chapter at the Park on Wednesday. The programme created a lot of impact and has helped around 4,000 disabled people in securing jobs so far.

The programme was organised in two batches, comprising 40 in each. It was scheduled to sensitise society to be more inclusive. The aim of this programme was to create empathy and understanding towards disability.

The "Dialogue in the Dark" was an awareness-raising, experiential experience and a social experiment. This unique



experiment was founded by Andreas Heinecke in 1988 in Germany. Since then, hundreds of programmes have been organised across the world. Nearly 500 to 600 programmes are held in India in about 63 cities.

Ritu Shah, Chairperson of FLO, said, "This programme was conceived as part of inclusivity. Dialogue-in-the-dark is a beautiful experience that can give you a new perspective on the senses. The best and most beautiful things in the world

cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart."

Anand led by his team of five guides Vinod, Pavan, Kiran, Sharath, and Faizal interacted with the participants at the end of the experience.

They said, "We have a couple of crore blind people in India. We have to be competitive to survive in this cut-throat competition. So, technology is enabling us to be independent. Thankfully soci-

ety, government and corporations are also becoming inclusive. We can book our own cab, do online shopping, do coding, and use AI tools. Now some tools and apps are available at our disposal, making us self-reliant."

Faisal said, "We travel independently without anybody's help and support. Further, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) website is compatible with NonVisual Desktop Access software (NVDA) which is a free and open-source, portable screen reader for Microsoft Windows. It is primarily used by Visually Impaired users for booking tickets. IRCTC Rail Connect mobile app is compatible with the "Google talk-back" accessibility feature. We need not need sympathy. We need empathy. Accept us as your equals"

ECl seeks report on Kaushik's suicide threat to voters

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Election Commission has sought a report on the alleged threat by Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) candidate Kaushik Reddy to voters that if he was defeated, he along with his family members will commit suicide.

The Election Commission directed the returning officer of Huzurabad constituency in Karimnagar district to conduct an inquiry and submit the report.

Addressing an election rally on the last day of the campaign on Tuesday, BRS candidate P Kaushik Reddy had said that if he wins, there will be a victory procession but if he loses, there will be a funeral procession on December 4.

Flanked by his wife and daughter by his side, Kaushik Reddy told the people that it was their wish if they wanted



to see them taking their lives by hanging. "It's up to you what you want. If you don't vote for me, you will see our dead bodies," he said.

Kaushik Reddy, who is a member of Telangana Legislative Council, appealed to people to give him a chance by electing him to the

Assembly in the November 30 election.

Kaushik Reddy is contesting against BJP's sitting MLA and former minister Eatala Rajender and Congress candidate Vodithala Pranav. Kaushik Reddy had lost 2018 elections from the same constituency as the candidate of the Congress

party to Rajender, who was then elected on TRS (now BRS) ticket.

In 2021, when Rajender joined the BJP and quit as MLA to force the by-election, Kaushik Reddy had quit the Congress to join the BRS in the hope of securing a party ticket. However, the BRS had fielded G Srinivas Yadav in the by-election. Rajender retained the seat with a majority of over 23,000 votes.

The BRS had later nominated Kaushik Reddy to the Legislative Council. However, the ruling party fielded him to take on Rajender. The BJP MLA is also contesting against BRS president and Chief Minister KCR in Gajwel constituency.

Elections to the 119-member Assembly are scheduled on November 30. Counting of votes will take place on December 3.



Congress files another complaint against KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress filed a complaint with the Election Commission against BRS Working President KT Rama Rao alleging that KTR violated rules regarding the silence period by giving a call to BRS cadres to observe Deeksha Diwas on Wednesday throughout the State and organise political programmes.

TPCC Senior Vice-President G Niranjan filed the complaint on Thursday. He mentioned in his complaint, "KTR's appeal is coming today on HMTV and the channel is also telecasting visuals from the year 2009 like K Chandrasekhar Rao's hunger strike.

Neck and neck fight between BRS and Congress on cards

SNCN ACHARYULU
■ HYDERABAD

"Who will win? Which party will come to power"? Wherever two persons meet they are discussing this topic only. Unlike in the past two Assembly elections the 2023 Assembly elections are creating interest in the public and also in the political circles.

For the excitement on this current Assembly elections, the reason was neck and neck fight between ruling BRS and the main opposition Congress. In the officials, political circles and also in the general public, the current Assembly elections have become a hot topic for discussion. The Assembly constituencies where the top leaders of political parties are in the fray have become central point for discussion. At the same time, some punters are betting over the individual results and also the overall results.

While the ruling BRS is confidence on a hat-trick victory, the main opposition Congress is also with the same confidence on coming to power for the first time in the Telangana State. Both BRS and Congress are busy with internal surveys over mood of the



people. Whatever is in their mind, the voters are also maintaining silence on which party they are going to vote. For the first time the BRS is facing a tough fight from the Congress. At ground level, cadre of the BRS and the Congress are working hard for the victory of their respective parties. In this context, a tense atmosphere prevails in the villages.

The candidates of major parties are also scared about their political future. They are also not in a position to tell confidently about their victory. Some candidates are openly expressing the confidence about their victory but in the internal talks they are expressing a different opinion. The Congress feels that there is a

favourable wave in the public to their party. The BRS denies that there is no favourable wave for the Congress and the public are still with their party only. To create confusion in the public, the Congress is creating a "fake wave" towards their party. Surprisingly, the public discussion was about the BRS and the Congress only and they are not talking about the BJP. In the battle between the BRS and the Congress there are clear indications that the BJP is going to be hit hard. Not only coming to power, but also hopes of the BJP on a hung Assembly may not be fulfilled. Between the BRS and the Congress, whichever wins will be going to get a clear majority as per political observers.

Cong leaders already deciding Cabinet portfolios

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Congress leaders are already deciding on who is going to get what portfolio. The party is confident of coming to power and so the dreams of Cabinet formation are being now discussed openly.

While many are expecting ministerial posts, some are expecting promotions, some who couldn't get a chance to contest are expecting MLC or corporation chairpersons posts.

Among those in race for Chief Minister's post are Revanth Reddy, Bhatti Vikramarka, Jana Reddy, Komatireddy Venkatreddy, Uttam Kumar Reddy, Madhu Yashki Goud who have indicated their aspirations. Whether they will get CM post or not, there is a big discussion on who is going to hold important portfolios like land, revenue, excise, mines, among others.

D Sridhar Babu, Seethakka, Shabbir Ali, Jagga Reddy and Jeevan Reddy are certain to get ministerial posts. Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Thummala Nageshwar Rao, Jupally Krishna Rao and Mynampally Hanumanth Rao are likely to be accommodated in the Cabinet. Even if leaders lose, they will be made MLC and given berth like Jana Reddy.

Many of Revanth Reddy's followers who didn't get a ticket like Shubash Reddy, Vem Narendar Reddy, Addanki Dayakar, Ayodhya Reddy and Belliah Naik are likely to be MLC or be given corporation chairmen.

Patel Ramesh, Balram Naik and Mallu Ravi are in race for MP posts. Political analysts believe that democracy in the party may end up with leaders fighting for seats.

Revanth asks Cong workers to look out for BRS games

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

TPCC President Revanth Reddy asked Congress leaders that they should be on the alert for 'games' by the BRS.

The BRS, which has been in power for two terms, has a chance to influence voters and win a third time. He emphasized that all field-level workers of the Congress must be alert and held a review meeting with main leaders in the party's war room on Wednesday.

Later, he spoke to Congress candidates in all the districts and the Assembly in-charge through teleconference and asked them to stop the BRS

from tempting voters.

He reminded them to be on alert 24 hours a day as this was a crucial time. If necessary, monitoring should be done without sleeping, he added.

He said that if we work hard for a day we will get power for five years. When we come to power, we will give first priority to all party activists, he added.

Meanwhile, as the time for polling is approaching, the Congress is focusing on poll management. The party has been taking strategic steps from the beginning confident that it would win this time.

TPCC President Revanth



Reddy and in-charge Manik Rao Thakre conducted a review meeting in the party's war room on Wednesday and gave instructions to all district units.

SWEARING-IN CEREMONY, SIGN ON FIRST FILE

Parties gearing up for D-day

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Much before even polling on Thursday for the Telangana Assembly elections, major parties, confident of their eventual victory, have started gearing up for the D-day by filling in details for the swearing-in ceremony and signing on the first file post government formation, among others.

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi is confident of winning the elections. Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao is holding discussions to form the government again.

As things stand, the swearing-in ceremony of a BRS government could be held on the premises of Dr B R Ambedkar Telangana State Secretariat with the Chief Minister taking the reins for the third consecutive time. The CM is in touch with priests to finalise the date and time of the swearing-in ceremony.



ny. The CM has also discussed which file should be signed first. The first sign could be the file giving ownership rights to assigned lands.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao will exercise his franchise in Chintamadaka village of Siddipet district on November 30 during the Assembly elections. KTR will cast his vote at

Nandinagar, while Kavitha will do her part in Khairatabad.

Likewise, top leaders of the Congress are holding discussions to form the government. The Congress brass has decided to hold the swearing-in ceremony on December 9 at LB Stadium. Top Congress leaders say that the first signature will be on the file concerning six guarantees.

Politicos turn to Gods for smooth elections

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The top leaders who have struggled to please the voters, also flocked to the temples on the day of silence, Wednesday. They prayed to the Gods to grant them victory with the understandable confusion in the minds of the voters. The key leaders of various parties in the State visited temples. They performed pujas to make their party win. The leaders of the Congress and the BJP, who have made many efforts to attract voters with the aim of winning, have now put the burden on God. They are worshipping in temples to make their party win.

As part of this, Kishan Reddy performed special puja at Charminar Bhagyalakshmi temple and Kanakadurga Nagalakshmi temple in Bashirbagh, a day before election day. He advised people to exercise their right to vote in Thursday's Assembly elections.

He said that four State elections have already been over. Telangana elections should be held peacefully on Thursday and people should not succumb to temptations, including money, and freely exercise the right to vote provided by the Constitution. He said that he prayed to Goddess Bhagyalakshmi to shower her blessings on the people of the country.

their right to vote in Thursday's Assembly elections.

On this occasion, Kishan Reddy said 41 workers came out safely after 17 days from the tunnel, which the people of the country were eagerly waiting for. This is really a great thing. "Today I prayed to Ammavaaru for coming out bravely. It is a great thing that the Central and State governments hold talks from time to time and brought out the workers from the tunnel in Uttarakhand," he said.

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Enquiry in Passport Office to be totally online

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Hyderabad Regional Passport Office (RPO) has taken a decision to shut the offline appointments for the enquiry.

According to a press release from the RPO, to alleviate the challenges of standing in queues for extended periods to obtain walk-in tokens for enquiry, it has now been decided to issue all 250 appointments online.

At present, a total number of 250 appointments are being issued every day except on Wednesdays. In all, 125 offline appointments (walk-ins) and 125 online appointments. In case of offline appointments, tokens were issued on a first come first serviced basis, wherein applicants were subject to come early in the day to get their token and those who could not get their token, had to visit the office once again. To end this system,

these appointments will be accessible on the passport seva portal, www.passportindia.gov.in The revised system will be effective from December 1, 2023.

On the days of Monday, Tuesday and Friday, 250 online appointments will be enquired as per the time slot given. On Thursday, there would be no limit on enquiry appointments between 09:30 am and 12:30 pm. Applicants with documentary proofs, such as those with medical emergencies, students providing admission proof for foreign institutions/hall tickets for exams, and individuals with visa expiry or imminent foreign travel, may walk in for enquiry and will be given priority. All applicants may please note that the enquiry appointments are free of cost and are advised to not approach middlemen, brokers, and outs for their passport-related matters.

BJP appoints Dattatreya's daughter Vijayalaxmi as TS unit spokesperson

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP appointed Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya's daughter, Vijayalaxmi, as the State BJP spokesperson.

"I hope that you will be dedicated to BJP's ideals, act with honesty, commit-

ment, discipline and sincerity, actively participate in all party programmes along with your fellow workers and party committees, identify problems faced by the people in your area and launch movements to strengthen the

party institutionally and work hard to expand the party," he said.

Vijayalaxmi was in the race for the Musheerabad Assembly ticket, however, the party gave that ticket to Raju. As such she was not happy with the party.

AP govt is investor friendly

MoUs signed at the Global Investors Summit (GIS) are coming into reality
CM launches and lays foundation for a slew of food processing and industrial units

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy launched and laid foundation stone for a slew of food processing and industrial units worth Rs 1,100 crore with employment potential for 21,744 persons.

Launching the food processing industries and laying foundation stone for new units virtually from the Camp Office here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister said that MoUs signed at the Global Investors Summit (GIS) are being translated into reality.

He said that special focus is on the industrial sector and called upon the officials to keep this in mind and continue their cooperation to the investors. District collectors should especially handhold the investors and entrepreneurs, extending them necessary cooperation at every step, he said.

He launched the 4.2 lakh metric ton capacity edible oil refinery established by Gokul Agro

Resources Pvt. Ltd. at Doruvula Palem in Muthukur mandal of SPS Nellore district with an investment of Rs. 250 crore and employment potential of 1,150 persons.

The Chief Minister also launched the Rs 2.5 crore sesame seeds processing unit established by APFPS at Peddiredlapalem of L Kota Mandalam in Vizianagaram district. It is run by the L Kota Jai Kisan Farmers' Producers Organisation and employs 20 persons.

He also launched the common facility centres at the printing cluster in Kakinada industrial estate established by the Industries Department with an investment of Rs 15 crore and employment potential for 1000 persons.

The Chief Minister also launched 21 industrial development projects and factory complexes established in 18 districts by the Industries Department with an investment of Rs 286 crore and laid foundations stones for some complexes. They have the potential of attracting

Rs.1785crore investments and providing employment to 18,034 persons.

The Chief Minister laid the foundation stone for the Rs 144 crore maize-based food processing unit to be established by Sri Venkateswara Bio Tech Pvt Ltd at Kommuru in Eluru district. It has employment potential for 310 persons.

He also laid the foundation stone for the Rs 13 crore Blue Fin Enterprises food products unit at Konada in Vizianagaram district. It will produce potato, millet and wheat based food products and provide employment to 45 persons.

He laid the foundation stone for the Rs 12 crore tomato processing unit at Pathikonda in Kurnool district. This unit would be run by the Pathikonda Farmers Producers Association.

Laying the stone, he lauded the officials for expediting the work in this connection and added that he has fulfilled the promise he had made to the people during his

recent visit there.

The Chief Minister also laid the stone for the Rs 280 crore pharma unit of the Sigachi Industries at Orvakal mega industrial hub in Kurnool district. It will provide employment to 850 persons.

He also launched the works of the nutraceuticals unit of the RPS industries which will invest Rs 90 crore and provide employment to 285 persons.

He said that out of the 386 MoUs signed at the GIS (Global Investors Summit) at Visakhapatnam in March 2023 to bring in Rs 13 lakh crore investments with a potential to give employment to 6 lakh persons, 33 units have started functioning and works relating to 94 units are in full swing while the works of other industries are in preliminary stage.

In the last four-and-a-half years, 130 large and mega industries have come up across the State with an investment of Rs. 69,000 crore providing employment to 86,000 persons, he said.

Jagan's aim is political empowerment of Backward Classes: Sajjala

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP General Secretary and Government Advisor (Public Affairs) Sajjala Ramakrishna Reddy once again made it clear that CM Jagan Mohan Reddy's aim is to achieve political empowerment of the backward classes. He said that CM Jagan made it clear that the idea is to eliminate economic backwardness. He mentioned that the elections will be held in AP along with the Parliament elections and various news coming on social media are not true.

A round table meeting was organized by BC Welfare JAC on Wednesday on unity and integral development of BCs. Speaking on the occasion, Sajjala said that as the world and times change, so do we. He said that while the opportunities are increasing in various fields with new technologies, caste based pro-



fessions will also change. He asked the gathered at the meeting, should we support Chandrababu who wants to settle the BCs by giving scissors and ironing boxes to remain in the same caste based profession or shall we move towards the changing future.

People should decide whether they want YS Jagan who is doing good for the people or Chandrababu Naidu who always cheats the people. Sajjala criticized Chandrababu's for giving

promises only during the election times and expressed ire on TDP for giving promises with selfish ideas. He said that CM Jagan is the only leader who will provide complete support and help to the poor and the needy. He pointed out Chandrababu Naidu is giving promises now and asked why the TDP did not do so during 2014 to 19.

In the past four-and-a-half years, Jagan has developed the State in all aspects. He has brought welfare and governance to the poor and middle class people. Every YSRCP leader and cadre is proudly going to the people to vote for YSRCP led by CM Jagan Mohan Reddy. People are attending the Samajika Sadikara bus yatra in large numbers which clearly shows the popularity of CM Jagan among the people across the State.

Out, with lessons

The evacuation of 41 workers tells us a few things about what went right and what we must set right

Life be frail and ephemeral but it is the human grit, determination, resilience and collaborative spirit that makes it explore space, navigate seas, move earth, climb mountains and challenge the mighty Nature. On the same theme, the Silkyara tunnel rescue operation in Uttarkashi stands out as a shining example of effective crisis management. After 400 hours of intense effort, the trapped workers can see the sun again. It was arguably the nation's biggest rescue operation – international experts, local authorities, Army and big machines all worked in tandem to pull off this feat. And the rat miners, part of the Army operations, deserve a special mention as finally they managed to reach the miners after digging continuously for 24 hours. Rat mining is now banned in India, yet their skills did the trick. Celebrations apart, this is also the time to ponder over the lessons learned from the oversights and mistakes made during the mission. For 17 days, the Silkyara-Barkot tunnel became a site of frenzy after 41 workers were trapped



in the tunnel. The rugged terrain and inclement weather compounded the challenges; the remote location added a degree of difficulty to the mission, necessitating a swift and coordinated response.

While the rescue operation ultimately succeeded, it is important to examine our shortcomings to improve future crisis responses. One notable oversight was the initial delay in deploying specialised equipment to the site. This lapse, attributed to logistical challenges and communication gaps, underscored the importance of a rapid and efficient response in emergencies. Another lesson learned was the need for enhanced coordination among the agencies involved in the rescue.

Effective communication channels and seamless collaboration are essential for streamlining efforts and ensuring a cohesive response. It would have been better had the Army been called in earlier, given its expertise in such operations. Initially, delays and confusion arose due to inadequate coordination, highlighting the need for improved inter-agency cooperation which was, however, made good after it became a national top story. While the operation showcased the prowess of specialised units in handling complex crises, it also emphasised the importance of addressing logistical challenges and improving coordination among agencies. It also highlighted how protocols and standard working procedures are flouted by the companies involved. There must be a Government agency to ensure that safety procedures are followed. The life of every individual matters but the companies often cut corners when it comes to worker safety. Even the multinational companies operating in India do not follow the same safety protocols they follow in Europe and America, as was amply proved by the Bhopal gas disaster. They know safety at the workplace is not a priority. In Silkyara, there was no plan in place to evacuate workers in case of an emergency. By continuously refining our emergency response strategies, we can better prepare for challenges.



Girls wearing traditional Punjabi dress perform 'giddha', in 11th Amritsar International Folk Festival

Democracy: Restoring the dignity in public life

Poll campaigns are becoming toxic with unrestrained campaigns; no one is sacrosanct, and all political parties must shoulder the blame for it

The campaign for the last phase of the election to the Telangana assembly has come to an end with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mega Road Show" at Hyderabad on Monday evening. It is once again silence in the state. But this is a temporary silence and a prelude to the much bigger cacophony that is all set to unfold in days to come. Poll pundits describe the election to the five State assemblies as the semi-final. While elegance and aristocracy were the catchwords of speeches made inside and outside the parliament, of late the quality of the language used by our lawmakers has degenerated to a level lower than the Bharani Pattu sung by a section of pilgrims at the Devi Temple in Kerala's Kodungallur. For those who are not familiar with the Bharani Pattu ritual, Bharani is one of the 27 stars used by astrologers for scientific calculations while Pattu means song/hymn. The self-styled Dravidians pay their obeisance to Bhagawathy (Devi/Goddess, the presiding deity of Kodungallur)



by singing obscene hymns on Bharani day in the Malayalam month of Chingam. It is a tradition whereby the farmers of yore days complain to the Goddess about their hardships in the typical Dravidian style. The elections that were held after India became an independent country stand out for its methodical and systematic campaign. The enthusiasm and fervour seen in the people from metropolises to villages elevated the democratic process into a festival-a festival of democracy. The campaign speeches delivered by the leaders were a learning process as they were packed with information, wisdom and knowledge. There are no records of leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,

Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Balraj Madhok, Shyama Prasad Mukerjee and Morarji Desai crossing the Lakshman Rekha and verbally assaulting their rivals. The political discourse took a nasty turn with Indira Gandhi attacking the Opposition parties alleging them of trying to finish her off in their bid to capture power. All her speeches were centred around this one-point agenda and were seen by political pundits as an attempt to divert the attention of the electorate from real issues. She belittled the corruption charges against her party colleagues and ministers by stating that "corruption was a global phenomenon". The stand-off between the then Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi and the then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi made it to the global news headlines. Sonia Gandhi began addressing Modi as 'Maut Ka Saudagar' (the wholesale merchant of death), Fascist, Dictator and whatnot! Modi retorted by calling her Antonio Maino (her Italian

name) and 'Congress widow' to which the Congress and the Communists cried foul. The name-calling continued unabated as Rahul Gandhi opened a new battle front in the run-up to the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. 'Chaukidar Chor Hai' was the new war cry of the Congress scion. Though Modi kept silent for a while, he was forced to retaliate which was not music to the ears of Congress leaders. This is one of the main reasons for having a One Nation, One Poll system. With the One Nation, One Poll system, we need to bear with this abnormal situation only once every five years and not every alternate month. The silent campaign has its virtues and elegance. Election Campaigns should not upset the rhythm of one's daily life. The dignity and harmony of democracy could be sustained by a silent campaign and not by discordant notes. (The writer is a special correspondent with the Pioneer, views are personal)



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Tunnel between science and spirituality

The successful rescue mission in the Silkyara, shows how coordinated efforts and a compassionate approach can achieve the impossible

The march of science, the heart of man must beat in unison with the heart of God. The future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics. These profound words of Swami Vivekananda gripped my attention after a friend of mine shared it on my WhatsApp with a photograph of tunnelling expert Arnold Dix bowing down before God (read Almighty) outside the Silkyara tunnel.

The successful completion of the rescue mission to extricate 41 workers trapped inside the Silkyara tunnel on Uttarakhand's Char Dham route was achieved on Tuesday evening of November 28, 2023. Rat-hole mining experts employed manual drilling techniques to navigate through the final 10-12-meter stretch of debris from the collapsed section of the under-construction tunnel. It was on the morning of Diwali, November 12, that a landslide occurred at approximately 5:30 AM, causing a section of the Silkyara-Dandagaon tunnel under construction on the Brahmalak-Yamunotri highway at Uttarkashi to collapse. The tunnel, a critical part of the Char Dham all-weather road project led to the trapping of 41 workers inside the tunnel, specifically at the Silkyara Bend – Barkot tunnel, situated about 200 meters from its entrance, which triggered a challenging rescue operation, as the entire nation joined in unison praying for the safe exit of the trapped workers. Action by officials and district administration began immediately and meticulously to bring out the trapped workers unhurt. Twelve skilled rat-hole mining experts played a crucial role in this intricate operation. The successful rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel – after the 17-day ordeal of life and death – involved a collaborative effort from various entities, including the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at the national level, state rescue agencies, international drilling experts, and even local rat-mining labourers — whose crucial contribution had often been overlooked by many. The district administration swift-



ly initiated rescue operations with approximately 200 disaster relief personnel employing drilling equipment and excavators. Simultaneously, oxygen, electricity, and food were provided to the trapped labourers through air-compressed pipes. Other than NDRF, the other agencies included SDRF, BRO, NHIDCL, and ITBP, who collaborated in the rescue efforts. In the Odisha train disaster, the NDRF played a crucial role in rescue operations. During the Sudan crisis, India launched 'Operation Kaveri' facilitating the safe evacuation of 3,000 stranded Indians. Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar engaged with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while the Indian Air Force and Navy conducted flights and sorties, evacuating nearly 3,900 Indians. After the release of the 41 trapped workers, in a message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that their "courage and patience" was inspiring. In a post on 'X', he wrote, "I want to say to the friends who were trapped in the tunnel that your courage and patience is inspiring for everyone. I wish you all well and good health. It is a matter of great satisfaction that, after a long wait, our friends will now meet their loved ones." Coming back to the profound words of Swami Vivekananda, as mentioned at the beginning, it emphasises the harmony between the march of science



AFTER THE EVACUATION OF THE 41 TRAPPED WORKERS, IN A MESSAGE, PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI SAID THAT THEIR "COURAGE AND PATIENCE" WAS INSPIRING

and the spiritual essence of humanity. The idea that "the future belongs to spirituality over science, to metaphysics over physics" suggests a balance between the material and the spiritual dimensions of human existence. In the context of the successful rescue mission in the Silkyara tunnel and other instances mentioned, this balance is evident in the coordinated efforts and compassionate approach adopted by various entities involved. The challenging rescue operation in the Silkyara tunnel serves as a practical manifestation of this balance. One could say that the use of manual drilling techniques, led by skilled rat-hole mining experts, symbolises the human touch, perseverance, and skill beyond mechanised technology. The collaboration of different entities, from local rat-mining labourers to international drilling experts, reflects a holistic approach. Arnold Dix, bowing down, serves as a poignant reminder of the humility required in the face of the unknown. Tunnelling through the Earth, Dix, a master of physical engineering, found himself compelled to bow before a force greater than himself — a force that perhaps transcended the limits of his scientific understanding. This gesture encapsulates the essence of surrendering to the supreme,

acknowledging that there are realms beyond the grasp of human intellect. Amidst the grandeur of our discoveries, there exists a yearning for meaning and purpose that science alone cannot satiate. This is where spirituality steps in, offering solace to the searching soul and providing a framework for understanding the metaphysical aspects of our existence. However, the act of surrendering to the supreme does not imply abandoning reason or forsaking scientific inquiry. Instead, it encourages a harmonious coexistence where the intellect bows to the infinite wisdom that transcends empirical understanding. Moreover, surrendering to the supreme allows us to navigate the uncertainties of life with grace and resilience. In moments of adversity, the recognition of a higher power provides a source of strength and comfort, where one understands a sense of purpose. The integration of spirituality and science may find a deeper understanding of our existence and our place in this grand arena of the cosmos, where our greed and wants need to be self-checked and demand self-restraint. (The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HC REJECTS PIL ON LOUDSPEAKERS

Sir—Dubbing it a "wholly misconceived PIL," a Division Bench of the Gujarat High Court on Tuesday rejected a public interest litigation (PIL) that had sought a ban on the use of loudspeakers in mosques during azaan. It's a good decision that came from HC. India is a democratic country where people follow different religions; that's called "unity in diversity." Different kinds of flowers beautify a bouquet of flowers; in the same way, having various religions prettifies India.

All citizens should live together, loving and supporting each other. With everyone's support, our country will develop; otherwise, our country will be scattered, society will be destroyed, and evils and devils will flourish. United we stand, divided we fall.

Tauqueer Rahmani | Mumbai

BRUTAL MURDERS CREAE PANIC IN UP

Sir—As per the report, the murders of eight women in the past few months, in a similar pattern, have created panic among people and anxiety for police in the BJP-ruled state of Uttar Pradesh. All the victims were aged between 35 and 60 years and were strangled to death with a saree or chunari, said officials. Seven of these murders were reported from different villages within Shahi police station limits. The most recent one was reported from Sheeshgarh police station on November 26.

Bareilly ADG PC Meena, along with IG (Range) Rakesh Singh, visited the crime spot and directed officials to work out the cases at the earliest. He asked them to do the crime mapping of incidents and analyse the crime pattern to nab the assailants. "It is still not clear whether these murders are interconnected or not. I am also not sure whether it is the work of one person or different people. But residents suspect the involvement of a psychopath in the region," said ASP (crime) Mukesh Pratap Singh. ASP Mukesh Pratap Singh issued an advisory to villagers to not allow women to go out of their homes alone and

Mission impossible!



The seventeen-day ordeal is finally over after rescuing 41 workers trapped in the Uttarkashi tunnel. The impossible is made possible. Man succeeded where foreign machines failed. The auger drilling machine was broken many times and could not complete the work. Removing it's broken blades from the rescue pipe was a great technological achievement. The 'Rat Miners', who emerged as heroes in this great escape, gave the required breakthrough

to insert the pipe in the final stages through which all the trapped workers were pulled out. India has now developed a 'Desi Technology' to rescue workers trapped in tunnels. Providing food and oxygen to keep them alive for more than two weeks was unbelievable. The patience, courage, and confidence of trapped workers and their family members, as well as the efforts put in by all the rescuers from different organisations, are beyond appreciation. The personal interest taken by the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister was exceptional. The government needs to investigate thoroughly the reasons for the mishap, and the lessons learned can be useful for safety in the number of tunnels under construction and proposed in the Himalayas. It is not advisable to stop construction activities in the Himalayan region because of this mishap.

O Prasada Rao | Hyderabad

step out in groups of three-four, if necessary. This advisory also stands for daytime, as all these murders happened between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. with women working in the field or at deserted places. The murder of a woman in the same pattern was reported from a village under adjoining Sheeshgarh police station limits on Sunday. Urnila, 55, wife of one Ved Prakash of Jagdishpur village in Sheeshgarh, had gone out to collect fodder for cattle around noon and did not return home. The woman's body was later found lying near the field of one Dori Lal, around 500 metres from the village. Earlier last year, three women aged between 60 and 64 years were killed in December in Barabanki district. With this, women are living under the fear of getting targeted and are not going out.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

MEMORABLE TALES OF 'THE GABBA'

Sir—The iconic Australian cricket stadium, 'The Gabba' in Brisbane, is said to be demolished and rebuilt for the 2032 Olympics. Renowned for hosting one of

the fastest tracks in world cricket, the Gabba became a household name in India and across the world after India breached what was Australia's fortress until 2021. For good measure, Gabba, the bastion of the Australian cricket team, is bordered by 'Vulture Street', which cricket aficionados will famously know as one of the two ends of the ground. Gabba may not stir emotions and enthrall romantics like the storied Australian cricket grounds of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide, but its very mention would strike fear in the minds of visiting teams. For the Indian fans, starting the day by listening to former Australian great Bill Lawry's cheerful voice early in the morning was music to the ears when he would start with, "very good morning to all our viewers wherever you are." Again, when action gets tense on the field, one will find Lawry saying, "It is all happening here at the Gabba."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE ANCIENT ART OF MUDRAS

Yogic hand gestures channel energy and help connect to higher spiritual realms



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

Mudras, a Sanskrit word that translates to "gesture," are ancient hand positions that have been practised for thousands of years in various cultures, particularly in the realms of yoga, meditation, and traditional dance. These symbolic gestures are believed to channel energy within the body and connect the practitioner to higher spiritual realms. The philosophy behind mudras lies in the idea that different parts of the hands represent different elements and energies, and by bringing them together in specific ways, one can harmonise and channel these energies for various purposes.

Major Mudras and Their Significance:

Anjali Mudra (Prayer Gesture):
How to perform: Bring the palms of your hands together in front of your chest, fingers pointing upward.
Anjali Mudra is a gesture of reverence and gratitude. It is commonly used as a greeting and is often performed at the beginning and end of yoga classes. This mudra symbolises the connection between the individual self and the universal consciousness.

Gyan Mudra (Knowledge Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Gyan Mudra is associated with knowledge, wisdom, and concentration. It is believed to enhance memory and improve concentration during meditation. This mudra is commonly used in various meditation practices to quiet the mind and promote inner peace.

Chin Mudra (Consciousness Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tip of the thumb and the index finger, forming a circle, and let the other three fingers remain extended.
Chin Mudra is a gesture of consciousness and is often used during meditation.

Prana Mudra (Life Force Gesture):
How to perform: Join the tips of the ring finger and the little finger to the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Prana Mudra is believed to increase the vital life force energy within the body. It is associated with improving vitality, reducing fatigue, and boosting the immune system.

Apana Mudra (Digestive Gesture):
How to perform: Touch the tips of the thumb, middle finger, and ring finger together, while keeping the index finger and little finger extended.
Apana Mudra is said to balance the Apana Vayu, one of the five vital forces in the body related to elimination and downward movement. This mudra is believed to support digestive health, assist in detoxification, and promote a sense of groundedness.

Huni Mudra (Seal of Patience):
How to perform: Join the tip of the middle finger with the tip of the thumb, while keeping the other fingers extended.
Shuni Mudra is associated with patience, discernment, and discipline. It is believed to help cultivate a sense of patience and focus. Practising this mudra is thought to bring balance to the air element within the body and mind, promoting a calm and reflective state. Shuni Mudra is often used to enhance one's ability to make wise decisions.

Incorporating mudras into your meditation or yoga routine can provide a deeper dimension to your spiritual journey, promoting physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Mudras are powerful tools that bridge the physical and spiritual aspects of our being. Incorporating these symbolic hand gestures into your daily life or meditation practise can deepen your connection with yourself and the universe. As with any ancient practice, it's essential to approach mudras with respect and an open mind, allowing yourself to explore their potential benefits on a personal level.

(The writer is a spiritual guide, views are personal)



BHARATI DEVI

In India's diverse landscapes, every village contributes a distinctive thread to the larger narrative of our country. Nestled approximately 6 km from the Poonch district in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Mangnad stands out as a border village that is slowly etching its identity in the realms of agriculture and animal husbandry.

Over the years, Mangnad has earned a reputation for its unique approach to animal husbandry. It's a village where livestock is not just a part of the scenery; it's a way of life. Yet, it's not a place where dependence solely rests on animal husbandry. Even government employees here take a keen interest in

both animal husbandry and agriculture. Consequently, Mangnad not only meets the local demand but also supplies milk and vegetables to the broader Poonch region. Every morning, vehicles laden with litres of milk make their way to the city, with city-dwellers acknowledging the village as a vital source for their daily dairy needs. This tradition has been sustained for years, but in the last 8-10 years, Mangnad has also emerged as a significant player in vegetable production, adding another layer to its unique identity.

Today, the village engages in diverse occupations, from private businesses to government employment, but one common thread binds them



all—cultivating vegetables. Observing the burgeoning interest in agriculture, the local agriculture department has stepped in to support the villagers. This collective effort has equipped the village with essential resources, including

small tractors, quality seeds, agricultural camps, and water tanks, transforming Mangnad into a beacon of self-sufficiency. Considering the hilly terrain of Jammu and Kashmir, this transformation is a testament to the resilience and determination

of its people. Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes. The villagers have not only embraced agriculture but have also diversified into vegetable production, a feat worth celebrating. 54-year-old Murti Devi, a resident of the village, shares that their approach to vegetable cultivation has evolved. Initially, they planted a single type of vegetable for six months and then another for the next six months. However, with experience, they have streamlined their efforts, categorising vegetables into four distinct seasons. They now synchronise their

planting with the weather, ensuring a continuous supply of diverse vegetables throughout the year. Sushil Kumar, 40, asserts that apart from vegetable production, they have no other business. With some patches of land, they ventured into vegetable farming, selling produce worth lakhs every season. This entrepreneurial spirit extends to several farmers in the village, illustrating how Mangnad has become an agricultural powerhouse. Harish Kumar, 29, emphasises the enduring interest in animal husbandry among the villagers. While some are dedicated to daily milk supplies to the city, others have expanded their focus to vegetable cultivation. The

villagers are not just cultivating vegetables; they are champions of organic farming, ensuring not only flavorful produce but also contributing to the nutritional well-being of consumers. This border village's success story is not just about agriculture; it's about community resilience, innovation, and a collaborative effort with the agriculture department. The department's support, including providing specialised sheets for transforming cow dung into fertilizer, has not only improved lives but has also bestowed a distinctive identity upon Mangnad.

(The writer is Charkha's volunteer trainer from Poonch, J&K. Views are personal. Charkha Features)

Cultivating a unique economic identity in the border areas

Mangnad is not merely a supplier of milk and vegetables; it's a testament to how a community can carve its niche, even in challenging landscapes

India's G20 Presidency: Towards a better future



NARENDRA MODI

Today marks 365 days since India assumed the G20 Presidency. Let us reflect, recommit, and rejuvenate the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'



As we undertook the responsibility of G20 Presidency last year, the global landscape grappled with multifaceted challenges: recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, looming climate threats, financial instability, and debt distress in developing nations, all amid declining multilateralism. In the midst of conflicts and competition, development cooperation suffered, impeding progress. Assuming the G20 Chair, India sought to offer the world an alternative to status quo, a shift from a GDP-centric to human-centric progress. India aimed to remind the world of what unites us, rather than what divides us. Finally, the global conversation had to evolve—the interests of the few had to give way to the aspirations of the many. This required a fundamental reform of multilateralism as we knew it. Inclusive, ambitious, action-oriented, and decisive—these four words defined our approach as G20 president, and the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration (NDLD), unanimously adopted by all G20 members, is testimony to our commitment to deliver on these principles. Inclusivity has been at the heart of our presidency. The inclusion of the African Union (AU) as a permanent member of the G20 integrated 55 African nations into the forum, expanding it to encompass 80% of the global population. This proactive stance has fostered a more comprehensive dialogue on global challenges and opportunities.

The first-of-its-kind 'Voice of the Global South Summit,' convened by India in two editions, heralded a new dawn of multilateralism. India mainstreamed the Global South's concerns in international discourse and has ushered in an era where developing countries take their rightful place in shaping the global narrative. Inclusivity also infused India's domestic

INDIA'S G20 PRESIDENCY USHERED IN A DAWN OF NEW MULTILATERALISM; A BEGINNING OF A NEW WORLD ORDER

approach to G20, making it a People's Presidency that befits that world's largest democracy. Through "Jan Bhagidari" (people's participation) events, G20 reached 1.4 billion citizens, involving all states and Union Territories (UTs) as partners. And on substantive elements, India ensured that international attention was directed to broader developmental aims, aligning with G20's mandate. At the critical midpoint of the 2030 Agenda, India delivered the G20 2023 Action Plan to Accelerate Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking a cross-cutting, action-oriented approach to interconnected issues, including health, education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

A key area driving this progress is robust Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI). Here, India was decisive in its recommendations, having witnessed the revolutionary impact of digital innovations like Aadhaar, UPI, and Digilocker first-hand. Through G20, we successfully completed the Digital Public Infrastructure Repository, a significant stride in global technological collaboration. This repository, featuring over 50 DPIs from 16 countries, will help the Global South build, adopt, and scale DPI to unlock the power of inclusive growth.

For our One Earth, we introduced ambitious and inclusive aims to create urgent, lasting, and equitable change. The Declaration's 'Green Development Pact' addresses the challenges of choosing between combating hunger and

protecting the planet, by outlining a comprehensive roadmap where employment and ecosystems are complimentary, consumption is climate conscious, and production is planet-friendly. In tandem, the G20 Declaration calls for an ambitious tripling of global renewable energy capacity by 2030. Coupled with the establishment of the Global Biofuels Alliance and a concerted push for Green Hydrogen, the G20's ambitions to build a cleaner, greener world is undeniable. This has always been India's ethos, and through Lifestyles for Sustainable Development (LiFE), the world can benefit from our age-old sustainable traditions. Further, the Declaration underscores our commitment to climate justice and equity, urging substantial financial and technological support from the Global North. For the first time, there was a recognition of the quantum jump needed in the magnitude of development financing, moving from billions to trillions of dollars. G20 acknowledged that developing countries require \$5.9 trillion to fulfil their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by 2030. Given the monumental resources required, G20 emphasised the importance of better, larger, and more effective Multilateral Development Banks. Concurrently, India is taking a leading role in UN reforms, especially in the restructuring of principal organs like the UN Security Council, that will ensure a more equitable global order. Gender equality took centre stage in the Declaration, culminating in

the formation of a dedicated Working Group on the Empowerment of Women next year. India's Women's Reservation Bill 2023, reserving one-third of India's Parliament and state legislative assembly seats for women epitomizes our commitment to women-led development. The New Delhi Declaration embodies a renewed spirit of collaboration across these key priorities, focusing on policy coherence, reliable trade, and ambitious climate action. It is a matter of pride that during our Presidency, G20 achieved 87 outcomes and 118 adopted documents, a marked rise from the past. During our G20 Presidency, India led deliberations on geopolitical issues and their impact on economic growth and development. Terrorism and the senseless killing of civilians is unacceptable, and we must address it with a policy of zero-tolerance. We must embody humanitarianism over hostility and reiterate that this is not an era of war. I am delighted that during our Presidency India achieved the extraordinary: it revitalised multilateralism, amplified the voice of the Global South, championed development, and fought for the empowerment of women, everywhere. As we hand over the G20 Presidency to Brazil, we do so with the conviction that our collective steps for people, planet, peace, and prosperity, will resonate for years to come.

(This is an exclusive writeup by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi)

MONEY MATTERS

I-T dept conducts 'survey' at Hinduja Group entity

The Income Tax department on Wednesday conducted a survey operation at Hinduja Global Solutions, an entity of the Hinduja Group, in Mumbai and some other cities, official sources said. The survey operation is being undertaken as part of a tax evasion investigation and offices in Mumbai and some other cities are being covered, they said. According to the I-T law for survey operations, only office premises are being covered. An email sent by PTI to the company did not elicit response. Sources said the tax department action is also linked to provisions of the General Anti-Avoidance Rules (GAAR). Hinduja Global Solutions (HGS) offers strategic consultation, digital transformation, IT systems integration among other services. The Hinduja Group, which owns IndusInd Bank, Hinduja Leyland Finance and Hinduja Bank (Switzerland), is diversifying and has plans to get into the new tech, digital and fintech as part of its new phase of growth and fill gaps through acquisitions to have complete offerings in the BFSI sector.



UltraTech acquires cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd

Aditya Birla group firm UltraTech Cement Ltd on Wednesday said it has acquired the cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd in Jharkhand for Rs 169.79 crore. The company has acquired 0.54 mtpa cement grinding assets of Burnpur Cement Ltd, located at Patratu in Jharkhand, UltraTech Cement said in a regulatory filing. The acquisition has been carried out at a consideration of Rs 169.79 crore in terms of the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002," it added. This investment marks the company's entry in Jharkhand, the filing said, adding the company's capacity in India now stands at 133 mtpa. Last year state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) had put up for sale the account of loss-making Burnpur Cement and invited bids from Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) to recover loans outstanding of over Rs 50 crore.



Guj CM leads Vibrant Gujarat Roadshow in Tokyo

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Wednesday led the 'Vibrant Gujarat Roadshow' in Tokyo, that saw participation of more than 200 business professionals, on the fourth day of his Japan visit, according to an official release. A high-level delegation led by Patel is in Japan to promote the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, to be held in January next year in Gandhinagar. At the roadshow, executive vice president Japan External Trade Organisation or JETRO, Kazuya Nakajo, and Director General of JETRO, Takehiko Furukawa, praised Gujarat's remarkable growth, as per the release. Recognizing the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they highlighted Gujarat's integral role in the global business ecosystem. Furukawa mentioned that the reason for this growth in Gujarat is its "double-engine government", the release said. Executive Vice President of Suzuki, Kenichi Ayukawa, shared his experience of working in Gujarat. He praised the proactive approach of PM Modi and CM Patel.



COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE BY 2030

Country can mop up US\$ 543 bn from retail investors: Report

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The country can mobilize as much as US\$ 543 billion from retail investors for climate investments by 2030, while the global potential for the same is a whopping US\$ 3.4 trillion, says a report.

A Standard Chartered Bank report on sustainable banking, is based on investor interest from a survey of 1,800 respondents in 10 growth markets across Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

According to the survey, of the US\$ 543 billion investible retail capital that can be mobilized in the country, US\$ 324 billion could flow into mitigation themes such as energy efficiency, renewables and energy storage, while US\$ 219 billion could be pumped in for adaptation including resilient infrastructure, biodiversity and food systems.

The survey shows 96 per cent of investors in the country are interested in climate investing -- the highest among all markets surveyed, and 84 per cent of



Though these investors are motivated by making a positive impact and personal values when making such investments, they also say that multiple barriers are holding them back from translating their interest into investment.

them want to increase capital flows towards climate investments. Though these investors are motivated by making a positive impact and personal values when making such investments, they also say that multiple barriers are holding them back from translating their interest into investment.

The respondents cited accessibility (76 per cent), comparability (75 per cent), comprehensibility (73 per cent) and com-

parability (74 per cent), as major barriers. According to Marc Van de Walle, global head of wealth management at the bank, overall climate mitigation and adaptation face an annual funding gap of trillions of dollars. To overcome the current disconnect between investor interest and the scale of climate investments, the industry needs to improve access to solutions, harmonise reporting standards and measurement of impact.

According to Saurabh Jain, head of wealth management at Standard Chartered India, climate change is a key challenge for the country given its frequent extreme weather events, growing population and increasing urbanization, highlighting the need to bring rapid focus into building climate-resilient infrastructure and staying on course to achieve the country's net-zero targets.

'Second quarter GDP numbers likely to be good'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Indian economy is showing momentum and the growth rate in the second quarter (July-September) is likely to be good, Economic Affairs Secretary Ajay Seth said on Wednesday. The GDP numbers for the second quarter are scheduled to be released on Thursday. The economy grew at 7.8 per cent in the first quarter (April-June) of the current financial year.

"India economy showed good momentum in the second quarter. The second quarter numbers should be good", Seth told reporters on the sidelines of a national workshop on 'Leveraging private finance for urban infrastructure developments -- Learnings from G20 Infrastructure Working Group'. He further said that the fiscal deficit target of 5.9 per cent for the current financial year was feasible despite additional outgo towards food subsidy.

"We are confident of meeting fiscal deficit target this year despite the government raising food subsidy for the next five years," Seth said.

Govt clears Terms of Reference of 16th Finance Commission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has cleared the Terms of Reference of the 16th Finance Commission to suggest the ratio for devolution of taxes between the Centre and states and also review financing disaster management initiatives, for five years beginning April 1, 2026.

The commission would submit its report for the five-year period (2026-27 to 2030-31) to the President by October 31, 2025, an official statement said.

Besides tax devolution and states' revenue augmentation measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

"The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government,



"The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the Terms of Reference for the Sixteenth Finance Commission. The 16th Finance Commission's recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, would cover a period of five years commencing April 1, 2026."

Names of the chairperson

and members of 16th Finance Commission would be finalised soon, an official said.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for 16th Finance Commission will be notified in due course.

The commission shall make recommendations in matters including the distribution between the Union and states of net proceeds of taxes which are to be, or may be, divided between them and the allocation between states of the respective shares of such proceeds.

The commission would advise on the principles which should govern the grants-in-aid of revenues of states out of Consolidated Fund of India and the sums to be paid to states by way of grants-in-aid of their revenues.

Gold rallies Rs 750 to record high of Rs 63,500; silver zooms Rs 800

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold price rallied Rs 750 to Rs 63,500 per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday amid strong global trends, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal had closed at Rs 62,750 per 10 grams.

Silver also zoomed Rs 800 to Rs 79,000 per kilogram.

"Gold prices surged on Wednesday, trading at an all-time high of Rs 63,500 per 10 gram, up Rs 750 following a bullish trend in overseas markets," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of

commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the overseas markets, gold and silver were trading higher at USD 2,041 per ounce and USD 24.95 per ounce, respectively.

Spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,041 per ounce, up USD 27 from the previous close.

Weaker dollar and statements from a Federal Reserve official reinforced bets that the central bank will begin lowering interest rates next year, which boosted traders' sentiment and pushed Comex gold to its highest level since May, Gandhi said.

IREDA makes dream stock market debut Shares settle with premium of 87.5%

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA) made a remarkable stock market debut on Wednesday, ending with a premium of 87.5 per cent, against the issue price of Rs 32.

The stock listed at Rs 50, up 56.25 per cent from the issue price on both the BSE and NSE. During the day, it rallied 87.46 per cent to Rs 59.99 on the BSE.

On the NSE, the stock ended at Rs 60 apiece, soaring 87.5 per cent.

The company commanded a market valuation of Rs



16,123.90 crore.

In volume terms, 381.55 lakh shares of the firm were traded on the BSE and over 57.98 crore shares on the NSE during the day.

In the equity market, the

30-share BSE Sensex jumped 727.71 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 66,901.91 and the Nifty climbed 206.90 points or 1.04 per cent to 20,096.60.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) of IREDA was sub-

scribed 38.80 times on the last day of bidding on Thursday.

The IPO had a fresh issue of up to 40,31,64,706 equity shares and an offer for sale component of up to 26,87,76,471 equity shares.

The price range for the offer was Rs 30-32 a share. This was the first public issue by a public sector enterprise after Life Insurance Corporation's IPO in May last year. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for augmenting IREDA's capital base to meet its future capital requirements and onward lending.

IREDA is a mini Ratna firm under the administrative controls of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy.

LIC launches guaranteed return plan Jeevan Utsav

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Insurance behemoth LIC on Wednesday launched its guaranteed return plan, Jeevan Utsav. It is a non-linked, non-participating, individual savings, whole life insurance plan, LIC said in a regulatory filing.

LIC Chairman Siddhartha Mohanty, in an interview to PTI had recently said policyholders can expect a lifelong benefit of 10 per cent of the sum assured after the policy matures. Mohanty had said the new product is poised to disrupt the market and that there is a widespread interest among insurance buyers in understanding the transparent cost structure and returns over a period of 20-



25 years.

Furthermore, he had mentioned that the new product would include features such as a loan facility and the option for premature withdrawal.

This plan is available for ages starting from 90 days to 65 years, LIC said in a statement. It gives guaranteed life-long income and life-long risk cover and the minimum premium paying term is five years and the maximum premium paying term is 16 years, it said.

FLOUTING INVESTMENT ADVISORY RULES

Sebi bans 9 entities from securities mkt for 2 yrs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi has barred nine entities from the securities market for at least two years and directed them to refund Rs 8 crore collected from investors, through unregistered investment advisory services, within three months.

Additionally, the regulator has imposed a penalty totaling Rs 18 lakh on them and asked them to pay the amount within 45 days.

The nine entities that have been prohibited are -- Yogesh Kukadia, Rajesh R Kallidumbil, Nithin Raj, SignalNoise Capital Partners, Investo Investment Advisers, SS Info Sales, SI Digi Sales, CT Web Sales and ML Tele Sales.

Further, three individuals -- Yogesh Kukadia, Rajesh Kallidumbil and Nithin Raj -- have been restrained from associating as directors or key managerial personnel with any listed public company for two years. In its probe, the regu-



latory found that Yogesh and Rajesh, who were registered as investment advisers, had not conducted the IA (investment advisory) activities in their individual capacities but rather carried out IA work through the six partnership firms that were not registered with Sebi.

The regulator conducted an inspection of the advisory activities of Yogesh and Rajesh for the period April 2018 to September 2019 after receiving certain complaints. Going by the order, the entities received Rs 810.24 lakh from the clients as fees in respect of their unregistered investment

advisory activities. The amount of fees was collected from 4,536 clients for providing investment advice through the six partnership firms, which were not registered with Sebi.

The three individuals, who are common partners in all the six partnership firms, have collected the fees from the clients through the six partnership firms, which were not registered and hence not eligible to collect such fees.

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Sensex jumps 727 pts on foreign fund inflows

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex rallied 727 points and Nifty closed above the 20,000 mark on Wednesday driven by buying in heavyweight HDFC Bank, Axis Bank ICICI and TCS on expectations of more foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 727.71 points or 1.10 per cent to settle at 66,901.91 with 26 of its components ending in the green and four in the red. The index started the day on a positive note and



later zoomed 772.08 points or 1.16 per cent to a high of 66,946.28.

The broader Nifty climbed 206.90 points or 1.04 per cent to reclaim the 20,000-mark after a gap of over two months. It ended at 20,096.60.

Among the Sensex firms, Axis Bank rose the most by 3.92 per cent. Mahindra & Mahindra surged by 3.38 per cent, Wipro by 2.32 per cent, Tata Motors by 2.09 per cent, HDFC Bank by 1.94 per cent and Tech Mahindra by 1.51 per cent. ICICI Bank, JSW Steel, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Bharti Airtel were also among major gainers.

Nestle, Titan, Bajaj Finserv and UltraTech Cement were the laggards.

Web3 sector can create 2 mn high-paying jobs in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Web3 sector, the new generation of internet based on decentralised blockchain technology, has the potential to create an employment base of about 2 million high-paying direct jobs in India within the next decade, a report said.

India is home to more than 900 enterprises in the Web3 sector, making significant strides by accounting for 11 per cent of the global Web3 developer community in 2022, securing its position as the third-largest talent pool of developers on a global scale, said a report by

management consulting services provider Primus Partners.

The transformative potential of Web3 extends across various sectors, with collaborative pilot projects showcasing its usefulness.

Promising use cases include supply chain management, privacy in healthcare, education, and experience certificates, voting systems, identity management, and more. Web3, therefore, when integrated responsibly, can transform industries, said the report titled 'Unlocking the Web3 Potential: India's Journey from a Talent Exporter to a



Product Powerhouse'.

Web3 can be looked at as set of technologies and platforms helping implement decentralised solutions delivering value to all stakehold-

ers. "As we witness the evolution of Web3, its potential for transformative growth becomes increasingly evident. Our study thoroughly explores this expanding land-

scape, offering valuable insights that illuminate the path forward for India with strategic attention to coordinated global efforts, robust domestic legislation, heightened awareness, and a nurturing business environment," Shrawan Shetty, Managing Director, Primus Partners.

India, through its G20 presidency, has shown dedication to addressing VDAs, evidenced by the publication of the IMF and FSB's synthesis paper on crypto in September 2023, the report said.

As a global consensus takes shape, the report stress-

es the urgency for India to advance its domestic policies, creating a conducive environment for Web3 businesses by implementing forward-thinking legislation, it added.

The report outlines a strategic framework for India's ascent to Web3 leadership, emphasising legislative prioritisation, heightened awareness, and business environment enhancement.

Proposing a coordinated global approach, the report underlined the need for a collaborative blueprint, emphasising global taxonomy, minimum standards, flexibility, and coordinated monitoring.

IAG Cargo open to partnerships with Indian carriers, logistics players



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bullish on the growth prospects in India, IAG Cargo is open for partnerships with Indian carriers and logistics players as and when an opportunity comes up, a top official said on Wednesday.

The European entity, which represents the cargo business of five airlines, garners around

10 per cent of its global export revenues from India. IAG Cargo handles the air cargo business of British Airways, Iberia Cargo, Spanish carriers -- Vueling and LEVEL -- and Ireland's Aer Lingus Cargo.

In an interview with PTI here, IAG Cargo's Chief Executive Officer David Shepherd said it gets some of the highest load factors from the Indian market, which is seeing a massive growth in diverse industries, including pharmaceuticals and e-commerce.

To a query on whether IAG Group will be looking at partnerships with Indian carriers and logistics players, he said.

'I don't have a knack for comedy; it's difficult'



ACTRESS LUBNA SALIM, WHO HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY, GETS CANDID WITH **THE PIONEER** ABOUT BEING A CONSISTENT ACTRESS, HER CAMARADERIE WITH KAMLESH GILL, AND MORE.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Actress Lubna Salim, who is well-known for her creative ability in both theatre and film, has made a significant contribution to the entertainment industry for more than three decades. The recent fame of *The Aam Aadmi Family* comedy series takes some time out and gets candid with **The Pioneer**.

"I am a consistent actress; to be able to walk this thorny part in the industry, you certainly got to be congruous. I had never expected my wide popularity to go to this extent, and there can never be comparisons between the mediums we are juggling with. Yes, the reach of a feature film, for example, when I did *Parbat Ke Uss Paar*, was beyond expectations. *Oh My God*, gave me immediate adulation. Now, when I did *Baa Bahoo Aur Baby*, citizens immediately recognized me on the streets by the name of my character. So this hero-worship was different from a feature film. I have watched myself coming in the commercials in between an important match that's going on; it is a different high in my life. Overall, it is the most difficult time to be in the theater. Who doesn't want to be in films? That's the final nail in the coffin for any actor," shares the *Oh My God* actress.



She does what she does in films, which the theater actress can relate to. She definitely wants that kind of audience adulation that mainstream heroines enjoy! Because audience adulation is important,

The daughter of the popular scriptwriter Javed Siddiqui continues, "I never had any expectations from my series; I knew it would be a sure-shot success. Right from day one, when Kamlesh Gill entered the sets and gave her first shot, I swear, we were rolling on the floor with so much laughter. She's an actor mom with so many stories to tell. I loved taking care of her on the hotel premises, feeding her, and escorting her to the room. Now she has become old and frail, but she has returned to work. She wasn't able to stand, but the whole unit was in total support of her. Her daughter had revealed to us how eager she was to return to the sets because she wanted to continue working until her last breath. We have recorded every moment of hers."

Lubna described how the veteran actress' energy was sheer madness coming from the Punjabi film industry. Continuing to win our hearts, she adds, "I don't have that



knack for doing comedy because presently you can watch me on your television screens doing a very serious role. It's just that my so-called comedy genres have picked up and received that prominence in the industry. Doing comedy is difficult; it involves some serious technicalities."

She has been associated with the family drama series since the first season. So it was natural for us to ask her about how she perceives family love, to which the *Just Married* fame shares, "They are my lifeline. I am not talking about blood relationships at all! For instance, my housekeeper is my family because she's feeding my son when I am away from work. And all this with no expectations in return? As far as my films are concerned, even though they are a part of my family, I should feel good about returning them. Hence, you see very little of me these days. I had decided very early on in my career that I would never become just one of the faces in the crowd. Now that your serial is on air, your fans won't even allow you to breathe very funnily."

Sharing her camaraderie with the new production house, she states, "TVF has its own niche in the OTT genre. They

were the first ones to start creating interesting content for binge-watchers. *Panchayat* and *College Romance* are two of my favorites. Now, because the team consists of only youngsters, there is no pressure on us. The way they want to showcase the point of view of their generation through their series makes them stand out amongst everyone else."

Her father, Javed Siddiqui, was a Hindi and Urdu screenwriter, dialogue writer, and playwright from our country. During his career, he collaborated with some of India's most prominent filmmakers, from independent directors like Satyajit Ray and Shyam Benegal to commercial directors like Yash Chopra and Subhash Ghai. We were very intrigued to know about his influence on her: "Any daughter would be closest to her father, and so am I. My mother calls me his "karchi", not even a "chamchi" (she laughed out loud). My whole family is in the same field; the common outlook toward the industry has kept us bound together for a lifetime. And we are the worst bunch of critics of each other at home. It's so easy to get carried away from the fame we receive, so the reality check at home has always been there."

'Environmental films hold immense power to bring about change and create impact'

With ALT EFF all set to premiere its new edition, **The Pioneer** interacts with its director Kunal Khanna, who shares some interesting insights about the festival.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

As we earlier reported to you, the All Living Things Environmental Film Festival is bringing sustainability and storytelling together. We have the festival's director on board who aligns with the commitment to using his influential platform for the greater good. Kunal Khanna wants to celebrate his conscientious approach and advocacy for social and environmental causes.

In an exclusive interaction with us, he opened up, saying, "I have been in a privileged position to be able to dive into ideas that have crossed my mind, where I find my true passion. During my early education at the University of Melbourne, I took a particular interest in economics, as it helped me make sense of the world that we live in, particularly from the perspective of the systems that dominate the current world order. However, as a practicing economist, it became increasingly clear to me that these systems may not be very conducive for our planet, people, and the diverse species on it to thrive; instead, they are skewed towards those who hold capital. I was able to question this and develop a new worldview personally as a result of the experiences I had in the arts through film festivals and other cultural events in Australia."

Then his food truck came about because he wanted to experience

more of this and while doing so, make money and not spend money. He quit his job as an economist and started a Masters of Environment degree with a food truck with his best friend Tyson Savannah, and this served both as his livelihood and his ability to engage with such experiences. It was some of the fun years of his life, as he describes them to us, and also when he met his wife Laura, who came to get lunch, and he wooed with his dosa-making skills. Interesting timeline.

He shared, "During my masters, I was introduced to the concept of permaculture, and very quickly it became a mindset I wanted to adopt for everything I did, and I have done exactly that. The three core ethics and the 12 principles of permaculture govern all the decisions I make in my life today. When I returned to India after thirteen years, Laura and I started The Odd

Gumnut Permaculture Farm in Panchgani and established the first zero-waste kombucha company."

Then in 2019, he wanted to develop a platform where people can have insightful experiences like he did back in Melbourne that helped shape his perspective. The environmental crisis is the most critical issue of our time and my subject matter. He took this idea to his co-founders, who run a design studio and also happen to be qualified filmmakers. Collectively, they launched ALT EFF, an environmental film festival, in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic and have not looked back since.

He continued, "Launching ALT EFF did not have anything to do with the pandemic, as we were having initial discussions for a festival in Panchgani already. The pandemic meant we launched as a 100% virtual festival, which actually enabled us to reach large audiences around the world with very low budgets and overheads. The wider societal interest and re-evaluation of our relationship with the environment meant the time could not have been better to kick-start the initiative. And in hindsight, I am very grateful for the same."

In his opinion, the environmental documentary scene in the country has been the best it has ever been. The limelight received by films such as *All That Breathes*, *The Elephant Whisperers*, and more recently, *Against the Tide* are all pushing filmmakers to cover stories that fall within the theme of

environment, both directly and indirectly. The interest in the same from audiences has also been growing consistently, and it only makes sense that as we continue to experience the wrath of climate change, the stories we tell increasingly cover and touch on this lived experience. One aspect that is still lagging is the finance for environmental documentaries. Production houses such as Civic Studios are starting to fill this gap, and he is very excited to see their slate of films released over the next couple of years.

Besides, "the way we approach the theme of environment is very broad. Films on social issues and the environment have been pivotal in some of the decisions I have made that have put me where I am today. In terms of the audiences that have experienced ALT EFF, our research shows that 83% of the viewers who attended made a change in their behavior or approach to certain issues after watching films at the festival. I can therefore conclude that, yes, environmental films hold immense power to bring about change and create impact, as awareness is the very first step to taking action."

His key lesson is that the power lies in collaborations and partnerships; this is the only way they can achieve the necessary scale for addressing the current environmental crises. Building and nurturing a network across the country is therefore of utmost importance for them as a festival.

PREVENTING VASCULAR COMPLICATIONS IN DIABETES

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects millions of people worldwide. Apart from its well-known impact on blood sugar levels, diabetes can have a profound effect on the vascular system. The interplay between diabetes and vascular health is crucial, as individuals with diabetes are at a significantly higher risk of developing vascular complications. Vascular diseases include a range of conditions such as atherosclerosis, peripheral artery disease (PAD), coronary artery disease, and stroke, among others. Understanding how to prevent vascular complications in diabetes is essential for improving the overall well-being of those affected. Dr. Krishna Chaitanya, Lead Consultant - Vascular and Endovascular Surgery, Aster RV Hospital explores the steps you can take to protect your vascular health and reduce the risk of complications associated with diabetes.

THE DIABETES-VASCULAR DISEASE CONNECTION:

Before diving into prevention strategies, it's crucial to comprehend the link between diabetes and vascular complications. Diabetes, both type 1 and type 2, can have detrimental effects on the vascular system. The elevated blood sugar levels characteristic of diabetes can lead to a cascade of events that damage blood vessels over time. Here's how it happens:

High Blood Sugar Levels: Uncontrolled diabetes results in consistently high levels of glucose in the bloodstream. This excess sugar can injure the delicate inner lining of blood vessels, leading to inflammation and the formation of fatty deposits.

Atherosclerosis: Atherosclerosis, often referred to as "hardening of the arteries," is a condition where fatty deposits accumulate on the walls of blood vessels. Over time, these deposits, known as plaques, can narrow and block blood flow, increasing the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Microvascular Complications: Diabetes can also affect the small blood vessels throughout the body. This may lead to microvascular complications such as retinopathy (eye damage), neuropathy (kidney damage), and neuropathy (nerve damage).

Preventing Vascular Complications: Preventing vascular complications in diabetes involves a combination of medical management, lifestyle changes, and proactive self-care.

Here are essential strategies for safeguarding your vascular health:

Blood Sugar Control: The cornerstone of diabetes management is controlling blood sugar levels. Regular monitoring, medication adherence, and following your healthcare provider's guidance are crucial in maintaining optimal glucose levels.

Healthy Eating: A balanced diet that's low in saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, and sodium can significantly reduce the risk of atherosclerosis. Focus on incorporating whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats into your meals.

Regular Physical Activity: Exercise plays a pivotal role in vascular health. It helps manage blood sugar, lowers blood pressure, and keeps your weight in check. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week.

Medications: Your healthcare provider may prescribe medications to manage risk factors such as high blood pressure, cholesterol, or blood-thinning agents. Complying with your medication regimen is crucial.

Smoking Cessation: Smoking damages blood vessels and accelerates atherosclerosis. If you smoke, seeking support to quit is one of the most significant

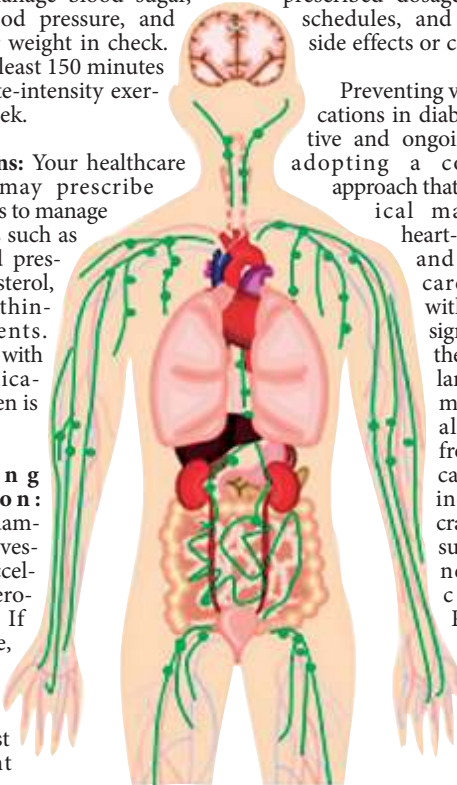
steps you can take to protect your vascular health.

Regular Check-Ups: Frequent check-ups with your healthcare provider are essential for monitoring your vascular health. They can conduct tests to assess your risk factors and identify issues in their early stages.

Foot Care: For individuals with diabetes, foot care is paramount. Nerve damage can lead to reduced sensation in the feet, making them susceptible to injuries and infections. Regularly inspect your feet, keep them clean and moisturized, and choose appropriate footwear.

Medication Management: If you've been prescribed medications, follow your healthcare provider's instructions carefully. This includes taking prescribed dosages, adhering to schedules, and reporting any side effects or concerns.

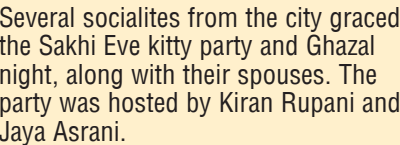
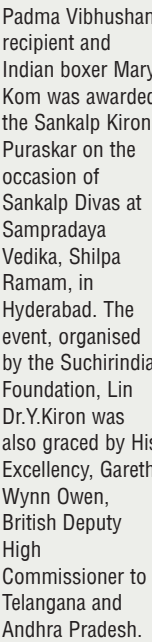
Preventing vascular complications in diabetes is a proactive and ongoing process. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines medical management, a heart-healthy lifestyle, and vigilant self-care, individuals with diabetes can significantly reduce their risk of vascular issues. Keep in mind that personalized guidance from your healthcare provider is indispensable in crafting a plan that suits your unique needs and circumstances. Protecting your vascular health is an investment in your overall well-being and longevity.



what's brewing?

iQOO, the high-performance smartphone brand, has announced that the upcoming flagship iQOO 12 will feature the all-new Android 14 based Funtouch OS. It comes with all the benefits introduced in the new Android version, with a unique iQOO twist to deliver an enhanced, always-smooth user experience. iQOO 12 will be first non-pixel smartphone to give Android 14 out of the box. With a focus on improving memory management, multitasking capabilities, customization, privacy, and security, as well as offering new video editing tools to allow greater creativity and flexibility, Funtouch OS 14 ensures users enjoy every interaction with their device. The OS integration in iQOO 12 will ensure the device comes with no hot restarts or games. Further iQOO 12 will also offer users 3-4 years of Android and security updates.

Photos by- SV Charv



TRIES TO FIGHT, BUT VERY AMPHIBIUN SLIDES IN AND IS...! HOW DISGUSTING!

I DON'T FEEL GOOD.

YOU SOUND AWFUL. YOU'VE GOT A FROG IN YOUR THROAT.

WHY IS A MOUSE TEXTING YOU SAD-FACED EMOJIS?

WE'RE OUT OF CHEESE

JIM DAVIS 3-27

A close-up of a clock face with a cracked glass cover. Two speech bubbles are present. The top bubble says: "I DUNNO, IT GOT CRACKED IN THE FALL." The bottom bubble says: "I'M SURE I'VE STILL GOT TIME FOR ONE MORE..."

I DUNNO, IT GOT CRACKED IN THE FALL.

I'M SURE I'VE STILL GOT TIME FOR ONE MORE...

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

1 Noon
3 Costing nothing
7 Contact by telephone
8 Purchasing
10 Rich
13 Very sore
16 A floor covering
17 Large boat
18 A red gemstone
19 Selected

1 One of the planets
2 A meal
4 Water from the sky
5 Ninety less ten





Prabhas will portray a ‘middle-class police officer’ in Spirit

After the Baahubali series, Pan-India star Prabhas didn't have a proper hit, but that isn't worrying the fans due to the star actor's massive lineup. His next release, *Salaar*, is one of the most awaited films in Indian cinema. Up next, he has *Kalki 2898 AD*, which is expected to revolutionize Indian cinema technically. Prabhas is doing a comedy movie with Maruthi.

Also, the *Mirchi* actor has a movie with Sandeep Reddy Vanga, which is titled *Spirit*. While promoting *Animal*, Sandeep Reddy

Vanga stated that they are planning to release *Spirit* either during the 2025 Christmas season or 2026 Sankranti. After *Animal's* release, Sandeep will wholly concentrate on the pre-production works of *Spirit*.

Sandeep Reddy Vanga already mentioned that Prabhas will play a police officer role in *Spirit*. While promoting *Animal*, the director has dropped one more exciting update about Prabhas' role. He said that the protagonist in *Spirit* comes from a middle-class background.

Both in *Animal* and *Arjun Reddy*, the male leads belong to wealthy families, and now Sandeep Reddy Vanga is changing this aspect for the Prabhas star. The movie will start rolling in September 2024. Sandeep Reddy

Vanga takes more time for writing, and he is doing the same for *Spirit*. The biggie will be produced by Bhusan Kumar of T-Series.

Saloni Batra: Being on the sets of Animal led me into dream land

The much-anticipated trailer for *Animal* has set the stage on fire, creating waves of excitement among fans. The film boasts an ensemble cast featuring Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna, Bobby Deol, and Saloni Batra. Saloni Batra, who steps into the role of Reet, Ranbir Kapoor's on-screen sister, shares her awe-inspiring experience of working on such a grand project as she celebrates her birthday today, considering *Animal* to be amongst her biggest gift from the universe this year.

Saloni Batra stated: "Being on the sets of *Animal* has been like god woke me up from a dream and led me into dream land. I've literally seen my manifestations

come to life from paper to reality and it has been surreal. Acting alongside the likes of Ranbir Kapoor, Anil Kapoor and being directed by the Sandeep Reddy Vanga has been one of my most fulfilling experiences. Masters of their craft, all of them have inspired me and I've learnt so much from them."

She further adds, "Ranbir, always so humble and grounded, is one of the most hardworking actors I've met. His empathy, patience and helpful nature reflects on screen in his endearing performances. I was stuck in a scene once for which he helped and then the scene just took flow. I thank you RK for always being a comforting energy. Anil Kapoor was always like a buddy on set. His energy is

contagious. He played my father and was such a natural but never made any of us feel the stardom he came with. Rashmika is the sweetest soul and the most warm person I've come across. I thank my stars for this set up I got to work in with Sandeep sir anchoring the ship. He is so passionate, full of clarity about his vision, into the process always which makes him the director he is. I honestly feel blessed."

With the film's release just around the corner, anticipation among fans is at its peak. The combination of a star-studded cast and Saloni Batra's heartfelt reflections sets the stage for *Animal* to entertain audiences and leave an indelible mark on the cinematic landscape.



Hanuman's Avakaya is a tangy melody connecting cultures & embracing Indian tradition

The unique homegrown superhero flick *Hanuman* has unveiled its latest gem - a song titled *Avakaya* rendered by Sunidhi Chauhan. This song pays homage to a beloved culinary tradition that is deeply rooted in the hearts of Telugu people—the art of making *Avakaya* - a spicy mango pickle that transcends mere gastronomy to become a cultural celebration.

Avakaya is a cultural bridge, beckoning audiences from all

corners of the country to explore the metaphor of good and evil. As the notes of *Avakaya* reverberate, it is evident that the attempt is to savor the cultural diversity that unites us.

Talking about it, filmmaker Prasanth Varma says, "*Avakaya* is a pickle that is deeply entrenched in our culture. The process of making the pickle is like a celebration. Every year, all the grandmothers prepare this pickle and stores it to make our eating habits

easier for the coming year. In India, when you make pickle, you nurture it against all evils. In the song, the hero is protecting the women who are making it against the demons."

Hanuman is presented by RKD Studios, while PrimeShow Entertainment is the producer of the film. Venkat Kumar Jetty is the Line Producer and Kushal Reddy is the associate producer. Catch film in the theatres on January 12, 2024

Mahesh Babu praises Bobby Deol for his menacing avatar in Animal says, 'You blew my mind'

In a recent promotional event for the highly anticipated film *Animal*, Superstar Mahesh Babu couldn't contain his admiration for Bobby Deol's role, which has left the entire nation in shock. The trailer, touted as one of the most awaited glimpses of the year, features Bobby Deol in a role that has captivated audiences and drawn high praise from industry peers.

As the trailer unfolds, Bobby Deol's presence escalates, eventually stealing the spotlight and setting the stage for a head-to-head clash with Ranbir Kapoor in what promises to be a cinematic extravaganza. Mahesh Babu, visibly impressed, shared his thoughts on Bobby Deol's performance, saying,

"Bobby, you come in the end, and you blew my mind - my phone just dropped. The transformation is stunning, and as an audience, it's very inspiring for us. I can't wait to watch you on the big screen".

With Bobby Deol going head to head against Ranbir Kapoor, *Animal* promises a clash of titans that has everyone on the edge of their seats.

As the release date approaches, the expectations and excitement surrounding *Animal* continue to build. Bobby Deol's performance, as endorsed by none other than Mahesh Babu, is poised to be a defining aspect of the film, leaving audiences eagerly counting down the days until the 1st of December.



Ram Charan takes time from filming to cast his vote as he jets off to Hyderabad

Global star Ram Charan is creating a buzz as he travels from Mysore to Hyderabad, not for a film shoot, but to cast his vote. This move proves his commitment to civic duty and being a responsible citizen. Taking time off his busy shooting schedule for the upcoming film, fans are eagerly anticipating his new avatar on the big screen.

Coincidentally, the theme of Ram Charan's highly awaited movie, *Game Changer*, revolves around the electoral system, adding a layer of significance to

his real-life actions. Despite the glamour of the film industry, he prioritizes his civic duty by taking the time to vote. Once done, the renowned actor will return to the film set, balancing his roles as an actor and a responsible citizen. The film, *Game Changer*, slated for release next year, promises an exciting cinematic experience for fans. As the excitement builds for the movie's release, Ram Charan continues to captivate audiences, not just with his on-screen presence but also with his commitment to making a difference in the real world.



Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen's Kadhalikka Neramillai romantic thriller first look out

Tamil actor Jayam Ravi has joined hands with Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi for the romantic thriller, *Kadhalikka Neramillai*. The film, which was unofficial so far, was officially launched by the makers on Wednesday. The makers also revealed the title and the first-look poster of the film as well.

The title of Kiruthiga Udhayanidhi directorial starring Jayam Ram and Nithya Menen is *Kadhalikka Neramillai*. Taking to X (formerly known as Twitter), the actor announced the film and shared the first look poster as well.

Jayam's post loosely translated read, "No Time for Love #KadhalikkaNeramillai(sic)."

The first look poster features Jayam Ravi and Nithya Menen in a romantic pose. The duo can be seen gracefully embracing each other as they blur into the background and the focus is on the

union of their hands. The title of the film appears on the right corner of the image.

Kadhalikka Neramillai also stars Yogi Babu, Vinay Rai, and Lal in pivotal roles. Along with a power



packed starcast, the film also has a starling production team.

Maestro AR Rahman will compose the music of *Kadhalikka Neramillai*, Gavemic Ary will handle the cinematography while the editing is to be done by Lawrence Kishore.

Ram Pothineni unveils his rugged avatar in Double iSmart's new poster

Energetic Star Ram Pothineni's highly anticipated *Double iSmart*, which is the sequel to the blockbuster hit *iSmart Shankar* directed by Puri Jagannadh and co-produced by the director and Charmee Kaur. Sara Ali Khan and Kavya Thapar are the leading female roles, Bollywood star Sanjay Dutt plays as antagonist, and Vishnu Reddy in pivotal role.

The makers unveiled a striking poster of *Double iSmart*. Ram Pothineni took on his hand Twitter and posted the poster that shows him upside down, surrounded by a wheel of weapons. Ram looks as good as ever in his rugged manner, dressed in a black jacket and goggles. "The countdown has begun," Ram tweeted beside the eye-catching banner. As a Maha Shivratri festive gift, *Double iSmart* is set for a



massive pan-Indian release on March 8. And today marks the 100-day countdown for *Double iSmart's* release.

Double iSmart, produced by Puri Jagannadh and Charmee under the Puri Connects label, with background music composed by Mani Sharma.

The CEO is Vishu Reddy. Gianni Giannelli, a Hollywood cinematographer, is working on this high-voltage action thriller. The film will be released on March 8, 2024. The film will be released in Telugu, Hindi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Kannada on March 8, 2024.

JR NTR-HRITHIK ROSHAN'S WAR 2 IN CINEMAS FROM AUG 14, 2024

War 2, the sequel to the 2019 Hrithik Roshan-starrer blockbuster film *War*, has locked its release date. The sequel will take the narrative forward for Hrithik's character of Major Kabir Dhaliwal, a RAW agent, who was shown to have gone rogue in the first part of the film. As per a trade source, *War 2* will debut in theatres on August 14, 2025. The film, which is directed by Ayan Mukerji, is the 6th film from the spy universe after *Ek Tha Tiger*, *Tiger Zinda Hai*, *War*, *Pathaan* and the recently released Salman Khan and Katrina Kaif-starrer *Tiger 3*.

Hrithik also teased his appearance in *Tiger 3* along with SRK, hinting towards the next movies in the spy-universe.

War, which released in 2019, told the story of Hrithik's character, who goes rogue to cleanse the intelligence system of the country of traitors and to identify the infiltrator in the elite forces.

The film broke all opening day and weekend box-office records for a Hindi film before it was surpassed



India Women's A pip England Women's A by 3 runs

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India Women's A staged a late inspirational comeback to pip England Women's A side by a mere three runs in the first T20 game of their three-match series here on Wednesday.

Chasing 135 for win, England looked in complete control riding on a brilliant 70-run stand for the fourth wicket between vice-captain Hollie Armitage (52) and wicket-keeper-batter Seren Smale (31), but India fought back with a cluster of wickets to clinch a narrow win.

Kashvee Gautam (2/23) struck twice to dismiss Smale and Issy Wong (2) in the 18th over to open the door back for the Indians, who pulled off a thrilling win at the Wankhede Stadium.

With 13 needed off the final over, Shreyanka Patil (2/26) gave away five extras (wide) on the first ball but India prevailed eventually by three runs.

India Women's A were guilty of not putting up enough runs on the board and making plenty of mistakes in the field.

Armitage, who top-scored in the game with 52 off 41 balls (3x4s, 1x6s), made the most of a lifeline as Disha Kasat spilled a regulation catch at cover off Prakashika Naik (1/28).



Another opportunity to break the stand was missed in the 14th over when Indian 'keeper Uma Chetry did not collect the ball to break the

stumps, anticipating a direct hit. The two England batters unleashed powerful hits while constantly pressuring the Indian fielders with brisk

running between the wickets. Patil got India A their first breakthrough when she cleaned up Grace Scrivens (7) in the second over.

Mannat Kashyap (1/21) got rid of Mady Villiers (20; 17 balls, 4x4s) and Naik removed Freya Kemp (1) in the eighth over.

Earlier, after electing to bat, India made 134/7 in 20 overs. Kasat batted well to make 25 from 32 balls, hitting three fours.

On a slow deck, India Women's A could not really push on with their scoring rate, with England seamers doing well.

Skipper Charlie Dean was the pick among the bowlers with 4-0-19-2 while Kemp finished with figures of 4-0-30-2. Wong (1/13), Lauren Filer (1/34) and Kirstie Gordon (1/26) chipped in with a wicket each.

Player of the match Patil admitted India made errors in the field.

"It is a big platform for all of us. It happens, (but) how we come back is what matters," Patil told the media after the match.

Patil said India were confident that the bowlers would pull it off.

"I would say maybe (India were) 10-15 runs short but then we were looking (at a total) around 130-140 because the wicket was slightly slower and we knew our bowlers could get the job done," she said.

Brief scores: India Women's A 134/7 in 20 overs (Vrinda Dinesh 22, Disha Kasat 25, Gnanananda Divya 22; Charlie Dean 2/19) beat England Women's A 131/8 in 20 overs (Hollie Armitage 52, Seren Smale 31; Kashvee Gautam 2/23, Shreyanka Patil 2/26) by 3 runs.

India to tour Lanka in July-August

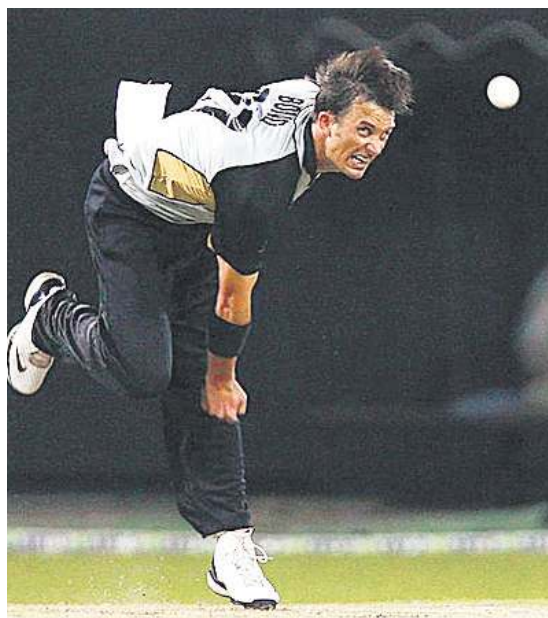
PTI ■ COLOMBO

The crisis-ridden Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) and its host broadcaster will have something to cheer about during the middle of 2024 when the Indian team makes its annual ritual tour of the islands for a short six-match white-ball series, the board announced on Wednesday.

SLC has been banned by the ICC for government interference and the global body has also shifted the U-19 World Cup to South Africa. However the national teams (men and women) will be allowed to fulfil their bilateral commitments. According to the 2024 calendar released by SLC, India is supposed to travel for three ODI and T20Is each during July-August, which is effectively country's cricket season.

The men's national team is due to play 52 international games in 2024, which includes 10 Tests, 21 ODIs and 21 T20Is. The T20Is, however, doesn't factor in the additional games that they will play during the T20 World Cup.

Shane is Paarl Royals head coach for SA20



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

SA20 franchise Paarl Royals on Wednesday announced the appointment of former New Zealand pacer Shane Bond as the new head coach for the 2024 season of the South African league. Bond replaces former South African all-rounder JP Duminy in the position, with the latter currently serving the national team. Bond, a former New Zealand fast bowling sensation, brings an impressive array of credentials and passion for the game. His illustrious career, both as a player and a coach across New Zealand's national team and multiple T20 franchises, has earned him the reputation of making the best players even better. His tactical acumen, knowledge of the game and his ability to inspire and nurture emerging talent have been widely recognized in the cricketing community which have also reflected in the Kiwi pacer helping the Mumbai Indians franchise lift four titles in nine seasons in the IPL. He was recently also roped in by Paarl Royals' sister franchise, Rajasthan Royals,

in the dual role of assistant coach and fast bowling coach for the IPL. Royals' Director of Cricket, Kumar Sangakkara, welcomed the 48-year-old for his debut season in the SA20. "Apart from being a fierce competitor during his playing days, Shane (Bond) has also excelled in his various coaching roles across teams and leagues, and we are delighted to have him lead the coaching team at Paarl Royals. "The inaugural season provided us with a lot of learnings after our semi-final finish, and we believe that his experience, commitment and vision align well with our goals for the upcoming season," Sangakkara said. Bond shared his thoughts on the opportunity, saying, "It is a new challenge for me personally to be heading to the SA20, but what gives me the belief is the strong squad we have been able to assemble for the upcoming season. "We have so much experience and immense potential in our ranks, which makes me excited to join the group in January and work towards achieving our target of lifting the trophy."

With so much
dew even 14 runs
per over would
have been chased:
Gaikwad

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The dew laden condition was the primary reason for Indian bowling attack's poor show in the third T20 International, where the home team failed to defend an imposing total of 222, vice-captain and opener Ruturaj Gaikwad said after the defeat.

Indian bowlers leaked 80 runs in the last 5 overs while defending 222 as Glenn Maxwell's 48-ball-104 not out, included 23 runs off the final over from Prasidh Krishna, who was smashed for four boundaries and a six. For the record, Krishna's 0/68 in 4 overs is the worst T20I figure by any Indian bowler. "I don't think so it's a concern because it's almost like you are bowling with a wet ball. And it's really tough on them," Gaikwad told reporters during the post-match press conference.

"In these kinds of conditions, 12 runs per over or even 13 or 14 runs per over is gettable, even while we are chasing. In the first game, how easily we managed to chase 210," he cited an example.

"So I think, I don't think so definitely there's not a concern at all. It's just that the conditions are slightly tougher for them, and we

have to accept and move on." Gaikwad said Maxwell's brutal innings and heavy dew proved to be home team's undoing. Making his 100th T20I appearance, Maxwell slammed an unbeaten 104 off just 48 balls as Australia massed 45 runs in the last two overs to seal a last-ball thriller to make it 1-2 in the five-match series.

"I think even Maxi batted really well. To win from a situation where they needed 100 from seven and a half hours and then 50 from 3 overs, I think it was critical innings for him," Gaikwad said.

"And I think from our side, our bowlers tried executing whatever they had in their control.

Also, there was a lot of dew around so ball was slipping a lot. So I think it was tough for the bowlers as well.

"Even though we scored 230, in the last game, it was still in between we felt the game might go till the last over, but this kind of dew it is these totals are bound to happen and bound to chase."

On way to a 57-ball 123, the 26-year-old Gaikwad scored his first fifty in 32 balls before completing the hundred in just 52 balls to set up a more than par-score for India.



"Initially, I felt pitch was slightly tacky, ball was stopping a little bit and there was some movement in the air and off the pitch as well. So first, I felt 2-3 overs, the wicket was like that, and we lost two wickets (Yashvir Jaiswal and Ishan Kishan) in a span of one over. So it was important that we stitched a partnership. And then after 7-8 overs, I think the wicket got slightly better."

India will Australia in the fourth T20I on Friday at Raipur.

Playing under great leaders will help me: Gill

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

India opener Shubman Gill feels the experience of playing under “great leaders” in the India setup will help him a lot when he leads Gujarat Titans in the upcoming season of the IPL.

Gill has played under the likes of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma and played a vital role in India reaching the World Cup final at home recently.

Gill was recently announced skipper of 2022 IPL champions Gujarat Titans after their captain for two seasons, Hardik Pandya, was traded back to five-time winners Mumbai Indians. It will be Gill's maiden outing as captain of an IPL side, having begun his journey in the competition in 2018 with Kolkata Knight Riders before heading to GT in 2022. "We all know captainship

comes with a lot of things, and commitment is one of them. Discipline is one of them. Hard work is one of them. Loyalty is one of them," said Gill in a video posted by the franchise on social media. "And, because, I think I've played under great leaders and I've learned a lot from them, I think those learnings that I have had from their experience playing under them is gonna help me a lot in this IPL."

Gill added that there was no dearth of experienced players in Gujarat Titans, and he would get to learn a lot from leaders such as New Zealand's Kane Williamson and Afghanistan's Rashid Khan. "We have great leaders in our team, be it Kane (Williamson) or be it Rashid (Khan) or be it (Mohammed) Shami, or even David (Miller), or even Wriddhi (Saha). So, I think it's gonna be great.

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