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**It is not 'Telangana Rising but Anumula Brothers Rising,'**  
**Telangana is falling. Revanth brothers may enter Forbes list or may overtake Adani.**  
**Revanth took loans worth Rs 85,000 crore until August. The Congress Government has already closed Rs one lakh crore. Does the CM know the amount of debts or is Dy. CM Bhatti misleading Revanth**

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-SPORTS

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At the TDP central office here, Chandrababu accepted appeals from the public on Wednesday.

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the scheme. Minister Ravikumar urged the beneficiaries to contact the helpline 1912 for any queries or clarifications regarding the scheme's implementation. He assured that the coalition government, committed to transparency and integrity, is effectively implementing the free electricity programme despite the financial mismanagement of the previous YSRCP government that plunged the power sector into crisis.

process has commenced. However, we must not lose momentum. Other railway zones have been opera-

The discussion also delved into broader railway modernisation efforts. The Minister highlighted advancements in track systems, enabling train speeds of 100-120 kmph, compared to the earlier 70-80 kmph, and underscored the deployment of the 'Kavach' programme, an advanced collision-prevention system. "Through initiatives like Kavach and track modernisation, we are enhancing safety and significantly reducing travel time for passengers across India," the Minister said.



# Jagan ‘orchestrated’ hostile takeover of Rs 3,600 cr Kakinada Port

A shocking revelation has surfaced, shedding light on the alleged misuse of power during YS Jagan Mohan Reddy's tenure as chief minister of Andhra Pradesh. Accusations against Jagan and his close circle suggest that they orchestrated the forced acquisition of shares worth Rs 3,600 crore in Kakinada Port and SEZ for a fraction of their value. The entire operation, executed under threats of legal action and imprisonment, has come to the forefront after businessman Karnati Venkateswara Rao (KV Rao) filed a complaint with the Andhra Pradesh CID on December 2.

According to KV Rao, he was coerced into selling shares worth Rs 2,500 crore in Kakinada Sea Ports Limited (KSPL) for just Rs 494 crore and shares worth Rs 1,109

crore in the Kakinada SEZ for a mere Rs12 crore. Rao alleges that he was threatened with fabricated cases, potential arrest, and the shutdown of his businesses if he refused to comply. The complaint names prominent individuals, including Jagan's uncle YV Subba Reddy's son Vikrant Reddy, YSRCP MP V Vijayasai Reddy, and representatives of Aurobindo Realty. Based on the complaint, the CID has registered a case citing charges such as criminal intimidation, forgery, cheating, and conspiracy.

Before Jagan became chief minister in 2019, KSPL was a thriving business. It reported revenues of Rs 491.47 crore in 2014-15, steadily increasing to Rs 628.71 crore in 2019-20. The company also had Rs 240 crore in cash reserves by that time. Rao states that,

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despite its strong financial position, after Jagan took office, support from port directors and the Andhra Pradesh Maritime Board dwindled, creating an atmosphere ripe for a hostile takeover.

In what appeared to be a prelude to the takeover, the state government ordered an audit of KSPL by PKF Sridhar & Santhanam LLP. The audit

report mentioned that KSPL caused Rs 965.65 crore in losses to the state government -- a claim Rao asserts was fabricated. Still, this report became the foundation for issuing threats and bringing pressure on him to get him to transfer his shares.

KV Rao recounts that after failing to secure an appointment with Jagan, he was forced to negotiate with



**RAMESH KANDULA**  
Chief Editor Swatantra TV and author

Vikrant Reddy, who then prepared the groundwork for the share transfer. Rao was informed that legal documentation was being handled by Varuna Law Associates and that a corporate deposit agreement was being prepared. Rao alleges that the entire operation

was orchestrated to benefit Aurobindo Realty. The shares of KSPL were valued at Rs 2,500 crore, but Aurobindo Realty appraised them at a mere Rs 494 crore using questionable methods. Rao vehemently opposed this valuation, arguing that the company's net assets, profitability, and future earnings potential were disregarded. However, Rao alleges that he was intimidated into signing the sale agreement under threats of dire consequences, including arrest and business closures.

After the deal was finalized, Rao was taken to meet Jagan in Vijayawada. During this meeting, Rao tried to raise objections, but Jagan allegedly silenced him and instructed him to follow Vikrant Reddy's directives. This interaction left no doubt in Rao's

mind that the entire operation was carried out for Jagan's benefit. The shares were transferred to Aurobindo Realty despite objections from Axis Bank and Bank of India, which had financial interests in KSPL. These banks flagged the transactions and restricted the company's ability to secure loans from other financial institutions. After the share transfer, Aurobindo Realty profited immensely from KSPL, alleges KV Rao.

Between 2020 and 2024, the company received Rs 102 crore as dividends and Rs 280 crore in inter-corporate deposits. Rao claims that KSPL was used as a cash cow to finance Aurobindo's other projects. Rao, who claims he had no choice but to comply during Jagan's regime, has now filed a complaint follow-

ing the change in the state's administration. He is seeking justice for what he alleges was a blatant abuse of power for personal gain.

**THE LARGER PICTURE**

The Kakinada Port case is not just about financial exploitation but raises critical questions about governance and accountability during Jagan's tenure. Rao's allegations paint a grim picture of how political power can be misused to intimidate and exploit businesses for personal enrichment.

This case could have significant political and legal repercussions as investigations progress. If proven true, it would further tarnish the image of Jagan's administration and provide a glaring example of corruption at the highest levels of power.

## Revenue Conferences from Dec 6-Jan 8 to address land disputes

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Revenue, Registration, and Stamps Minister Anagani Satyaprasad has said that to resolve land-related disputes comprehensively, the AP government will organise Revenue Conferences in 17,564 villages across the State starting from December 6. The Minister announced that the 33-day initiative aims to address issues affecting landowners and ensure justice for the common people.

During a video-conferencing with district collectors and joint collectors from the Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA) office in Mangalagiri, Minister Satyaprasad stressed the government's commitment to resolving land disputes created by the previous administration and implementing reforms for better governance.

The Minister highlighted rampant irregularities in land distribution and management during the previous government's tenure, particularly in the allocation of housing plots. He stated that the YSRCP administration had allegedly misused its authority to allocate plots to ineligible beneficiaries, including party workers, leading to widespread public dissatisfaction.

### Rampant irregularities in land distribution and management during previous Govt's tenure: Min



"We will scrutinise all housing plot allocations during the Revenue Summits. Beneficiary lists will be reviewed, and ineligible recipients will be identified. Plots wrongfully allocated will be reclaimed and reassigned to eligible beneficiaries," said Minister Satyaprasad.

The summits will run for 33 days, followed by a 45-day period to resolve all complaints. Teams comprising Tahsildars, Revenue Inspectors, Village Revenue Officers (VROs), Mandal Surveyors, and other relevant officials will visit every village to ensure grievances are addressed efficiently.

Satyaprasad assured that the government will investigate and rectify any irregularities, including fraudulent inclusion of

common people's lands under Section 22A or misuse of government schemes. He also warned of strict action against those who forcibly acquired lands from villagers.

RP Sisodia, Special Chief Secretary, Revenue Department, said that Revenue Conferences will be held from December 6 to January 8. In a circular released on Wednesday, he said that the government is organising these conferences with the primary objective of resolving land-related issues at the village level. A team of officials from the relevant departments will visit each village and receive prior information from those affected by land encroachment issues related to freehold and Section 22A.

During the summits, teams comprising officials from various departments will visit every revenue village to collect petitions from affected individuals and process them with prior information.

District collectors and joint collectors will finalise district schedules and oversee the collection and resolution of grievances at the village and mandal levels.

All complaints received will be recorded in real time on the Revenue Department's Grievance Redressal Portal, developed by the Real-Time Governance Society (RTGS). The conferences will take place daily from 9 AM at designated locations in each revenue village, Sisodia added.

## YSRCP to launch agitation from Dec 11

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

YSRCP president and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced an action plan for the party to highlight the failures of the coalition government and picket collector offices demanding input subsidy, roll-back of hiked power charges and immediate clearance of fees reimbursement dues.

After a meeting with party district presidents, secretaries, general secretaries and regional coordinators here on Wednesday, he gave a detailed action plan on the issues the party would take up.

On December 11, the party will organise rallies and submit representations to district collectors on farmer issues. The demands will be Rs 20,000 input subsidy, MSP for paddy, and revival of free crop insurance schemes.

On December 27, agitations will be staged at SE offices and CMD offices, and memorandums will be submitted demand-

### Seeks input subsidy, rollback of hiked power charges, clearance of fees reimbursement dues

ing roll-back of hiked power charges.

On January 3, the party will picket collectorates demanding payment of fees reimbursement and Vasati Deevana dues.

The former Chief Minister said power tariff hike, middlemen capturing paddy procurement, farmers not getting MSP, fees reimbursement, terrorising social media activists, and other major issues should be raised on public platforms.

"The resentment against the coalition government is growing within less than six months of coming to office. They failed to implement Super Six and Super Seven schemes after assuming office and all the institutions are being weakened.

"For the first time in the State, fees reimbursement is due for three quarters and by January Rs 2,800 crore is pending. Vasathi

Deevana bills of Rs 1,100 crore are pending and colleges are warning students not to come to classes if the fee is not paid, which results in students turning into labourers. Aarogyasri dues amounting to Rs 2,400 crore are pending for the past nine months and patients are in a position to avail the scheme. Salaries are not paid for 108, 104 ambulance services," Jagan explained.

He added that on the agriculture front, farmers are not getting MSP which was given through RBKs by e-crop during their governance. Farmers are getting Rs 10,000 more per acre, he said. Now, the farmers are in distress as their crop is damaged due to heavy rains and the government is neglecting them.

Power charges are increasing. In the first round, people were burdened by Rs 6,000 crore and in the next months, another Rs

9,000 crore will be imposed. Such a move is unprecedented in the country, Jagan stated.

"False cases are being foisted on those who question the government. This has never happened after and fear of psychosis is spread across the State. Corruption is rampant and the red book constitution is being implemented. During elections, the coalition partners promised free sand, now the government is not getting any revenue but the rate of sand has doubled and the spoils are being shared.

"Liquor shops are taken over by Chandrababu and his people and belt shops are being auctioned from village to village for Rs 2 to 3 lakh each. Industrialists have to pay ransom to MLAs and Chandrababu and there is a plan to take over Nellore quartz mines," the YSRCP chief said.

## Gati Shakti Multimodal Cargo Terminals in AP soon

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Railway Ministry is implementing the Gati Shakti Multimodal Cargo Terminal (GCT) policy to improve cargo transportation facilities across the country. Under this policy, 354 locations have been identified nationwide, including 23 in Andhra Pradesh, as stated by Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw in a written response

in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. TDP MPs Kesineni Sivanath and Daggubati Purandeswari raised questions in Parliament on the Gati Shakti Multimodal Cargo Terminal policy, asking the Railway Ministry for details. The terminals are expected to not only meet industrial needs but also enhance cargo transport opportunities.

As of October 31, as many as 91 GCTs have been commis-

sioned, with four located in Andhra Pradesh. According to the GCT policy, construction must be completed within 24 months of approval. Funding for these projects will be raised through both private and public sector collaborations. The selection of locations and the release of funds will be based on industrial needs and cargo transportation opportunities, as explained by the Minister.

### Kakani plays CM over Kakinada Port controversy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy launched a scathing attack on the Chandrababu Naidu-led coalition government, accusing it of using the Kakinada Port controversy as a diversionary tactic to cover its shortcomings. Addressing the media on Wednesday, he alleged that the revival of old cases, including the Kakinada Port issue, was aimed at targeting political opponents.

He criticised the CM for his handling of the Kakinada Port, claiming that the controversy originated with accusations of public distribution system (PDS) rice smuggling but later shifted to allegations of a forcible takeover of the port. He stated that the port, initially developed during the tenure of the late Chief Minister YS Rajasekhara Reddy, was allegedly handed over to Chandrababu's associate KV Rao during his tenure as Chief Minister.

The former minister also noted the change in stance of Jana Sena Party chief Pawan Kalyan, who had raised concerns about the issue during the 2019 elections but has since remained silent. Kakani questioned the logic of the accusations, saying, "If the port's takeover was truly hostile, why was only 48 per cent acquired instead of the entire stake?"

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Tuni RTC Depot driver Lowaraju, who was suspended for dancing to a movie song while on duty, met Education and IT Minister Nara Lokesh along with his family to express gratitude after his suspension was revoked.

Lowaraju, an outsourced driver at the Tuni RTC depot in Kakinada district, was on duty on October 24 when the incident occurred. While driving a bus from Rowthulapudi to the Tuni depot, a tractor loaded with wooden logs blocked the narrow road. Unable to proceed, Lowaraju halted the bus and in a light-hearted moment, danced to a



song from the movie Devara to entertain the passengers.

A young passenger recorded it and the video quickly went viral on social media. Citing a breach of conduct, RTC officials suspended Lowaraju. The matter caught Minister Lokesh's attention,

and he assured that the suspension would be revoked. Lokesh met Lowaraju and his family in person fulfilling his promise to support the driver. Lowaraju and his family expressed gratitude for the Minister's intervention, which allowed him to resume his duties.

## CM: Formulate plans...

Continued from Page 1

He is firm in his opinion that poverty alleviation is possible only if people are made partners in sectors like development and economy.

Chandrababu is confident that if more and more projects are launched in the State under the people, public, private partnership (P-4) policy, Andhra Pradesh will soon emerge as a poverty-free State. Amaravathi is a classic example for this P-4 project as several people have voluntarily come forward to donate their lands for building the capital, the Chief Minister said, adding that while the State government has shouldered the responsibility to build the capital, private organisations have become partners in this mission. Thus, people, the government and the private organisations are getting equal benefits, he said.

Also, solar power generation is possible with the active partnership of the people as solar-roof has been set up atop every house under the PM Surya Ghar scheme, the CM said. He told the officials that there is a need to intro-

duce many more such P-4 projects in the State.

Besides taking up programmes like P-4 for poverty alleviation in the State there is a need to take necessary assistance from the affluent sections, the Chief Minister said. For getting such assistance the officials should come forward to sensitise the corporate sector to offer their services in a philanthropic manner as a small contribution makes a big difference. They should take the assistance of corporate bigwigs like Bill-Melinda Gates Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation, Shiv Nadar Foundation and the Tata Foundation which are much ahead in charity. Also, the officials can take the help of the NRIs, the Chief Minister said.

The CM expressed concern over the decreasing fertility rate in the State and increasing the rate of dependents besides coming down the rate of youth. The birth rate in the State is significantly lower than in the whole country, the Chief Minister said.

Chief Secretary Neerab Kumar Prasad and several other senior officers from various departments took part in the meeting.

## Unprecedented in..

Continued from Page 1

They all complained to the Chief Minister that their assets have been forcibly occupied by the YSRCP leaders after physical attacks on all of them by rowdy gangs. After giving a patient hearing to all of them, the CM promised them of a detailed probe into how atrociously the innocent people were attacked and their properties were forcibly occupied.

Chandrababu also accepted appeals from the differently-abled and senior citizens. The Chief Minister extended financial assistance to many of them.

Karempudi Abhiram of Gollapudi complained to the Chief Minister that YSRCP MLC Talasila Raghuram, with the help of Assistant Commissioner of Police Hanmantha Rao, and Police Inspector Ravindra, threatened him with dire consequences and forcibly took over his property worth over Rs 10 crore. For the sole reason that his father, Ravindra, had filed his nomination for the MPTE elections, Abhiram said that he was harassed and illegal cases filed against him. He said that he was also sent to jail for 73 days in these illegal cases. Abhiram said that unable to digest the harassment, his father died of a heart stroke. He felt that if an inquiry is ordered into the atrocities of Talasila Raghuram, several such illegal activities will come into the open.

G Madhu of Chandragiri in Penugonda mandal of Satya Sai district told Chandrababu that his properties were forcibly occupied by the then cabinet minister, Sankara Narayana.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH  
PANCHAYATI RAJ DEPARTMENT  
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE

NIT NO.46 to 48/TO/2024-25

01.12.2024

Online tenders are invited under a procurement platform for 3 Bridge works with an Estimated Cost of Rs. 1005.12 Lakhs under PMGSY Grant in Krishna District. Bid upload and download starting date: 06.12.2024 onwards. Further details visit: [www.tender.aperecurement.gov.in](http://www.tender.aperecurement.gov.in) Ph.No.6305693265.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer, Panchayati Raj, Nachilipatnam, Krishna District

E.O.No: 1478/CLM/NT/1024-25 Dt. 04.12.2024

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## Jagan promises support for social media activist

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has assured the social media activist, Puli Sagar that the party will stand by him and the issue will be escalated to national level.

The activist, a Dalit, was harassed by police in Rajamahendravaram. The Chief Minister said that the matter will be taken up with the National Human Rights Commission, and the National SC, ST Commission, he said.

Earlier, the victim told media at the party office that the Rajamahendravaram Inspector had put him in lockup and beat up, besides harassing him and abusing him in the name of his caste.

Former MP Margani Bharat and former MLA TJR Sudhakar Babu, who accompanied him, said that the government has been harassing social media activists by foisting false cases.

They have been registering multiple cases for the same issue at different places and harassing them.

We will take legal recourse and stand by the activists, he said.

# CM, HRD Minister to attend Mega Parent Teacher meet

Based on infrastructure, 0-5 star rating to be given to schools

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The State government is set to enhance educational standards in government schools by encouraging parental cooperation and participation. To achieve this, a Mega Parent Teacher Meeting (Mega PTM) will be organised across all 45,094 schools on December 7, according to Kona Sasidhar, the Principal Secretary of the Education Department. He said that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and Minister for Human Resources and IT Nara Lokesh will participate in the Mega PTM at the Bapatla Municipal High School.

While addressing a press conference at the Secretariat at Velagapudi, on Wednesday, Kona Sasidhar urged the alumni, parents, and prominent people who studied in the Bapatla Municipal School besides people's representatives and School Management Committee to attend the Mega PTM. Following the directions from CM Naidu, the Mega PTM is conducted to attract government schools rather than private ones, he said.



Further, he said that to improve infrastructure facilities and educational standards in all government and aided schools in a bigger way, the government proposed to conduct the Mega PTM. Based on the educational standards, the government would give a star rating to each school and for that, the programme would be conducted on an innovative model, he added. Firstly, implement the 0-5 star rating in all schools and later, take the appropriate steps to improve the star ratings every year, he explained. The ultimate aim is to reach every school to a 5-star rating, he said.

Disclosing the details to the media, Sasidhar said that more than 35,84,621 students, 71,60,000 parents, 1,88,266 teachers and around 50,000 people's representatives are to be participating in the Mega Parent Teacher Meeting. Besides the CM and HRD Minister, many ministers, MPs, MLCs, MLAs, Mayors, Municipal Chairpersons, ZP Chairpersons, MPPs, ZPTC, MPTC members, Sarpanch and other ward members would take part in these meetings, he added.

Meanwhile, he said all parents are invited to the event by special invitation cards that are creatively prepared by

their children. He made it clear that they are planning to conduct these Mega PTMs in a pleasant atmosphere by avoiding political involvement. During the meetings, elaborate discussions are being conducted with the parents for the overall development of their children, he said. On the other hand, he announced that the government would introduce the Holistic Progress Cards in place of the current progress cards.

School Education Department Director V Vijaya Rama Raju and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan State Project Director B Srinivasa Rao attended the press conference.

## Will address shortage of 'Tella Poniki' wood: Collector

Committee to be formed to resolve Kondapalli Toys artistes' problems



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

NTR District Collector Dr G Lakshmisha has announced that the district administration is committed to addressing the shortage of White Sandar Wood, also known as "Tella Poniki". He said that this initiative will involve establishing a nursery through the collaboration of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). Dr Lakshmisha emphasised that this effort will support the Kondapalli toy artists in the district. The Collector convened a meeting with the Kondapalli Toys Artists Cooperative Society at Kondapalli near Vijayawada on Wednesday. During the discussions with the Collector, several artists expressed their displeasure with the shortage of raw materials such as Tella Poniki wood. Later, the Collector interacted with the artists and observed the toy-making process.

Speaking on the occasion, Lakshmisha said that the Kondapalli Toys are the symbol of the elevation of Telugu tradition. He said with collective efforts, the State government would bring previous glory to the

Kondapalli Toys and the government will support the artists. He also assured the artists that a joint committee would be formed, involving the Forest Department, the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), the District Water Management Agency (DWAMA), and other relevant departments, to ensure a steady supply of Tella Poniki wood for toy production.

He stated that, according to the regulations of the Forest Department, the district administration would assist artists in creating more attractive toys by facilitating access to Tella Poniki wood. He emphasised that he would develop a plan of action for this initiative. Additionally, he explained that the government is committed to preserving artistic heritage for future generations by providing support and encouragement to artists.

DRDA Project Director K Srinivasa Rao, DWAMA PD A Ramu, DFO G Satish, Kondapalli Municipal Commissioner Srinivasulu and others accompanied the Collector.

**All set to conduct Revenue meetings**

Meanwhile, the Collector told

the Minister for Revenue, Stamps and Registrations, Anagani Satya Prasad, Special Chief Secretary RP Sisodia and Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA) G Jaya Lakshmi that the NTR district is all set to conduct the revenue meetings from December 6. They are making a plan of action to resolve revenue-related issues during these meetings in the presence of officials and people's representatives, he said.

The Collector attended the meeting from the collectorate meeting hall in Vijayawada on Wednesday. He explained that the district authority is all set to conduct revenue meetings at all 320 gram panchayats besides ward sachivalayam in Vijayawada, Nandigama, Jaggayapeta, Kondapalli and Tiruvuru municipalities.

He said that for these meetings, a district-level officer has been appointed to each mandal to resolve the issues soon after receiving petitions from the public. A special meeting will be conducted on these revenue meetings for all MPs, MLCs, MLAs, and other elected people besides RDOs, Tahsildars and others on Thursday, he explained.



Andhra Pradesh Olympic Association president RK Purushotham and other members addressing a press conference in Vijayawada on Wednesday (Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar)

## APOA seeks CM's appointment

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh Olympic Association (APOA) held a Special General Body meeting in Vijayawada on Wednesday, chaired by its president, RK Purushotham. The meeting focused on preparations for the 38th National Games, scheduled to be held in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, from January 28 to February 14 next year. The APOA requested Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's support in facilitating the participation of the Andhra Pradesh team in the event.

Additionally, the association sought an appointment with the Chief Minister to discuss and clarify matters related to the functioning and management of sports associations within the state. Later, the special general body meeting unanimously elected the APOA vice-president Badeti Venkatramaiah as the Chief de-Mission for the Andhra Pradesh team in the upcoming National Games.

APOA president RK Purushotham said that as many as 220 members' contingents

Urges government support to participate in 38th National Games

**The association sought an appointment with the Chief Minister to discuss and clarify matters related to the functioning and management of sports associations within the state. Later, the special general body meeting unanimously elected the APOA vice-president Badeti Venkatramaiah as the Chief de-Mission for the Andhra Pradesh team in the upcoming National Games**

including coaches, managers and technical officials would participate in the National Games. The participation teams will be finalised either at the end of December or the first week of January, he said. However, the Sports Authority of Andhra Pradesh (SAAP) did not conduct even a single meeting with APOA and State Sports Associations regarding participation in the National Games, he felt.

"We tried at my level best to meet the SAAP officials, however, some of the officials are preventing us from meeting with the SAAP Chairman Animini Ravi Naidu and Vice Chairman and Managing Director PS Girisha. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) chaired by PT Usha recognised the APOA, however, the SAAP did not conduct any meeting with us," he expressed his unhappiness.

Additionally, he urged the CM to direct the SAAP to ensure that the government provides support for the teams participating in the National Games next year. If the government does not support the APOA, the AP teams will participate in the National Games without the AP government logo, he added.

APOA CEO Govindu Raju, vice-president Nadella Brahmaji Rao, joint secretary Subba Rao, treasurer Srinivas, women representative Padmaja Bala and others were present.

## Steps underway to implement film policy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Tourism, Culture, and Cinematography Minister Kandukuri Durgesh has stated that the State is making strides towards introducing a film policy. On Wednesday, the Minister held a review meeting with senior officials of the department at his chamber in Velagapudi. Minister Durgesh urged the officials to prepare proposals related to the film policy.

The Minister also suggested holding a meeting with stakeholders in the film industry soon. He stressed that once a comprehensive report is prepared, discussions would be held with the film industry. Durgesh provided several suggestions regarding the frequent increases in cinema ticket prices, seeking to understand the rationale behind such decisions and inquiring what approach would work best.

## ENC pays tributes to fallen heroes on Navy Day

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As part of the Navy Day 2024 celebrations, the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) paid solemn homage to service personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, including during the 1971 War. A poignant ceremony was held on Wednesday at the iconic 'Victory at Sea' War Memorial in Visakhapatnam, a symbol of valour and sacrifice.

The tribute commenced with Rear Admiral Chetan Chandegave, Flag Officer Submarines, laying a floral wreath at the memorial. In his remarks, he stated, "Today, we remember and honour the courage and sacrifice of those who gave their lives for our nation's sovereignty. Their legacy continues to inspire generations of sailors and citizens alike. It is our duty to uphold the values they fought for and to safeguard the nation they cherished."

Prominent dignitaries from the civil administration, police, and veteran communities joined the Navy in the solemn



ceremony. Floral tributes were laid by District Collector MN Harendhira Prasad, Commissioner of Police Shankar Brata Bagchi, GVMC Commissioner P Sampath Kumar, and Metropolitan Commissioner KS Vishwanathan, along with Rear Admiral T Sudhakar, AVSM, NM (Retd), vice-president of the Navy Foundation Vizag Chapter and G Satyanandam, Zilla Sainik Welfare Officer.

Speaking on the occasion, Harendhira Prasad highlighted the importance of remembering the sacrifices of the Armed Forces. "The sacrifices of our brave service personnel remind us of the enduring spirit of our armed forces, which stands as a pillar of our nation's freedom and security. We owe our peaceful lives to their unwavering commitment."

Rear Admiral T Sudhakar

(Retd) added his voice to the tributes, saying, "For veterans like us, today is a day to reflect on the bonds we shared with our comrades and the shared commitment to serve our nation. This ceremony is a testament to the enduring respect and love for our heroes."

The ceremony at the 'Victory at Sea' War Memorial serves as a powerful reminder of the indomitable spirit of India's Armed Forces.

## Feasibility study underway for seaplane tourism in Sileru

Official confirms Sileru dam has all the necessary infrastructure

PNS ■ PADERU

In a bid to boost tourism in the picturesque Sileru region, the Alluri Sitharama Raju district administration has initiated a feasibility study to explore the viability of seaplane tourism. The move is expected to attract more visitors and stimulate local economic growth.

Tahsildar T. Ramakrishna, who led the site inspection, confirmed that the Sileru dam has all the necessary infrastructure for seaplane tourism. "The dam has adequate space for the construction of a jetty. We have checked the depth of the water and the flow, and in the lines of River Krishna, this waterbody supports seaplane landing and take-off," he said. A detailed report has been submitted to the District Collector and will be forwarded to the Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation



(APTDC) for further consideration.

Tourism officials believe that, with the right facilities, seaplane services could be introduced between Visakhapatnam and Sileru, with potential for future expansion to other scenic locations in the region. The concept of seaplane tourism is already under review for Visakhapatnam, and the success of this project could pave the way for similar

initiatives across the State.

Located about 190 km from Visakhapatnam, 120 km from Paderu, and 70 km from Lambasingi, Sileru is a hidden gem in the Agency areas of the district, offering lush valleys, waterfalls, and rich historical significance.

Tahsildar Ramakrishna emphasised the region's untapped tourism potential, noting its appeal to both nature lovers and history

enthusiasts. "Sileru has immense tourism potential with its scenic beauty and historical importance. The region is also closely linked to the legacy of freedom fighter Alluri Sitharama Raju, who strategised his guerilla campaigns against the British in the forests here," he said.

In addition to its natural beauty, Sileru is home to several key tourist attractions, including the Sri Daralamma Ammavari Temple at Darakonda, which draws large numbers of devotees annually. Ramakrishna suggested that these historical and cultural landmarks could form the basis of a well-connected tourism circuit, offering visitors a rich and diverse experience.

If successfully implemented, the project could position Sileru as a top-tier tourist destination in Andhra Pradesh, combining adventure, history, and natural beauty in a unique package.

## Massive diversion of ration rice in Visakhapatnam sparks outrage

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Approximately 70-80 per cent of the ration rice distributed to the underprivileged in Visakhapatnam district is being diverted, raising serious concerns about the integrity of the public distribution system. Allegations point to small traders purchasing the subsidised rice and routing it to Kakinada through mills located in Chodavaram, Anakapalli district.

Complaints submitted to Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan reveal that certain rice millers have allegedly reaped significant profits by channelling ration rice to Kakinada over the past five years. "This issue undermines the very purpose of the ration system, which aims to support the underprivileged," a senior Civil Supplies Department official said.

Small traders allegedly purchase subsidised rice and route it to Kakinada through mills in Chodavaram

Visakhapatnam district has 5.29 lakh ration cardholders, with over 4.5 lakh in urban areas and the rest in rural mandals like Anandapuram, Bheemili, Padmanabham, and Pendurthi. The district distributes 8,000 tonnes of rice monthly via 641 depots and 314 mobile distribution units (MDUs). However, reports suggest a considerable portion of the rationed rice never reaches the intended beneficiaries.

"We've observed a disturbing trend where cardholders sell rice at Rs 12 to Rs 17 per kg instead of consuming it," District Civil Supplies Officer Bhaskara Rao remarked. "This rice ends up in local eateries, tiffin centres, and hotels, resold

at higher prices." Beneficiaries reportedly trade rice for cash with mobile distribution vehicle drivers or at depots after biometric verification. Small traders then transport the rice in autos and small vehicles to areas like Chodavaram, Pendurthi, and Anandapuram for polishing and resale. Some rice is sold to mills in Vizianagaram and Kakinada, with allegations of it being exported. Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan recently ordered stringent action following the seizure of a ship allegedly exporting ration rice to African nations from Kakinada Port. Joint Collector Mayur Ashok has since intensified monitoring efforts.

On Tuesday, Civil Supplies

officials inspected Gangavaram Port, confirming no recent rice exports but extending their vigilance to Visakhapatnam Port. Raids led by Officer Bhaskara Rao uncovered 40 quintals of illegally stored rice in Kranti Nagar and Gajuwaka Vuda Colonies. "These raids are only the beginning. We are committed to dismantling the networks exploiting the ration system," Bhaskara Rao said.

Local activists have demanded stronger enforcement to curb these illegal practices. "These activities have been an open secret for years," an activist lamented. "It's time for a systemic overhaul to ensure ration rice benefits the intended recipients."



# MP approaches Minister for new veterinary hospital

PNS ■ ELURU

MP Putta Mahesh Kumar appealed to Minister for Agriculture K Atchannaidu to take steps for the construction of a new veterinary hospital in Kotta Pattiseema in Polavaram mandal of the district.

The MP submitted a representation to the Agriculture Minister stating that the existing veterinary hospital was constructed at Kotta Pattiseema in 1977 and the building is now in a decapitated condition.

The existing veterinary hospital, located in Kotta Pattiseema, is to serve surrounding villages in six village panchayat limits where there are over 5000 cattle. Since the existing building has become



dilapidated, the veterinary doctors are unable to provide treatment to the cattle in the hospital.

"It is imperative to construct a new building for the veterinary hospital in K Pattiseema to provide better services," the MP explains to Atchannaidu.

Significantly, Minister Atchannaidu responded positively to the request of MP Putta Mahesh Kumar and passed orders to the Animal husbandry department Director to take necessary action on the request of the MP about the new building to the veterinary hospital K Pattiseema. The MP thanked the Agriculture Minister for his swift response for his request.

## Student killed as compound wall of school collapses

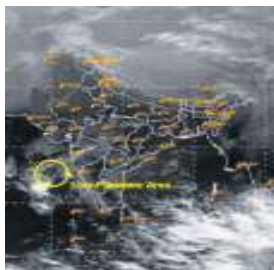


PNS ■ NANDYALA

In a tragic incident, a girl student was killed as the compound wall of the school collapsed at Nandikotkur on Wednesday. Police said that the compound wall of Urdu primary school collapsed killing a girl student, Aasta Mahin (8).

The deceased girl was studying second standard at the school. When the students were going home after the end of the classes, the watchman pulled the Iron Gate to close the gate. Along with the gate, a portion of the compound wall collapsed and fell on the deceased girl, killing her instantaneously. She was taken to hospital but the doctors declared she was brought dead.

MLA Gitta Jayasurya visited the scene of the incident. Later he consoled the parents of the deceased girl at the GGH. The MLA assured the bereaved family of taking the incident to the notice of the Government and ensuring help to them. The parents of the deceased girl appealed to the MLA to take steps to punish the officials who were responsible for the death of their daughter.



## Well marked low pressure weakens into low-pressure area

PNS ■ GUNTUR

The well-marked low-pressure area over east central Arabian sea & adjoining Coastal Karnataka weakened into a low-pressure area over east central & adjoining southeast Arabian sea at 0830 hours on Wednesday.

The associated cyclonic circulation extends upto 5.8 km above mean sea level. It is likely to move westwards and become less marked during the next 24 hours, the Meteorological Centre said.

In a daily weather report here, it said that thunderstorms accompanied by lightning are likely to occur at isolated places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next 48 hours. Light to moderate rain or thundershowers is likely to occur at a few places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema during the next seven days. During the last 24 hours, very heavy Rainfall occurred at Gorantla (Sri Sathyasai District) in Rayalaseema.

Heavy rainfall occurred at Atmakur (Spnr Nellore Dt) in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rainfall occurred at a few places over Coastal Andhra Pradesh Rayalaseema.

# Officials conduct checking in Stella L ship for PDS rice

PNS ■ KAKINADA

The officials conducted a thorough checking of the cargo vessel 'Stella L Panama-IMO 9500687' at the Kakinada Sea port on Wednesday.

The multi-disciplinary committee, constituted by the Government comprising the Police, Revenue, Civil Supplies, Customs and Port, inspected the cargo vessel Stella L Panama-IMO 9500687 today. The officials conducted a search to find out whether the PDS rice was among the rice load of the ship. Sources said over 37,000 metric tonnes or rice has already been loaded into the ship Stella L and the officials have to ascertain how much quantity of PDS rice is among



the load.

It may be mentioned here that Kakinada district Collector S Shanmohan announced on November 27 that there was 640 tonnes of PDS rice in the cargo vessel Stella L Panama. On November 29, Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan visited the Kakinada Port and exposed the security lapses

and ordered the officials to seize the ship Stella L-IMO 9500687.

The mystery shrouded around the cargo vessel Stella-L IMO as it is transporting over 73000 Metric Tonnes of rice to West African countries from Kakinada Port. The officials are yet to decide whether they have to seize the ship or the PDS rice in the ship.

# TTD Chairman warns of action against violators in Tirumala

PNS ■ TIRUMALA

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman BR Naidu on Wednesday said that the shopkeepers should do their business in the place allotted to them only and follow the norms without any deviations. Naidu, who con-

ducted a surprise inspection of shops and hawkers licenses at Varahaswamy Rest House here, warned of action against the violators causing trouble to the devotees. The



officials were directed to check the licenses and remove the encroachments if any. TTD Estate Officer Venkateswarlu, VGO Surendra and other officers participated in the inspection.



APCC President YS Sharmila and Vice-president Kolanukonda Shivaji paying tributes to former Chief Minister K Rosaiah on his third death anniversary in the Andhra Ratna Bhavan here on Wednesday.

# Anumula brothers rising, TG is falling: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS Working President KT Rama Rao launched a sharp attack on the Congress and its leadership during an interaction with the media at the Telangana Bhavan on Wednesday.

KTR countered the CM's statement that "Telangana is rising" by saying, "It is not Telangana rising, but Anumula brothers rising, and Telangana falling."

He lambasted Revanth for allegedly indulging in theatrics and accused him of mismanaging the state's finances. KTR said the Chief Minister's approach has not only tarnished the reputation of his office but has also benefited only a select few, including the CM's close relatives.

"In just 11 months, Anumula brothers have risen to unimaginable heights, amassing wealth and influence," he said. He said that if the trend continues, they would soon feature on international wealth rankings.

KTR criticised the Congress Government's failure to attract

investments and create job opportunities.

"Companies are not coming in. Existing ones are leaving. Employment opportunities in the state have been dumped in Gandipet," he remarked sarcastically.

Mocking the "Telangana Rising" campaign, he said it was nothing more than a facade and that the real narrative should be "Anumula Brothers Rising."

"Revanth is a habitual liar. To avoid discussion on six guarantees and 420 promises, the CM is talking about debts. The debt is not Rs 7 lakh crore but Rs 4.20 lakh crore. Release a white paper on your failures," KTR said.

Responding to allegations of mounting state debt, KTR presented a detailed rebuttal, accusing the Congress government of spreading lies.

He pointed out discrepancies in the numbers presented by Revanth and emphasised that Telangana's debt-to-development ratio is among the best in the country.

"For every Rs 100 spent, Rs 74 goes directly towards devel-



opment projects," he said, contrasting this with the alleged mismanagement by the current administration.

KTR said that of the Rs 100 allocated for debt servicing, only Rs 47 goes towards interest payments.

He also criticised the Congress Government for failing to fulfil its election promises, including job notifications, farm loan waivers and the six guarantees.

"The Congress has delivered only 12,000 jobs. Compare that to the extensive employment initiatives under BRS," KTR said, adding that even the

promised loan waiver has been implemented only partially, causing distress among farmers.

Addressing the controversy surrounding land acquisitions, particularly in Kodangal, KTR accused Revanth of acting arbitrarily. He questioned the motives behind land acquisition without proper consensus and feasibility reports.

"Is this land acquisition for tribal welfare, or does it benefit private interests? The Chief Minister owes an explanation to the people of Telangana," he said.

"If KCR has a 1000-acre



# Rally slams attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh

PNS ■ ONGOLE

A large number of people affiliated to various Hindu outfits took out a rally here on Wednesday condemning the attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh and arrest of in-charge of ISKCON in Bangladesh, Chinmay Krishna Swamy.

The Hindu activists took out a rally from Prasanna Chennakesava Swamy temple located at Keshava Swamypet to the Collector's office where they staged a

dharna. They held placards and raised slogans condemning the attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, Vishwa Hindu Parishad district president Mallikharjun alleged that the Bangladesh Government failed to prevent attacks on Hindus. The Bangladesh Government citing lame excuses in containing attacks on Hindu.

"The International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKON) preaches peace and harmony. Arresting

Bangladesh Chief of ISKCON Krishna Swamy is highly condemnable. The Bangladesh Government itself resorts to atrocities against the Hindus," he lamented.

When attacks and atrocities are taking place against, the Bangladesh Government remains a mute spectator without taking stringent steps to curb the attacks, he lashed out.

"The attacks against Hindus across Bangladesh highlights the necessity of Hindu to be united in India to face such a

situation, if it arises," he called upon the Hindus. Later the leaders of various Hindu outfits met Collector Thameem Ansariya and submitted her representation.

Leaders of various Hindu organizations VHP district secretary E Sitaramaiah, Jillellamudi Venkateswarulu, Pasumarthi Venkateswarulu, Vennela Subba Rao and T Satyavati, M Aravinda Lakshmi and Jandyam Radha Ramana Gupta were among those who took part in the rally.

## Tiger Reserve gets emergency ambulance

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

On the occasion of World Wildlife Day, December 4, a programme was conducted with the theme Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation. The theme highlighted the role of digital technologies in enhancing wildlife conservation efforts.

It was attended by Dr Vamshi Krishna, MLA of Achampet constituency, and senior forest officials such as Ram Babu, Field Director of Project Tiger (FDPT) and Rohith Gopidi, District Forest Officer (DFO) of Nagarkurnool.

The Apollo Foundation donated an emergency ambulance to support healthcare services for Primitive Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), including the Chenchu community in the Nallamala Hills. The ambulance will be used for health checkups and emergencies.

Appreciation was conveyed to Upasana Konidella for her support. It will organise medical camps inside forests. MLA Vamshi Krishna urged the public to prevent forest fires and emphasised the importance of protecting forests and wildlife. He commended the efforts of the Amrabad Tiger Reserve Forest department for their conservation initiatives.



# Minister conducts surprise inspection of residential school

PNS ■ NELLORE

Minister for Social Welfare Dola Bala Veeranjanya Swamy conducted a surprise inspection to Ambedkar Gurukul School at Bogolu village on the night of Tuesday.

The Minister visited the hostel during the night and interacted with the students and knew their problems. He saw the toilets and ambience of the residential

school. He expressed displeasure over the poor maintenance of toilets and non functioning of the lighting system. The Minister observed a water pit in the school premises and instructed the officials to take steps to fill the pit.

The Minister expressed shock when he was told that one student was bitten by a snake in the school some time ago. He instructed the school headmaster and teach-

ers to ensure that such incidents do not recur in the residential school.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister highlighted that the Government has given priority for education and is providing all needed facilities to the students. He exhorted the students to excel in education utilizing the facilities being provided by the Government. Later the Minister had dinner with the residential school students.

## 3 members of a family killed as roof of a house collapses



PNS ■ ANANTAPUR

Three members of a family were killed when the roof of their house caved in on them at Rudrampalli village in Kundurpi mandal in the wee hours on Wednesday.

Police said that the deceased were identified as Ganganna, Sridevi and Sandya. When they were asleep in the house, the roof of the house collapsed on

them killing them instantaneously. The three deceased were buried under the debris.

The house was in dilapidated condition and soaked in the rain water which led to the mishap. The bodies were extricated from the rubble and shifted to the GGH for postmortem. Kalyanaduerg MLA Surendra Babu visited the bereaved family members and assured of extending all needed help.



ACROSS THE STATES



Six central universities to offer admissions twice a year

Six central universities have adopted the policy of offering admissions twice a year, the Union Ministry of Education said on Wednesday. The information was shared by Union Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar in response to a written question in the Rajya Sabha. "The University Grants Commission (UGC) has approved the policy of allowing Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) to admit students twice a year, in July/August and January/February. However, admitting students twice a year is optional for the HEIs, depending on their preparedness to handle such biannual admissions," Majumdar said. "The willing HEIs are required to carefully prepare a plan for all the activities related to the policy of admitting the students twice a year, including a plan for semester examinations," he added. The minister informed that six central universities -- Central University of Kerala, Central University of Punjab, Central University of Rajasthan, University of Hyderabad, Tezpur University and Nagaland University -- adopted the policy of offering admissions twice a year.



Bhutan King to arrive in India today

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck will pay a two-day visit to India beginning Thursday to further advance the already close bilateral partnership between the two nations. Wangchuck will be accompanied by Queen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck and senior officials of the Bhutanese government, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, announcing the trip. The King will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two leaders are expected to deliberate on ways to further deepen bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas. "India and Bhutan enjoy unique ties of friendship and cooperation, which are characterised by mutual understanding and trust," the MEA said. "The visit shall provide both sides an opportunity to review the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation and to further advance the exemplary bilateral partnership across diverse sectors," it said in a statement.



'People of Bastar want to see end of Naxalism'

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Wednesday said his government has fought a decisive battle against Naxalism in the last 11 months of its tenure and is making concerted efforts to fulfil the Centre's resolve to eliminate the menace by March 2026. Sai, who took oath as CM in December 2023 after the BJP stormed back to power, maintained the people of the Bastar region, affected by Left wing extremism (LWE), want to move towards development. He was addressing a meeting called to review the ongoing anti-Naxal operations in the state at police headquarters in Nava Raipur, a government statement said. Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma, who holds the home portfolio, Director General of Police Ashok Juneja and senior officials were present in the meeting, it said. The state's BJP government has fought a decisive battle against Naxalism in the last 11 months and the people of the Bastar region now want to get rid of the menace and move towards development, Sai told the meeting.

J'khand HC exempts CM from personal appearance in court

ED had filed a complaint against Soren before the court of the judicial magistrate for his non-appearance though he has been summoned several times by the central agency in connection with a case of alleged money laundering linked to a land scam. The court ordered Soren to appear before the MP/MLA Court in Ranchi in person on December 4. The chief minister challenged the order of the judicial magistrate before the high court, saying he was unable to appear personally due to official commitments and engagements.

Rahul stopped on way to Sambhal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ghaziabad (UP), Dec 4 (PTI) A delegation of Congress leaders led by Rahul Gandhi on its way to violence-hit Sambhal was stopped by Uttar Pradesh Police at Ghazipur border here on Wednesday and had to return, with the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha terming the action as "anti-constitutional". The opposition party's leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, returned to Delhi after staying at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border for about two hours, failing to proceed onwards. A massive traffic jam was witnessed at the Ghazipur border on the Delhi-Meerut Expressway in the morning as Congress workers gathered there amid heavy security

deployment and barricading. The carriageway from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh was heavily congested, with thousands of commuters facing a harrowing time on the road. After being stopped at the Ghazipur border, Rahul Gandhi said he was ready to go alone to Sambhal with police but was not allowed. "We are trying to go to Sambhal. Police are refusing, not allowing us. As the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha, it is my right to go... I said that I am ready to go alone, I am ready to go with the police but they did not accept that either," he said. "Now they are saying that if we come back in a few days, they will let us go. This is actually against the right of the leader of opposition in Lok Sabha. I should be allowed to go," he told reporters. BJP

TERMS POLICE ACTION ANTI-DEMOCRATIC



leaders in Uttar Pradesh decried the Congress's move as a "drama" aimed at "appeasing its Muslim vote bank". Meanwhile, Congress legisla-

gation but was put under "house arrest". "I am under house arrest. This is hooliganism and anarchy by the government. Rahul ji, the Congress party and I will visit Sambhal today, tomorrow or whenever we can," she said. Prohibitory orders are in place in Sambhal where violence erupted on November 24 over a court-ordered mosque survey, killing four people and injuring several others. Holding up a copy of the Constitution in his hands amid heavy security at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border, Rahul Gandhi said the police's decision was against democracy. "We want to go to Sambhal and see what happened there. We want to meet the people but I'm not being allowed my constitutional right. This is India where attempts are on to end the Constitution. But we will keep fighting," he added. Priyanka Vadra said what happened in Sambhal was wrong and as the LoP, Rahul Gandhi has the constitutional right to visit it. "He is different from other people. He cannot be stopped. He has the constitutional right to go and meet the victims, he should be allowed," the Wayanad Lok Sabha member added. Later, Rahul Gandhi posted on X: "The police stopped us from going to Sambhal. Being the leader of the opposition, it is my right and duty to go there. Yet I was stopped. I am ready to go alone, but they did not agree to that either. This is against the Constitution. Why is the BJP scared - why is it using the police to hide its failures? Why is it suppressing the message of truth and brotherhood?"

De-escalation, activities in border areas to be discussed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

JAISHANKAR ON INDIA-CHINA TIES



Peace and tranquility in border areas is a pre-requisite for the development of bilateral ties with China and the two sides will be discussing de-escalation and effective management of activities in these areas in the coming days, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday while making a statement on India-China relations in the Rajya Sabha. A brief uproar was also witnessed following the statement and Opposition MPs walked out of the House after Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar, disallowed them from seeking some clarifications. Jaishankar, while making a statement on "Recent Developments in India's Relations with China", also said disengagement has now been achieved in full in east-

ern Ladakh through a step-by-step process, culminating in Depsang and Demchok. He had earlier made an identical statement in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. Jaishankar, in his statement,

Control (LAC), two: neither side should attempt to unilaterally alter the status quo, and three: agreements and understandings reached in the past must be fully abided by in their entirety". "Our relationship had progressed in many domains, but was obviously negatively affected by recent events. We are clear that the maintenance of peace and tranquility in border areas is a prerequisite for the development of our ties. In the coming days, we will be discussing both de-escalation as well as effective management of our activities in the border areas," he said. He said with the task of disengagement completed, it is now our expectation that discussions would commence in regard to the remaining issues that we had placed on the agenda.

Fadnavis elected BJP legislature party leader

TO BE SWORN IN AS CM TODAY

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Devendra Fadnavis was on Wednesday unanimously elected as Maharashtra BJP legislature party's leader, paving the way for his swearing in as the chief minister for a third time. Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde and NCP's Ajit Pawar will be sworn in as deputy chief ministers at the ceremony, to be held at the sprawling Azad Maidan in south Mumbai on Thursday in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sources said. At the legislature party meeting held in Vidhan Bhawan on Wednesday, former Gujarat CM and BJP's central observer Vijay Rupani announced that Fadnavis (54) has been unanimously elected the BJP legislature party leader. Speaking at the meeting, BJP's central observer and Union minister Nirmala



Sitharaman said the "double engine government" in the state and the Centre will boost development. Fadnavis thanked the BJP legislators for reposing trust in him, adding that the thumping victory of the ruling Mahayuti alliance in the November 20 assembly elections was due to the mantra

of "Ek hai toh safe hai" given by PM Modi. At the Vidhan Bhawan meeting, senior state BJP leader Chandrakant Patil proposed the name of Fadnavis as the legislature party leader. Fadnavis' name was finalised for the top post at the state BJP's core committee meet held here ahead of the legislature party meeting. A delegation led by Fadnavis is expected to meet Governor C P Radhakrishnan at 3.30 pm on Wednesday to stake claim to form the new government in the state. The BJP achieved remarkable success in the November 20 Maharashtra elections, securing 132 out of the 288 assembly seats in the state, marking its best performance in the state so far. Together with its allies Shiv Sena and NCP, the BJP-led Mahayuti coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats.



NAVY'S COMMITMENT ENSURES NATION'S SAFETY, PROSPERITY, SAYS PM MODI

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday lauded the Indian Navy on Navy Day, saying its commitment ensures the safety, security and prosperity of the nation. Navy Day is observed as an acknowledgement of the Navy's seminal role in the country's defence, and December 4 was chosen to commemorate its valour against Pakistan during the 1971 war when it inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. "On Navy Day, we salute the valiant personnel of the Indian Navy who protect our seas with unmatched courage and dedication. Their commitment ensures the safety, security and prosperity of our nation. We also take great pride in India's rich maritime history," the prime minister said in a post on X.



'Govt committed to prevent fraud in cooperative societies'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi government is fully committed to preventing frauds in cooperative societies and no culprit will be spared irrespective of their political affiliation, Minister of State for Cooperation Krishan Pal asserted in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. Responding to supplementary queries during the Question Hour in the Upper House on the delinquencies in the multi-state cooperative societies, the minister said ever since this government came to power, several steps have been taken to stop fraud. "Those who commit fraud, whether he is from this side or that side (pointing first towards the government and then the opposition), whether big or small, he will not be spared at any cost," the minister said. He said action is already on in this regard. "After this government came to power and this ministry was formed, several stringent steps have been taken. If you say, I will discuss all that (with you)," the minister added. He was responding after Congress MP from Gujarat Shaktisinh Gohil asked how many of the 100 societies currently undergoing liquidation have seen fraud and are under CBI investigation. Gohil also wanted to know if there is any society in which no action has been taken against the people, who have committed fraud, due to some "political equation". When members sought to know the number of cases in which the CBI investigation is going on, Krishan Pal responded, "CBI investigation will not be initiated on your request". Dissatisfied with the reply,

the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge intervened and said the question was not answered. "Shakti Singh ji asked out of 100 multi-cooperative societies, in how many inquiries are going on and how many are under CBI investigation," Kharge said. He alleged that the cooperative department had been created to harass others. Meanwhile, the deputy speaker intervened and said that nothing would go on record and, if the members were not satisfied with any answers, there were provisions under the rules and procedures. During the discussion, TMC MP Saket Gokhale sought to know the total number of banks operated by multi-state cooperative societies that have been liquidated from 2019 to 2024 because of scams and bad loan ratios. He asked about the steps being taken by the Ministry to protect the money of depositors which is held in these banks that do scams and get caught with bad loan ratios. The minister said there is no place for fraud in this government. "There are 70 such banks in which such activities have happened and out of that seven are in liquidation." Earlier, YSR Congress Party MP Gola Babu Rao asked what specific steps have been taken to expedite the winding-up process of the delinquent cooperative societies and how this will impact the members of the societies. The minister said the government has taken some good steps to strengthen as well as improve transparency for preventing fraud and mismanagement that are often seen in multi-state cooperative societies, he said.

SC ASKS STATES

Furnish details on facilities for the homeless in winter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked the states to furnish details about the facilities available for housing homeless persons in wake of the winters. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and K V Viswanathan said the state governments should file their affidavits without fail within two weeks specifying these details. The top court requested Attorney General R Venkataramani to assist it in the matter and suggested the authorities to take assistance from corporate social responsibility. "You may incentivise," the bench said, "there must be corporates willing to help". The apex court was hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in the urban areas. During the hearing, one of the advocates appearing for the petitioners said the state governments should be asked to apprise the bench about the facilities available for homeless persons besides their



respective winter action plans. It posted the hearing after two weeks. While hearing the matter on December 3, the apex court sought details from the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) on the facilities available for housing homeless persons in the national capital. "We are concerned. We are on the eve of what is going to be a very chilly winter," the bench observed.

The top court asked the DUSIB to give details about the number of persons who could be accommodated in shelter homes and an estimate of those requiring such facilities. The bench then said if there was any deficit in the facilities available, the DUSIB would apprise how it proposed to deal with it



# No love lost

The relations between India and Bangladesh are on the ebb and if steps are not taken now, could deteriorate further

The relations between India and Bangladesh, long characterised by cultural ties and strategic cooperation, have soured in recent months. Protests, diplomatic outrage and heightened security concerns are the latest manifestations of the growing rift between the two neighbours. The arrest of a Hindu monk in Bangladesh has sparked unrest, further straining ties that have been under pressure since the ousting of former Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. The minority has historically faced discrimination and sporadic violence, often exacerbated by political upheavals. Sheikh Hasina's government, in power until her abrupt ousting in August, was seen as somewhat supportive of minorities, though her critics argue this support was inconsistent. Hasina's exit, triggered by mass protests against alleged corruption and authoritarianism, plunged Bangladesh into political instability. The arrest of Hindu monk Chinmoy Krishna Das in Bangladesh has reignited long-standing grievances about the treatment of minorities in the country. Das was detained on charges of sedition and inciting unrest during an October protest advocating minority rights in Chittagong. His denied bail and the subsequent delay of his hearing until January 2025 have escalated tensions.



This has led to protests in India, headed by Hindu organisations and supported by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). These protests culminated in an attack on the Bangladeshi consulate in Agartala, causing significant diplomatic fallout. The vandalism at the consulate prompted sharp criticism from Dhaka, which labeled the incident 'heinous' and demanded stringent action from India. Bangladesh also summoned Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka to show its displeasure over the incident. Meanwhile, Indian authorities, while condemning the attack and increasing security for Bangladeshi diplomatic missions, have struggled to contain public sentiment. In Dhaka, the storming of the consulate sparked counter-protests, with students and activists condemning the incident and demanding accountability from India. The situation has become a flashpoint for nationalist and religious tensions on both sides. The strained relations carry significant risks. For India, Bangladesh is a vital partner in maintaining border security and managing regional stability. The two countries share deep economic ties and cultural connections, making any prolonged estrangement costly. However, mutual trust has eroded. While Indian side urge Bangladesh to address violence against minorities, Bangladeshi officials accuse Indian media of propagating disinformation. Both nations have had good relations and they must urgently de-escalate tensions. Resolving the immediate crisis surrounding the monk's arrest, addressing minority rights concerns in Bangladesh, and curbing inflammatory rhetoric in India are critical steps.

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PICTALK



Artistes perform during a show of Rambo Circus, in Mumbai

PTI

# The role of teachers in building positive learning spaces

A successful classroom isn't just about books and resources; it's about creating an environment where students feel valued, heard and empowered to succeed

A thriving learning classroom is grounded in the way the students perceive their classroom. It's not just about utilising the appropriate resources but establishing a space where students feel recognised, heard and valued. Teachers are the key catalysts in making this possible by nurturing a balanced, cohesive and well-organised environment that allows students to reach their potential. By implementing strategies to cater to individual requirements, connect thoughtfully, and commemorate milestones, educators can establish an educational atmosphere that supports progress, self-esteem, and teamwork. **Teachers can build a positive and inspiring learning space: Develop a sense of anticipation:** Teachers should give explicit instructions and procedures to their students so that they feel comfortable. When students know what comes next, their interaction with the lesson increases and their belief in their learning abilities is enhanced, leading to a serene and concentrated mood. Address students' needs. No student is entirely



similar to another in the classroom. Instructors should appreciate academic and emotional needs and take a personalised approach to materials, attention, and motivation. **Welcome learners into the classroom** First impression means a lot. A simple smiling morning wish makes students receive and look forward to the day. A welcoming environment causes active involvement and participation in the class's activities. **Interact with students** Ideally, this should help prepare a powerful fondness between teachers and students. Teachers must take an active role in students' lives; they should ask questions and pay attention to the answers. This builds trust, develops reading skills, and makes students want to speak

more. **Team-building activities** Team-building activities help in practising directives and showing appreciation to others. **Be experiential** Sometimes, the mistakes, failings and losses of the teachers make the learning environment comfortable and emotionally intelligent. This ensures that students are encouraged to connect and share, indicating that learning is collective and not individual. **Celebrate success and appreciate students:** Recognising and celebrating students' achievements enhances their self-confidence and encourages them to try again. Teachers must reward such behaviour with verbal appreciation, prizes, or other forms of reward in the classroom. **Avoid judgement:** Acceptance and open-mindedness are evident in a conducive learning environment. Judgement should not be attached to the students so that the students can feel free to explore and even commit mistakes without being laughed at. **Suppress anger and act strategically:** Emotional regulation is expected from the

teachers. Keeping cool during conflicts or problems serves as a good decorum for the students' emotions and problem-solving skills, this practice leads to a learning environment that is calm and goal-oriented. **Listen to their thoughts** Allowing students to express their opinions also encourages them to take responsibility for their learning. Studies suggest that teachers should nurture students to enable them to speak their minds. **Acknowledge feedback:** The teachers should encourage and respond to any feedback from their students. If the students are appreciated for their response, then the atmosphere becomes interactive. Simple activities such as organising the room, attending to students, or recognising achievement encourage teachers to design a safe, friendly, and welcoming space for students. A welcoming and nurturing classroom facilitates academic achievement among learners and emotional and social development. *(The writer is principal of Modern School; views are personal)*



ALKA KAPUR

# Election results challenge the Opposition unity

The electoral setbacks have exposed fractures within the INDIA alliance while the BJP has emerged stronger after the recently held state elections



KALYANI SHANKAR

The aftermath of the recent election results in Maharashtra and Jharkhand has led to cracks within the Opposition coalition known as the INDIA alliance. Following these disappointing results, some partners in the INDIA bloc, such as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and the Trinamool Congress, are focusing on their agendas and show little interest in collaborating for the current winter session of Parliament. AAP chief Kejriwal has announced that his party will go solo in Delhi Assembly polls, ruling out tie-up with Congress. The INDIA bloc hoped to consolidate anti-BJP votes in the capital.

Still, Kejriwal's announcement signals a potential fracture in unity. Additionally, it seems unlikely that the Uddhav Thackeray coalition will work together in the upcoming civic election. Consequently, the immediate concern for these partners is to unite and collaborate effectively. However, achieving this is proving to be quite challenging. Every political party makes mistakes, but the successful ones learn and improve. The INDIA bloc aimed to defeat the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, ultimately allowing the BJP to form a government with support from the JD(U) and the Telugu Desam Party. The Assembly polls lacked a joint strategy. Two key points stand out in the recent elections in Maharashtra and Jharkhand. First is the significant victory of the BJP-led NDA in Maharashtra. Second is the ease with which Hemant Soren retained his position in Jharkhand despite being jailed on allegations of corruption. Another important question is whether the Congress, NCP and the Uddhav faction of the Shiv Sena misinterpreted the signals on the ground. Did the BJP make errors in Jharkhand? The recent results reveal missed growth opportunities. It could have performed better if Congress had learned from past experiences and made necessary adjustments. Unlike the Pachmarhi or Shimla conclaves,



there has been a lack of post-election analysis. The Grand Old Party is entirely under the control of Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, and his chosen associates. Rahul worked hard and campaigned, but the party could not deliver. The results suggest they have yet to learn from the recent Haryana Assembly elections, such as relying heavily on one leader, ignoring the others, and the wrong distribution of tickets despite being in a winning position. The most crucial aspect the Congress Party, NCP and the Uddhav faction of Shiv Sena must address is the narrative. For the Congress, the focus on caste issues, defending the Constitution, and making personal attacks on the Prime Minister has not resonated with the voters. This disconnect is a clear sign that the party needs to reevaluate its strategy and focus on issues that truly matter to the electorate, such as the bread and butter issues. It is a pressing concern that needs alignment. Even earlier, Rahul Gandhi's Gandhi's attack on Savarkar did not garner any support for Congress; instead, it created friction between the Shiv Sena, which idolised Savarkar and Congress. These parties also did not realise the political impact of the BJP's par-

FOR THE CONGRESS, THE FOCUS ON CASTE ISSUES, DEFENDING THE CONSTITUTION, AND MAKING PERSONAL ATTACKS ON THE PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT RESONATED WITH THE VOTERS

ent organisation, RSS, which worked for the party's success. Maratha strongman Sharad Pawar must feel disheartened after losing his party and the election to his nephew, Ajit Pawar, whom he groomed. The warning signs became clear when Ajit joined the BJP, betraying his uncle to help form the government. The situation worsened when the Election Commission recognised Ajit's faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), despite Sharad Pawar having founded and led it to power multiple times. This decision severely undermined Pawar. So must Uddhav Thackeray, son of Shiv Sena founder Bal Thackeray, who succeeded his father, lost the party and elections to his rebel Eknath Shinde, who helped BJP form the government in Maharashtra in a coalition. Both must introspect about what led to their loss of popularity. On the other hand, JMM, a partner in the INDIA bloc, has demonstrated how to win despite numerous challenges. JMM Chief Minister Hemant Soren and his wife, Kalpana, faced several hardships, including a jail sentence for Soren. The results of the bye-elections after the Assembly polls show that the BJP is not invincible.

Elections in India happen almost continuously in various states, which means the election season never truly ends. The next significant event will be the Rajya Sabha elections for six seats on December 20. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is expected to win five of these six seats. At the same time, the Trinamool Congress is likely to secure one. If this prediction holds, the NDA will gain a majority in the Upper House, which could weaken the Congress Party's position in Parliament. There are currently eight vacancies: four in the nomination category and four in Jammu and Kashmir. Elections around the world highlight both victories and defeats. Each election offers valuable lessons regarding the successes and mistakes of the candidates and parties involved. These outcomes are not exclusively driven by generational change, as change is a constant process. Future generations must strive to advance their party. Ultimately, the true winner is the one who learns from their mistakes swiftly. Winners should avoid becoming complacent, while those who lose must stay motivated. *(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### DELHI NEEDS TO BE DECONGESTED

Madam — Delhi's role as India's political capital and administrative nerve centre has created a lopsided dependence on a single city, which is becoming increasingly untenable for several reasons. Delhi is overcrowded and heavily polluted, with air quality regularly breaching hazardous levels. This is posing several health risks to its residents, particularly children and the elderly, leading to long-term implications for public health. Basic amenities like water and electricity are stretched thin. Traffic congestion and overburdened public transportation systems result in wasted time and reduced productivity. Concentrating the country's entire administrative apparatus in one city makes it vulnerable to dangers of terrorism, natural disasters and other calamities. The concentration of central government offices in Delhi, apart from inflating property prices, skews economic activity and perpetuates regional inequality. The idea is not to displace Delhi as the national capital entirely but only to distribute its administrative load. The top-level officials of all the ministries and departments may be retained in Delhi for administrative convenience. Ministries and departments within ministries could be relocated to different cities/towns best suited for their focus areas, avoiding already congested metros like Bengaluru and ensuring balanced regional development. The government may start with a pilot involving one or two ministries, followed by an evaluation of costs, benefits, and scalability. Advances in IT and communication enable virtual conferences and seamless coordination, making physical proximity less critical. The conduct of G-20 meetings last year successfully should give the government confidence to take off in this direction. Decentralising national capital is not merely an administrative adjustment; it is also a transformative step toward equitable development and stronger governance. **Gopalaswamy J | Chennai**

### Uncertainty in Maharashtra



It is disgusting that after such a huge mandate, the Mahayuti cannot form the new government, though the results were declared on November 23. They are insulting the mandate. By rights, the chief ministerial post belongs to the leader of the party that has more MLAs than the combined total of the other two constituents. With Ajit Pawar publicly endorsing Fadnis for chief ministership, Shinde should gracefully bow

to the inevitable and propose the BJP leader's name for heading the new government. He betrays the trust the Maharashtra voter has reposed in the Mahayuti by throwing a sulking fit and vanishing to his village, while the more urgent task of government formation awaits him in Mumbai. Such childish behaviour is unbefitting of a senior politician like him. Decency requires that the leaders of the Mahayuti work together in the same cooperative and concerted manner with which they had worked to win the large popular mandate. Now with Fadnis as chief minister and Shinde and Ajit Pawar as Dy CMs, they should show the same zeal and energy to resolve the myriad socio-economic problems facing the people of Maharashtra. Excessive ambition, especially unsupported by numbers in the Assembly, can be counterproductive. **N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru**

### INVESTORS LOSE WEALTH

Madam— Since October, the ongoing decline in the stock market has resulted in investors losing ₹47 lakh crore in wealth. On September 27, the total market capitalisation of companies in the market was ₹477.90 lakh crore, which has now reduced to ₹430.60 lakh crore. Increasing uncertainty and apprehension in the market have driven investors back to banks. According to data released by the RBI, deposits in banks surged to ₹2.35 lakh crore in the second fortnight of October. Before the Sensex hit a record high, total bank deposits in the second fortnight of August were around ₹215.50 lakh crore. In the first fortnight of September, there was a decline of ₹45,000 crore in total bank deposits. By the end of September, a phase of market decline began, during which bank deposits started to rise. In October, total deposits in banks reached ₹219 lakh crore. Thus, in the face of uncertain market risks, Indian banks are perceived as a safe haven by investors. For investors affected by market risks, bank

deposits are proving to be a reliable support. **Dattaprasad Shirodkar | Mumbai**

### MRP REGULATION NEEDED

Madam — Manipulating the MRP (Maximum Retail Price) of medicines is a significant issue in India. Pharmaceutical companies often set MRPs much higher than the production cost, burdening patients financially. Retailers further exploit this by charging inflated prices. While the government's Drug Price Control Order (DPCO) regulates essential medicines, many drugs remain outside its scope, allowing companies to set arbitrary prices. Initiatives like Jan Aushadhi Kendras, which provide affordable generic medicines, are commendable but need wider promotion. Transparency, awareness, and the promotion of generics are key to ensuring affordable healthcare for all. **R K Jain | Barwani**

Send your feedback to: [letterstopioneer@gmail.com](mailto:letterstopioneer@gmail.com)



FIRST COLUMN

SVABHAVNA: A PATH TO TRANSFORMATION

Our innate nature is both, a defining force in our lives and a formidable adversary




AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We are born with it. Nature ('svabhava') is what we have done in earlier lives and our deep desires, which are still unfulfilled. It is part of our fate and big events, both good and bad ('parab-dha'). Svabhava defines us. Character, personality, behaviour, moods, attitude, opinions, faith, preferences, how we decide, how we interact and what we care about, all have links with our natures. Spiritually speaking, three modes ('gunas') constitute this. They are present in every person in different percentages. For example, a good man will have more of the goodness mode; not a good man will have more of the mode of darkness and the rest will fall in between. However, these modes always compete for supremacy. "Goodness become predominant by overpowering passion and darkness; darkness becomes predominant by overpowering even goodness and passion; and passion becomes predominant by overpowering goodness and darkness." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 14.10) This is what happens with good people. Temporarily, their thinking and actions come under darkness, and they behave lustily, angrily, etc. Compare this with what happens with bad people, who naturally behave badly. Only when the mode of goodness gains ascendancy they behave better. Unfortunately, a common man falls in between, and he has many faults in his svabhava. What does he normally do? He wishes to enjoy his senses as much as possible; likes to avoid duties; tries to act smart, even resorts to cheating; feels superior; laughs at others; and hates suffering, whenever it comes, blames others for it. This is not so bad as to come under negative emotions like lust, anger, greed, hate, etc. Driven by them, one acts badly and becomes deserving of punishment. For example, when lust overpowers, one crosses limits ('maryada') and does what will taint for life. A greedy person thinks nothing beyond gaining more and wastes precious human life. Anger raises its ugly head when lust is denied. (18.66) And hate, when it is uncontrolled, dooms a person. (16.19) Therefore, one has to be very careful at all times. Svabhava, which controls our thinking and surely our actions can be our worst enemy. What can be done to safeguard ourselves? The very first thing is to introspect at all times. Are my deep desires faulty? Am I crossing social norms? Am I violating dharma? Am I avoiding duties? We will find that we are. Then, what is to be done? Can I control myself? Maybe, a little, but not fully. Am I stuck? Yes and no. Yes, because drastic change in nature is not possible, as svabhava is part of our destiny, just like big occurrences such as losing one's job will come and we cannot stop them from coming. No, as God is very merciful. He has left an opening in both cases. If one takes shelter from God sincerely, God helps one to come out of all one's troubles (18.58) As far as nature goes, God can help change it for the better if one is determined. This is tough and a slow process, but doable. What is the conclusion? We have a problem with our natures. Whether it is lust or anger or greed or hate or overinflated ego, we are well and truly stuck. Therefore, rush to God's shelter, i.e. get started to please Him now. Let God be convinced that you are determined; He will surely help. And when we do that, those around us will also begin to have some inspiration from us, rather than trying to correct one another, which is an impossibility. (The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Maharashtra villages embrace green energy, move towards zero waste, zero bills


## The State is setting a benchmark for climate resilience by integrating water security with renewable energy



SANJAY SINGH

In a significant push towards climate resilience and sustainable development, Maharashtra is pioneering innovative solutions that combine water security with renewable energy. The state's groundbreaking initiatives are transforming rural communities while addressing the dual challenges of water scarcity and energy transition. The Water Supply and Sanitation Department, along with the Ground Water Surveys and Development Agency (GSDA), has initiated a revolutionary automated solar-hybrid water pumping system across 69 communities. This innovative approach, supported by UNICEF Mumbai, represents a major leap in rural

enabled infrastructure. Digital flow meters and sensors installed at storage tanks allow Gram Panchayats to monitor and control water distribution remotely, preventing over-extraction and waste. The technology includes an automatic solar panel cleaning mechanism, making it highly sustainable and low-maintenance. In Nagpur, the innovative "Green Project" demonstrates how integrated approaches can yield multiple environmental benefits. The project combines solar systems, rooftop rain-water harvesting, ground-water recharge and innovative cooling solutions. Early results are promising: a typical 250-square-meter rooftop can harvest approximately 200,000 litres of water while reducing electricity consumption by 50 per cent. Perhaps the most inspiring success story comes from Manyachiwadi village in Satara district, which has become Maharashtra's first fully solar-powered village. Through the installation of over 100 rooftop solar panels, the village has achieved energy independence, eliminating electricity bills for its residents. The project, funded through the Majhi Vasundhara Campaign state award money and community contributions, serves as a model for rural energy transition. Similarly, Tikekarwadi village has earned recognition under the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj



Abhiyan (RGSA) for its comprehensive approach to sustainability. The village has successfully integrated solar and wind energy, biogas plants, and reverse osmosis water treatment systems, setting new standards for rural development. These initiatives are particularly significant given Maharashtra's vulnerability to climate change. The state faces recurring droughts, intense heat waves, and water scarcity issues. The year 2020, tied with 2016, was recorded as the hottest year, highlighting the urgent need for cooling solutions in rural areas where air conditioning is often unaffordable. The state's approach aligns with multiple national programs, including the Jal Jeevan Mission, Atal Bhujal Yojana, Catch the Rain Campaign, and the Majhi Vasundhara Campaign. This convergence of schemes has enabled comprehensive solutions that address both immediate needs and long-term sustainability goals. The economic viability of these projects is particularly noteworthy. The Green Project, with an investment of approximately INR 420,000, achieves break-even within 3-4 years while providing lasting environmental benefits. The solar-hybrid water pumping systems have a payback period of 5-6 years, generating significant long-term savings for rural communities. These innovations represent a significant shift in rural development strategy, demonstrating that environmental sustainability and economic viability can go hand in hand. The success of these projects has caught the attention of other states, with many looking to replicate Maharashtra's model. These initiatives are in a way unlocking significant productivity gains and strengthening the development outcomes by accessing clean and green energy for water, health, etc. As climate change continues to pose increasing challenges, Maharashtra's integrated approach to water security and energy transition offers valuable lessons for sustainable development. These initiatives not only address immediate environmental concerns but also build long-term resilience in rural communities, proving that local solutions can have a global impact in the fight against climate change. (The writer is chief, UNICEF Maharashtra Office; views are personal)



IN BRIEF



Truck rentals decline as demand softens

Truck rentals, which had returned to normal levels in October after the festive season rush, saw a decline in November in most trunk routes as demand for transportation services softened with fleet occupancy levels dropping to around 60 per cent sequentially in the previous month, according to an industry report. This decline is largely attributed to a combination of factors, including poor urban demand across categories, the BS4 truck ban in the NCR region on account of air pollution issues, polling activities in Maharashtra, and reduced agricultural produce movement, Shriram Finance said in its monthly bulletin. A majority trucks in the business are BS IV-compliant and given the existing entry ban in the NCR, these trucks transport items to the NCR border from where the goods are loaded into smaller BS VI or CNG trucks to be transported for delivery, according to the company. This has resulted in increasing the logistics costs in the region, it added. Elections in Maharashtra also slowing down logistics activity, as per Shriram Finance. Truck rental rates (round tips) followed a downward trend, with rentals on key trunk routes like Delhi-Chennai-Delhi and Delhi-Bengaluru-Delhi declining 1.4 per cent and 1 per cent, respectively, on a month-on-month basis, it said.



India's external debt rises to \$ 647 bn

India's total external debt has increased by USD 31 billion to USD 646.79 billion in 2023, according to World Bank International Debt Report. The report further said that interest payment increased from USD 15.08 billion in 2022 to USD 22.54 billion in 2023. While the long-term debt stocks have risen 7 per cent to USD 498 billion in 2023, short-term debt stocks declined marginally to USD 126.32 billion in 2023. According to the report, external debt stock as percentage of exports was 80 per cent, while debt servicing was 10 per cent of exports in 2023. The World Bank International Debt Report, 2024, further said that net debt inflows during the year worked out to be USD 33.42 billion, while the net equity inflows was higher at USD 46.94 billion in 2023.



'Digital platforms not required to obtain SDP status'

Market regulator Sebi on Wednesday clarified that digital platforms, used by registered or regulated entities to associate with third parties, are not obligated to seek recognition as Specified Digital Platforms (SDPs). The market regulator also stated that there is currently no regulatory framework in place for governing SDPs. An SDP is a digital platform approved by Sebi that has mechanisms to prevent and address any prohibited activities, such as unregulated advice or claims. In a statement, Sebi clarified that becoming an SDP is entirely voluntary for digital platforms. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has issued a clarification after queries have been raised in various news articles about the obligation of digital platforms to get recognition as a Specified Digital Platform.

'Govt took many steps to boost availability of DAP'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Anupriya Patel on Wednesday said the geopolitical disturbances this year caused disruptions in fertiliser supply chain and also impacted domestic availability of di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), but the government took many steps to overcome challenges of providing nutrients to farmers on time.

Addressing an annual seminar of Fertilisers Association of India, Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilizers Anupriya Patel said India's agricultural sector depends significantly on the import of some of the critical fertilizers like DAP (Di-ammonium phosphate), MoP (Muriate of Potash), NPKs and partially even urea.

"And this year, there have been some geopolitical disturbances which led to supply chain disruption and that had an impact on the availability of fertilizers, especially of DAP in the country. But the Department (of fertilizers) rose to the occasion," she said. To overcome this challenge, Patel said the Centre took several proactive measures.



This year, there have been some geopolitical disturbances which led to supply chain disruption and that had an impact on the availability of fertilizers, especially of DAP in the country

"Along with the proactive steps that we took in terms of procuring fertilizers through long-term agreements with the supplier countries, the government also kept its focus on promoting the use of alternate fertilizers as well as indigenous nano-fertilizers like Nano-DAP and Nano-Urea," the minister said.

That apart, Patel said, regular coordination was made with the state governments, the port authorities, the ministry of railways and even the fertilizer companies to ensure faster dispatch of fertilizers to the demand intensive regions.

Patel said the government took two major decisions to address the challenges for the

current Rabi (winter-sown) season, 2024-25.

The first decision is regarding offering of a special package of Rs 3,500 per tonne on DAP, costing Rs 2,625 crore to the central exchequer, which is to make the price sustainable for the companies to import DAP amid global price volatility, the minister said.

Secondly, Patel said that the overall increase in the prices of P&K fertilisers in the international market has been linked to the market prices. "If the procurement price of P&K fertilisers including DAP increases in the global market, the procurement capacities of the companies are not going to be affected," she added.

Sensex advances 110 pts in choppy trade

Banks gain ahead of RBI policy

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex advanced 110 points in a choppy trade on Wednesday, extending its gains to the fourth day in a row helped by buying in HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share barometer rose by 110.58 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 80,956.33 with 14 of its constituents ending with gains and 16 stocks with losses. During the day, it jumped 399.64 points or 0.49 per cent to 81,245.39 and dipped to a low of 80,630.53.

The NSE Nifty rose marginally by 10.30 points or 0.04 per cent to 24,467.45 as gains in IT, realty and banking shares were offset by profit-taking in auto and FMCG shares. From the 30-share Sensex pack, HDFC Bank,

Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, Titan, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance and ICICI Bank were the biggest gainers.

Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, Adani Ports, Power Grid, Maruti, ITC, Reliance Industries and UltraTech Cement were among the laggers.

Foreign institutional investors turned buyers on Tuesday as they bought equities worth Rs 3,664.67 crore, according to exchange data.

"The domestic market maintained a positive trajectory, despite some volatility stemming from mixed sentiments in Asian markets due to the situation in South Korea. Broader indices showed strong performance, with the banking and financial sectors continuing to excel.

Rupee plummets to all-time low of 84.76 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee slumped to its all-time low of 84.76 (provisional) against the US dollar after dropping 8 paise on Wednesday amid a strengthening greenback and increase in crude prices.

Forex traders said a positive trend in domestic equity markets and foreign fund inflows supported the local unit at lower level.

At the interbank currency exchange, the rupee opened at 84.66 and traded in the range of 84.65-84.76. Eventually it settled at 84.76 (provisional), 8 paise lower than Tuesday's close of 84.68.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said, the rupee lost initial gains amid strong dollar and a positive tone in crude oil prices.

"Dollar strengthened amid

UPI Lite: RBI raises limit of wallet to Rs 5,000, per transaction to Rs 1,000

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday increased the UPI Lite wallet limit to Rs 5,000 and per-transaction limit to Rs 1,000 in order to encourage wider adoption of the popular instant payment system through mobile phones.

UPI Lite transactions are offline to the extent that Additional Factor of Authentication (AFA) is not required, and transaction alerts are not sent in real time.

Currently, the upper limit of an offline payment transaction is Rs 500 and the total limit for offline transactions on a payment instrument is Rs 2,000 at any point in time.

The Reserve Bank on Wednesday amended the 'offline framework' issued in January 2022 with an aim at facilitating small value digital payments in offline mode.

"...the enhanced limits for UPI Lite shall be Rs 1,000 per transaction, with Rs 5,000 being the total limit at any point in time," said a Reserve Bank circular.

Steps taken to speed up rooftop solar installations: Official

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government has taken a series of steps such as building robust IT systems, cutting down regulatory barriers, and efficiency in subsidy disbursement to speed up domestic rooftop solar installations, which are expected to reach 10 lakh by the end of this fiscal under a scheme, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Around 1.45 crore registrations have been made under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGMBY) and 6.34 lakh installations completed. The scheme targets to achieve one crore installations in the residential sector by FY'27 with an outlay of Rs 75,021 crore.

As per official data, Gujarat has seen the maximum solar installations under the scheme at 2,86,545, followed by Maharashtra with 1,26,344 installations and Uttar Pradesh at 53,423.



The ministry is also coordinating with all stakeholders including REC, DISCOMs, and vendors, to resolve any challenge for the successful implementation of the scheme.

The official said that transformative initiatives of this scale necessitate solid foundational work to ensure long-term success and sustainability as the scheme is the world's largest domestic rooftop solar programme.

Prior to its launch in February 2024, only 8.1 lakh installations were completed over a decade (2014-2024), averaging 7,000 per month.

In contrast, within just nine months of PMSGMBY, 6.3 lakh installations have been achieved, an average of 70,000 per month.

The official said that the numbers are increasing at a healthy rate as initial implementation challenges were effectively addressed to accelerate the rollout.

Consistently scored high on punctuality: IndiGo

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IndiGo on Wednesday said it has consistently scored high on punctuality, and refuted a survey that claimed the airline is among the worst based on certain parameters, including punctuality.

The survey was done by by AirHelp, an EU claim processing agency. It compared the world's biggest and most popular airlines and rated them according to their punctuality, quality of service, and how well they handle claims for compensation. In a statement, IndiGo said the data published in the survey does not report the sample size from India, and neither takes into account the methodology or compensation guidelines used by the global aviation industry – "casting a doubt on its credibility".

PURE EV to set up 250 dealerships pan-India

Electric two-wheeler maker PURE EV on Wednesday announced plans to open 250 dealerships pan-India over the next 30 months as part of a roadmap to strengthen its presence nationwide and expand globally. The expansion will be driven by the growing demand for long-range scooters, electric motorcycles, large B2B contracts, and the company's entry into the household brand space, the Hyderabad-based firm said.

Besides, the company said expanding beyond India, it plans to commence exports to the Middle East and Africa by March next year, marking a significant step in its journey to become a global player in the electric mobility market. It currently exports its e-two-wheelers to Nepal and Bhutan.

Over the next 30 months, the company aims to add 250 new dealerships, taking its total network to over 320 across India, PURE EV said.

Gold slips below Rs 79,000 per 10 gm on reduced demand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices slipped below Rs 79,000 per 10 kg in the national capital on Wednesday due to poor off-take by stockists and retailers amid weak global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity fell by Rs 150 to Rs 78,850 per 10 grams. It had closed at Rs 79,000 per 10 grams in the previous session.

Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity extended the losses for the third straight day, declining by Rs 150 to Rs 78,450 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 78,600 per 10 grams.

However, silver rose Rs 100 to Rs 92,500 per kg. On Tuesday, the white metal had settled at Rs 92,400 per kg.

In futures trade on the



Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for February delivery fell Rs 93 or 0.12 per cent to trade at Rs 76,810 per 10 grams.

Silver contracts for March delivery declined Rs 322 or 0.35 per cent to Rs 91,875 per kg on the bourse.

Comex gold futures in the Asian market hours edged lower by USD 4.90 per ounce or 0.18 per cent to USD 2,663 per ounce.

"Gold held steady on Wednesday as traders continued to assess the recent polit-

ical developments and monetary outlook while awaiting key US economic data releases in the week ahead," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

According to Manav Modi, Analyst, Commodity Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, gold prices traded steady after inching higher in Tuesday's session, on one end, strong US jobs data hinted at a cautious approach to rate cuts, while a softer dollar and easing Treasury yields capped losses as markets awaited further economic cues.

Along with geo-political tensions in the Middle East, disturbance in South Korea also led to some safe-haven buying, Modi said.

Silver also traded 0.17 per cent lower at USD 31.33 per ounce in the global markets.

'Food inflation in policy formulation is a complex issue'

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Nilesh Shah, a part-time member of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, on Wednesday said the debate on whether to include food inflation in policy formulation is a complex issue, and questioned if we are computing the number correctly.

Shah, who is the managing director and chief executive of Kotak Mutual Fund, questioned if the computation takes into account free food to over 80 crore Indians under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) while arriving at the number.

Making it clear that the EAC-PM is yet to deliberate on the issue, Shah said the free or subsidised food grains to 80 crore Indians will lead to a decline in the headline number but was quick to add that the 2-6 per cent inflation band given to the RBI will also need to undergo a change.

"My only submission will be are we measuring food inflation correctly? For example, 80 crore Indians are provided free food. That cost is more than our fiscal deficit. Is the credit taken in food inflation?" he said, speaking at a Kotak MF event here.

There is a need to check if we are measuring food correctly, he said, stressing that the issue of food inflation is a very complex one.

In July, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran pitched for excluding food inflation from policy formulation which set it a fierce debate in policy circles with RBI resisting any such move.



Shah said different countries have different practices, and spoke about how the US operates by core inflation alone because the relative spending on food in the developed economy is far lesser.

However, traditional economics says that inflation is a monetary phenomenon, whether it is food or non-food, he added.

"Is there one right or wrong answer? The answer is no. There are perspectives and we should let the Reserve Bank of India and Finance Ministry take a call on it," he said.

Meanwhile, Shah also said that the government will have to draw up detailed plans on upping the capital expenditure in the remaining months of the fiscal year ending March 2025 to ensure that the heavy lift-off in the spends happens in the second half after slower spends in the first.

The 5.4 per cent growth in Q2 is well below expectations, but the signs of the slowdown were visible for some time, he said.

Services sector growth eases moderately

Employment growth fastest since 2005

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's services PMI marginally dipped to 58.4 in November while employment in the segment recorded robust growth, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index was down marginally to 58.4 from 58.5 in October as sales increased at a softer pace. Last month, the country's services PMI recovered from its 10-month low.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"India posted a strong 58.4 services PMI in November, down only a fraction from the prior month's 58.5. During November, services sector employment notably grew at the fastest pace ever recorded since this survey began in 2005," Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC,



said.

"The hiring surge reflected the sector's improving busi-

ness confidence, growing new orders, and vigorous international demand. At the same

time, high food and labour costs drove up input and output prices to their fastest rates in 15 months and nearly 12 years, respectively," Bhandari said.

Panelists of the survey continued to signal improving international demand for their services, while new export orders increased at the quickest rate in three months, but well below those seen around mid-year.

Private sector companies indicated that demand

strength supported further growth of new business and output in November. Ongoing increases in sales continued to add to capacity pressures, which led firms to hire staff at the quickest pace since comparable data became available 19 years ago.

Paired with rising input prices, labour costs exerted upward pressure on inflation. Overall, expenses and output charges rose at the fastest rates in 15 months and almost 12 years, respectively.



# GIRLS WILL BE GIRLS PREMIERES THIS DECEMBER

Prime Video announced the exclusive streaming premiere for the coming-of-age film *Girls Will Be Girls*. An Indo-French joint production, this highly acclaimed and globally celebrated young adult drama has been produced under the banner of Pushing Buttons Studio, Dolce Vita Films and Crawling Angle Films by Richa Chadha, Claire Chassagne and Shuchi Talati with Ali Fazal as the executive producer.

It marks the feature film directorial debut of writer Shuchi Talati and also introduces debutants Preeti Panigrahi and Kesav Binoy Kiron in lead roles,

with acclaimed actress Kani Kusruti in a pivotal role. *Girls Will Be Girls* has garnered widespread praise for its compelling narrative and outstanding performances, earning numerous awards and accolades at prestigious international film festivals. The film will premiere exclusively in India on Prime Video on December 18. The film follows 18-year-old Mira, as she navigates her rebellious awakening and emotional turmoil, intertwined with her mother's own unfulfilled coming-of-age experiences. The trailer for *Girls Will Be Girls* offers a visually captivating glimpse into what promises to be a cinematic gem.



It hooks viewers right from the start, taking them on a roller-coaster journey through Mira's eyes. With its rich storytelling and compelling characters, the film leaves an impression on viewers, making it a must-watch.


Richa Chadha, the co-producer of the film, shared, "*Girls Will Be Girls* is a film that captures the raw and authentic experiences of young adults, reflecting the rebellious spirit of adolescence while exploring the challenges of adulthood, where inter-generational conflicts and struggle for independence are common. We are thrilled that the universal theme

of our dream project has resonated with audiences worldwide, earning international acclaim and recognition at some of the most prominent film festivals."

Ali Fazal, the executive producer of the film, added, "*Girls Will Be Girls* is incredibly special to Richa and me because it's our first project as producers. A lot of heart, passion and hard work have gone into bringing this vision to life, making it a journey of immense learning and growth. The phenomenal response from international audiences has been highly motivating, encouraging us to continue pursuing our passion for delivering distinctive narratives."

## Jessica Biel 'takes break' from Justin Timberlake

As Justin Timberlake embarks on his *Forget Tomorrow World Tour*, his wife Jessica Biel will have the essential break from drama she truly desires. The *Mirrors* hitmaker has been on tour since April and plans to keep the musical journey going until next summer. The 43-year-old pop icon encountered difficulties earlier this year when he was arrested in New York for driving under the influence. Considering the ongoing drama regarding his



troubling reputation, Timberlake ultimately admitted guilt to a lesser offense of driving while ability impaired. Despite the resolution of his June arrest in September—after he consented to pay a fine and complete community service for the revised noncriminal traffic infraction—his wife has been forced to navigate yet another challenging phase in their already tumultuous 12-year marriage. Despite Timberlake's recent string of concert cancellations, the tour has created space between him and Biel, providing her with some emotional relief "to escape all the drama." An insider recently revealed that although she's "happy to back him" publicly by attending "a concert or two," secretly the actress is "grateful to have some distance so she can reflect, work on her own projects, and meet with friends."

The grapevine has always been worried about Timberlake's series of chaotic blunders. In 2019, the *Sexy Back* singer was seen holding hands with his Palmer co-star Alisha Wainwright, igniting issues in his relationship with Biel. From time to time, he has been seen getting entangled again in the controversies linked to former Britney Spears too. Although the *In Time* actor received a reduced charge for a careless mistake committed earlier this year, it has allegedly intensified the pressure on his relationship with the who appears to be putting in a lot of effort in their marriage away from the public eye.

## PC hints her B'wood comeback

Currently, Priyanka Chopra Jonas is managing two significant projects — the American action-comedy *Heads of State* alongside Idris Elba and John Cena and the action drama *The Bluff* — but it seems the international star is poised to make her comeback to her roots after a six-year break. In a major announcement, Priyanka has recently disclosed that she is nearing a decision on a new Hindi project.

"Not joking, I meet many filmmakers here, read scripts. I have actively been looking for something I want to do in Hindi. This year was really busy for me. But I have something up my sleeve, I will leave it at that," Priyanka said during a chat. Naturally, the next question was whether she was referring to the Farhan Akhtar directorial *Jee Le Zaraa*. "You will need to speak to Excel (Entertainment, Farhan Akhtar's production house) about that," she said, offering no further details. Promoted as a road movie, *Jee Le Zaraa* has been creating substantial excitement since its announcement in 2021, as it stars Priyanka, Katrina Kaif and Alia Bhatt in the main roles. Co-authored by Zoya Akhtar, Farhan Akhtar and Reema Kagti, with Farhan directing, the film has encountered postponements because of challenges in aligning the schedules of the three main actors and the director.



## 'NOBODY HAS APPROACHED ME': GOVINDA ON BHAGAM BHAG SEQUEL

Akshay Kumar, Govinda and Paresh Rawal's *Bhagam Bhag* has been making waves on social media. With the continuation being developed, fans are thrilled to see the comedy return to the screen after 18 years. While enthusiasts are wondering if the trio will make a comeback in the sequel, Govinda has recently provided an update, stating that no one has contacted him regarding the film.

In a latest interview, Govinda, who found the situation entertaining, disclosed that he has not been approached for *Bhagam Bhag 2*. He stated, "Nobody has approached me for *Bhagam Bhag 2*, or sat down for a discussion. There are stories



of me doing not just *Bhagam Bhag 2*, but many other sequels, including *Partner*."

So would he like to be a part of it, the actor shared that his decision will depend on various factors. "I know sequels are popular today, but one should not go by beliefs, suggestions and popularity. If I do a project, I must discuss it in its entirety—from the remuneration to the script, my character and the director," he said.




Previously, amid various speculations, the producers announced that they are developing *Bhagam Bhag 2*, which is presently in the scripting phase. The sequel's rights were recently obtained from Shemaroo Entertainment by Sarita Ashwin Varde of Roaring River Productions, who has also been developing the film's script at the same time. She will collaborate with Shemaroo to produce the film!

### LOOKBOOK




The ASEAN India Music Festival 2024 wrapped up its final day with an explosion of music, energy and emotions. Hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and Seher, the 3-day grand event was a stunning tribute to a decade of India's 'Act East Policy' and the comprehensive strategic partnership between India and ASEAN countries. The festival was elevated by the presence of the Minister of State for External Affairs, Pabitra Margherita, who inaugurated the event on its opening day as the Chief Guest.






### ARCHIE





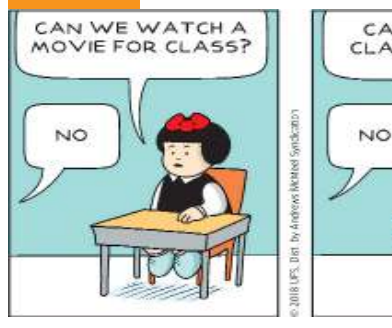
### CALVIN AND HOBBS






### GARFIELD



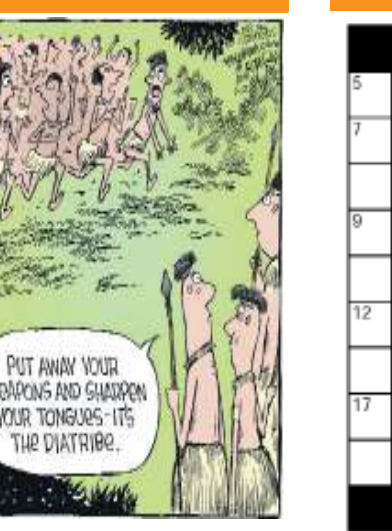

### NANCY



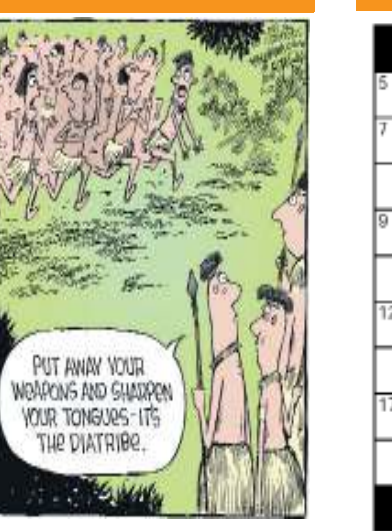
### GINGER MEGGS



### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4		
5					6
7			8		
9				10	
			11		
12	13		14	15	
			16		
17				18	
19					

#### ACROSS

- Using your brain
- A neck-warmer
- Strike with the foot
- Time of darkness
- Moving stairway
- A roll of tobacco leaves that is smoked
- Spinning aeroplane part
- Tugged
- Taking part in a play
- Come to a halt
- The capital of Egypt
- A curved support under a bridge
- A type of chimney on a ship
- A small oily green or black fruit from a tree
- Big
- A hot breakfast food

#### DOWN

- Bread cooked brown
- A young child

#### SOLUTION

V	I	L	L	A	G
O	L	I	A	T	I
L	I	N	E	T	O
C	A	F	E	A	
A	I	A	D	O	N
N	N	O	G		
O	P	E	N	S	
E	O	A	R	E	
S	T	A	E	D	
A	E	D	E	U	
R					



## ‘Om Shanti’ revolution

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“Om Shanti,” with these serene words, the conversation with sister Vasanta began, opening a gateway to understanding the profound philosophy of this spiritual organisation. At its heart, the Brahma Kumaris emphasise the importance of integrating values into everyday life.

“Our teachings focus on inculcating values and divine virtues as part of daily living,” she explained. “We all talk about values, but what matters is practicing them consistently. Alongside this, meditation plays a crucial role, it rejuvenates, energises and relaxes, creating a harmonious balance.” Tracing its origins to 1936 in undivided India’s Sindh (now in Pakistan), the Brahma Kumaris began as a small spiritual initiative and has since expanded its reach to over 140 countries.

When asked what makes the Brahma Kumaris distinct from other spiritual movements, the answer was rooted in simplicity and integration. “We don’t treat meditation or values as separate entities; they are seamlessly woven into our daily lives,” she said.

Values such as honesty, peace and joy manifest in small, meaningful gestures—like greeting someone with a genuine smile. “These aren’t abstract concepts; they’re integral to how we live. For example, wearing white symbolises peace and unity. White encompasses all colours, much like our philosophy embraces all emotions and perspectives.”

Central to their teachings is *Raja Yoga* meditation, which the representative described as a transformative mental practice. “Meditation is not just about sitting in a specific posture. It’s about a state of being—a way of living,” she elaborated. She elaborated, “If I control what I see,

choosing to focus only on what uplifts me, then I am the king of my eyes. If I can resist listening to gossip or negativity, I become the master of my ears. But if I let my senses or mind overpower me—absorbing what I know isn’t right—then I’m no longer the ruler of my being.”

The Brahma Kumaris extend their teachings beyond individual transformation, making meaningful contributions to society. “Our organisation addresses a wide spectrum of social challenges through 21



dedicated wings,” she explained. “These wings cater to the unique needs of diverse groups—be it media professionals, business leaders, sportspeople, or women.” When discussing women’s empowerment, she emphasised the importance of inner strength. “Empowerment isn’t just about overcoming gender bias, though that’s crucial. True empowerment comes from within. When a woman feels free, powerful and aligned with her inner self, she naturally radiates strength and confidence.”

On environmental sustainability, the representative connected the external world to the internal. “Nature has two aspects: the external—what we see in flora and fauna—and the internal—our own nature. If my inner nature is peaceful and harmonious, it reflects in how I treat the world around me. Sustainability begins with self-awareness.”

The Brahma Kumaris’ philosophy extends far beyond personal transformation, encompassing global initiatives like *COP 29*, currently being held in Baku, Azerbaijan. “Spirituality is being recognised as a critical element in addressing environmental challenges,” shared the representative. “At *COP 29*, we have speakers, stalls and services showcasing how spiritual practices like *Raj Yoga* can inspire minimalism and sustainability. When we cultivate contentment and positivity within, we naturally consume less and respect the environment more.”

Whether it’s fostering harmony in personal relationships or addressing workplace challenges, the Brahma Kumaris provide tools for building resilience and emotional intelligence.

The impact of the Brahma Kumaris’ work is vividly seen in local communities. Their headquarters houses the Global Hospital and Research Centre, which serves a vast radius with trauma care and nursing education. “This hospital is a lifeline for the area, offering free or affordable healthcare to underserved populations,” she said.

The organisation also champions innovative projects like yogic agriculture, where farmers practice meditation to imbue their crops with positive energy.



“Plants respond to human energy,” she explained, citing indigenous practices where trees are gently ‘cursed’ to fall naturally, demonstrating the profound connection between human vibrations and nature.

In Hyderabad’s Shanti Sarovar center, countless lives have been transformed through spiritual guidance. One such story stands out. “A young woman struggling with anxiety and strained family relationships came to us. Through consistent meditation and workshops on self-awareness, she gradually found peace within herself. This inner calm helped her rebuild her

relationships and approach her career with confidence. Today, she actively volunteers, inspiring others with her journey.”

The Brahma Kumaris’ work reminds us that in every sector—be it healthcare, education, or environmental sustainability—values like compassion, care and love are indispensable. “Money can build hospitals and buy medicines, but without empathy and warmth, true healing is incomplete,” she remarked, sharing a recent story of a patient who nearly lost her life due to negligence but survived due to timely intervention from a caring doctor.

“This is the need of the hour,” she concluded. “To combine technical expertise with spiritual values. When love and care guide our actions, the world becomes a better place—for individuals, communities, and the planet as a whole.”

For over 12 years, the Brahma Kumaris have been a transformative presence in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, bringing hope and positive change to individuals and families. One compelling example is a family they supported through spiritual guidance and meditation.

“Thousands of lives have been transformed this way,” she added. “People struggling with substance abuse, suicidal tendencies, or negativity have found purpose and inner strength through spirituality. They no longer need substances to feel ‘high’—they’re self-motivated and naturally happy.” The path of spreading goodness isn’t without obstacles. Misinterpretations about the organisation, such as misconceptions around their white attire being indicative of a cult, have posed challenges.

With a rich history spanning over eight decades, the Brahma Kumaris have been steadfast in their mission to empower individuals, foster global unity and promote sustainable living. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, a representative of the Brahma Kumaris sheds light on the organisation’s profound philosophy and its impact on transforming lives worldwide

## ‘Playing Sarojini Naidu was not just an ‘acting challenge’ but a ‘tremendous responsibility’

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In a world where voices are often silenced, one woman’s words have been shaking the status quo—it’s none other than Malishka Mendonsa, aka the very popular RJ Malishka. With her quick wit, infectious laughter and unapologetic charm, she has captured the hearts of millions as the host of Mumbai’s popular radio show, *Morning No. 1*. Now, she’s taking on the role of a lifetime as Sarojini Naidu in the highly anticipated web series *Freedom at Midnight*. So, how could we just miss out on the opportunity? In this exclusive chat with us, the ‘Mumbai Ki Raani’ reflects on her early fascination with Sarojini Naidu, recalling how she dressed up as the iconic poetess as a child. “I had dressed up as Sarojini Naidu when I was a child and I was always fascinated by the way her hair did that particular wave upfront. And I thought she had short hair, but she didn’t. Or that tiger tooth necklace that she wore, which as a kid was a ‘Haathi daant’. I, however, later figured it was the tiger tooth or the way she wore her sarees, the kind of blouses, the high bindi and all of it.”

The *Fear Factor: Khatron Ke Khiladi* fame acknowledged the challenges of working with prosthetics; she describes it as “a long, arduous, crazy time.” “The prosthetics helped bring her young and old appearances to life. From the face mold, where I had to close my eyes, ears and nose and simply breathe, to the hours spent wearing the prosthetics as older Sarojini, it was physically demanding,” she recalls. Another challenge was portraying scenes that required the actors to wear shawls and jackets in the scorching heat to depict winter. “On such a large-scale production, even a small mistake could delay everything. The logistics of managing so many actors, all portraying historical figures, were complex.”

She, however, found that Sarojini Naidu’s personality resonated with her. “Her warmth, wit and ability to light up a room,” Malishka says. “Working with the cast was a fabulous experience. These were exceptional actors, chosen not only because we resembled the characters but also for our ability to portray them convincingly.”

Despite the difficulties, she appreciates the opportunity to learn and grow as an actress. “I feel like because I played Sarojini, not only did I get an opportunity to be part of a wonderful historical made by Mikhail Advani, but I also got to learn so much about the craft and so much about patience.”

To integrate the literary essence and eloquence of Sarojini Naidu into her performance, she delved into the poetess’s works. “Sarojini was known as the Nightingale of India because she wrote very lyrical poetry... I bought her book, I’ve read her speeches.” She was particularly struck by Sarojini’s voice, noting

its “beautiful flow of language” and “clipped” English, which she sought to replicate in her performance. Mendonsa reflects on Naidu’s relationships with her contemporaries, including Jinnah and Gandhi, highlighting the unique dynamics and camaraderie they shared.

Naidu’s relationship with Jinnah, for instance, was built on mutual respect and friendship. As Mendonsa notes, “Her relationship with Jinnah, for example, is that they’re friends, their contemporaries... At one point, she talks about him as the beacon or the symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity in India.”

Mendonsa also touches on Naidu’s relationship with Gandhi, revealing a fascinating anecdote. “I read somewhere that she nicknamed him Mickey Mouse,” she says, hinting at the affectionate and playful dynamic between the two leaders.

As an actress, the *Tumhari Sulu* star brought her own unique perspective to the role, drawing from her background in radio. “My experience as an RJ would help me with any kind of vocal work. I think being on the mic when your face is not being shown allows you to portray emotions in so many different ways.” This expertise proved invaluable in capturing Naidu’s vocal presence and charisma.

Going ahead, she delves, “Sarojini Naidu was, of course, a freedom fighter, a poet, a women’s rights activist, a feminist in that sense and she was also a very, I mean, almost a child prodigy. She was very learned and belonged to a family of educated people. She belonged to high society. She had no hesitation in speaking to our leaders of that time, male political leaders, because you’ve hardly seen any other female political freedom fighters.”

To portray Naidu’s strong personality, Malishka drew inspiration from her own experiences as a woman in a male-dominated industry. “I had to kind of be an extended version of myself because I used to keep saying that this is a modern woman. This is a woman of today. You saw her in saris and bindis, but she was everything and more than a modern woman of today would be with a great voice that was listened to. I brought all these things together also because I feel that, elementarily, in this day and age, I am that person. A lot of women like me exist. Maybe we don’t wear sarees or bindis, or maybe we do. And that’s really that being a strong, independent woman is not just about how you dress but about embodying those qualities in your daily life.”

The *Incredibles* star’s portrayal of Naidu also highlights her remarkable womanly essence. “She was a lady with a mighty mind if you ask me

From her early fascination with Sarojini Naidu to the challenges of bringing this complex figure to life on screen. In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, the multifaceted **Malishka Mendonsa** opens up about her latest role as the iconic Sarojini Naidu in the highly anticipated web series *Freedom at Midnight*



because, obviously, she decided she figured out that Jinnah’s philosophy did not suit the nation, did not suit perhaps even the women of the nation because she was so much about women’s empowerment.” As she explored Naidu’s character, she discovered moments where she felt a deep connection to the historical figure. “When they asked me to do this role and when Nikhil explained this to me, I was completely of the opinion that Sarojini Naidu is the modern-day woman that is today,” the *Thor: Ragnarok* fame says. “In very many ways, I was like, Yes, this is who I am.”

The *Dancing Queen* star was particularly drawn to Naidu’s confident and charming personality. “She lit up a room and I was like, This is me (She laughs). And most importantly, that she did—at no point did we ever think for a second that Sarojini Naidu or a woman of that time was lesser than a man, even though it was that time.”

Oh and also, she appreciated Naidu’s use of humour as a device to get her point across. “I find that fabulous because I think that is my personality trait also. I’ve used humour on the radio all my life. I find humour a great stabiliser. It puts across your point beautifully. No one can take offense, really, and the job is done.”

Then, she also spoke about how she received a 15- to 20-minute voice note about Sarojini Naidu’s life, interests and personality. She was also told that she might have to learn a bit of Bengali, as Naidu was Bengali but spent most of her life in Hyderabad. She sat down with a Bengali colleague to go through the lines, but they eventually realised that they didn’t need to use them.

Through her research, she discovered that Sarojini Naidu was a woman who held her own among men, walking shoulder to shoulder with them. For Malishka, playing Sarojini Naidu on screen was not just an acting challenge but a tremendous responsibility. She admires how Naidu would often leave the men around her embarrassed, yet impressed, by her sharp wit and fearless humour. “She would say things, even jokingly, that would leave the men around her a bit embarrassed, thinking, ‘Wow, what did she just say?’”

Malishka recalls, chuckling. “For example, there’s this one scene where she says, ‘I’m here only to do poetry,’ and everyone looks at each other and laughs.” One memorable moment for Malishka was during a ballroom scene. “Vallabhbhai and I danced a waltz in our costumes during a break while the crew was setting up,” she recalls. “It was such a lovely moment and I hope it’s captured somewhere.”



## Sowing seeds for sustainable farming

Soil degradation in rural India poses a formidable challenge to the country’s agricultural sustainability, economic stability, and food security. With smallholder farmers constituting 80% of India’s agricultural workforce, the deteriorating health of soil directly affects their livelihoods. Unsustainable farming practices, overreliance on synthetic inputs, and climate change exacerbate soil erosion, nutrient depletion, salinization, and acidification. Addressing this issue requires an integrated approach to preserve and restore soil health.

**Role of Smallholder Farmers:** Smallholder farmers are vital contributors to the global food system but remain marginalized in development efforts. Smallholder and marginal farmers, owning less than two hectares of land, makeup 86.2% of all farmers in India, yet they own only 47.3% of the arable land. Investing in balanced nutrition for the crops can improve productivity but also heighten risks for resource-constrained farmers. This presents a barrier to adopting improved practices. A curated approach is necessary combining strategic and tactical interventions. Strategic investments like correcting soil acidity, adopting conservation agriculture, and increasing soil organic matter are critical to ensuring long-term productivity.

**Extent and consequences of soil degradation:** India faces extensive soil degradation, according to the National Bureau of Soil Survey and Land Use Planning (NBSS&LUP), around 30% of India’s total land area (approximately 120 million hectares) is affected by soil degradation. The primary causes are misuse and unbalanced application of fertilizers, monocropping, poor irrigation practices, and inadequate crop rotation, all of which contribute to the depletion of soil nutrients and the loss of soil organic matter. This degradation directly impacts:

**1. Crop yields:** Declining soil fertility reduces crop productivity. For instance, monocropping in Punjab has depleted nutrients, leading to lower yields, while erosion in Rajasthan affects wheat and barley production.

**2. Farmer livelihoods:** Decreasing agricultural income often traps smallholders in poverty, forcing them to migrate to cities or engage in less profitable nonfarm activities. For example, soil degradation in Tamil Nadu has driven many farmers into low-paying construction work.

**3. Food security:** Soil degradation limits crop production, reducing food availability and causing nutritional deficiencies in farming households. In Chhattisgarh, poor irrigation infrastructure combined with soil erosion has led to lower yields, directly affecting dietary needs.

### Pathways to sustainable soil management

**Strategic and tactical approaches to soil management:** Strategic approaches focus on long-term solutions to restore and sustain soil health. These include addressing soil acidity and salinity through amendments like lime, improving soil organic matter (SOM) by incorporating crop residues, compost,

and practicing agroforestry, and adopting conservation agriculture (CA) practices such as reduced tillage and crop diversification. Developing local water resources like farm ponds and check dams ensures supplemental irrigation, reducing risks of crop failure in rainfed systems. Balanced nutrient management, involving a combination of organic and inorganic fertilizers, and the use of soil testing tools optimize fertility and minimize degradation. Strategic investments also prioritize resilience through agroecological farming systems that integrate livestock, crops, and trees to improve long-term soil health. Tactical approaches are short-term, adaptive strategies to manage risks and variability, particularly in rainfed systems. Flexible agronomy allows farmers to adjust crop choices and fertilizer inputs based on rainfall predictions and yield potential. Participatory learning, such as Farmer Field Schools (FFS), equips farmers with localized solutions. Risk mitigation tactics like crop diversification, staggered planting, and supplemental irrigation stabilize production. Decision-making tools, including nutrient calculators and rainfall forecasts, enable informed, adaptive practices. Integrating these approaches empowers farmers to balance productivity with sustainability while navigating climate and resource uncertainties.

### Overcoming barriers to adoption

For sustainable practices to succeed, farmer education and access to resources are essential:

**1. Farmer training programs:** Initiatives such as the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) equip farmers with skills in organic farming, integrated nutrient management, and conservation practices.

**2. Farmer field schools (FFS):** These hands-on programs encourage peer learning and experimentation, fostering community-driven solutions.

**3. Access to inputs:** Affordable access to organic fertilizers, soil amendments, and irrigation systems is critical. Government programs like the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchay Yojana (PMKSY) aim to reduce water wastage and subsidize sustainable inputs.

**Modern technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing soil health management:**

**1. Soil health monitoring:** Tools like in-situ soil testing kits and mobile apps provide real-time assessments of nutrient levels, pH, and organic matter. The Soil Health Card Scheme promotes judicious fertilizer use.

**2. Precision agriculture:** Technologies like GPS and sensors optimize input applications, reducing waste and environmental harm. Maharashtra has adopted smart irrigation systems to conserve water and improve soil moisture.

**3. Drones and remote sensing:** Equipped with sensors, drones monitor soil health and crop growth, enabling timely interventions to manage soil degradation effectively.



# Indian team is a group of superstars, we are not focussing just on Bumrah or Kohli: Lyon

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

India is a team of superstars, and Australia is not focused on countering just 'extraordinary' players like Jasprit Bumrah and Virat Kohli, but the entire group as everyone is incredibly talented, spinner Nathan Lyon said on Wednesday. In the buildup to the Border Gavaskar Trophy and post India's emphatic 295-run with the series-opener in Perth, the chatter has revolved around specific Indian players including Kohli and Bumrah. "I look at the Indian squad and see a group of superstars. Cricket, however, is a team game, winning requires the entire side to perform well. India boasts extraordinary players like Bumrah and others, but it's not just about the superstars," Lyon said ahead of the pink ball Test here. "The rest of the Indian squad is also incredibly talented. They're an incredible cricket team. We're not focusing



solely on any one player, that's for sure. "We have nothing but respect for every Indian cricketer

who takes the field on Friday. That doesn't mean we're not going to compete. We respect them, but we're determined



to play our brand of cricket and compete hard against a quality side. India is one of the best teams in the world,"

he added. Seasoned India off-spinner R Ashwin, who has 536 Test wickets, could not find space

in India's playing XI in Perth with the tourists opting to play all-rounder Washington Sundar as the sole spin option. "More than surprises me. But the quality of Indian cricketers that they got in that squad, don't they? You've got Ashwin with 530 odd wickets and then you got Ravindra Jadeja over 300 wickets or whatever it may be. "So it's pretty remarkable to see the quality of player that are sitting on the bench. But I can't control with who they run out, but it would be a good challenge, no matter who they bring out," Lyon said. Debutant Nitish reddy displayed his attacking instincts by taking on the Australian off-spinner, hitting him for several boundaries in Perth. However Lyon wasn't surprised. "I wasn't surprised. But yet again, here for boundaries, it provides opportunities for me to hopefully take a few chances along the way," he added.



## Kaun banega next BCCI secretary?

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

With Jay Shah taking over as International Cricket Council's youngest chairman on December 1, the role of secretary in the mighty BCCI lies vacant and as officials wonder who the replacement might be, they have time to figure out the next course of action. Following the constitutional amendment in 2022, the secretary is the most influential office-bearer in the BCCI, having "all powers in relation to cricketing and non-cricketing matters" with the CEO working under his supervision. Shah was elected unopposed for the ICC top position in August and the stakeholders have been wondering ever since how the transition process will take place. Gujarat's Anil Patel and current BCCI joint secretary Devjit Saikia could replace Shah in the BCCI. The name of DDCA president Rohan Jaitley was also floated but remained just speculation. "We don't know what is happening. Everyone (BCCI officials and state units) is quiet on the matter. Most likely joint secretary (Saikia) will be interim for the time being," said a BCCI administrator. "There are issues that need to be dealt with on a day to day basis and anyone who comes in, needs to have a bit of knowledge on how the BCCI is run," he added. From the time an elected office-bearer resigns, the

board has 45 days to call for a Special General Meeting and choose his successor. If one calculates the 45 days from the day Shah took charge of ICC, the board has time till mid-January to fill up the position. The BCCI also needs to appoint an electoral officer at least four weeks prior to the election, as per the constitution. A senior state unit official said the board had ample time to complete the transition. "Transition should have been complete by now. The secretary has to sign majority of documents. This matter should have been taken up at the AGM (in September) but nobody questioned at that time," said the official. "There is a power vacuum right now at the BCCI, the most powerful cricketing body in the world," added another office-bearer of a state unit. With the current three-year term of officer-bearers coming to end in September next year, the incoming secretary will be in charge for close to one year. There is also no word yet on who the new BCCI representative in the ICC board would be. Shah held that position too and Board president Roger Binny is in the list of alternate directors. IPL chairman Arun Dhumal is India's representative in the ICC's Chief Executives' Committee.



## Yashasvi is standing exactly where I was 10 years back: KL Rahul

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

KL Rahul sees shades of himself in 22-year-old Yashasvi Jaiswal, who on his first trip Down Under, seems to be in a similar position like he was on his maiden Australia tour 10 years back. In the 2014-15 series, the then 22-year-old Rahul, batting at No. 6, had scores of 3 and 1 on debut at the MCG but came back strongly as an opener in the very next game with a eye-catching 110 in Sydney. He also faced nerves but during the second innings in Sydney where he scored 16, he battled for an hour with Murali Vijay which eased him a lot. Rahul is trying to play a similar role with Jaiswal what Vijay, the former opener and his national team senior had done to him back then. Rahul and Jaiswal shared an Indian record opening stand of 201 in the second innings in Perth where Jaiswal scored a classy century but Rahul played his part with a very useful 77. "I saw a bit of myself in him how I was 10 years ago, opening the batting for the first time, lots of doubts, lot of nerves and you keep doubting

your own game and a lot that happens in your head, and so all you can do is try and slow things down, try and take a few deep breaths," Rahul replied when asked about his conversations with Indian cricket's next 'pin-up' boy. "That's what was passed on to me by my fellow opening partner (M Vijay), I just passed that on to him," Rahul remembered his Test hundred in Sydney, which was his second game of his career. Having said that, Rahul doesn't deny that self doubts could creep in time and again but he has tried to preach Jaiswal what he practices. "I am not saying I don't have all these thoughts, I do. But having been there, I know what I need to do to get past those doubts and thoughts you have in your head. And so whatever I told Jaiswal was what I have myself practiced," he said. Rahul felt that once he had played around 40 balls, Jaiswal seemed more and more confident about his game. "Once he got past those first 30-40 balls, he started feeling more confident, he was seeing the ball really well and batted beautifully," he said.

## Ollie Pope stays as stand-in wicketkeeper for England in second Test against New Zealand

AP ■ WELLINGTON

England has kept Ollie Pope as its stand-in wicketkeeper for the second Test against New Zealand starting Thursday. After Jordan Cox broke his thumb ahead of the series opener in Christchurch last week, Ollie Robinson was called up as wicketkeeping cover and was in contention to make his maiden international appearance in the second Test at Wellington's Basin Reserve. However, England kept faith with the same team that won by eight wickets on the fourth afternoon of the first test at



Hagley Oval, meaning Pope retained the gloves and Jacob Bethell stayed at No. 3. Pope was solid behind the

stumps and hit 77 after moving down to No. 6 in the batting order. Bethell was also impressive on his debut,

hitting 50 not out in the second innings. "They always say when you don't notice a keeper, he's done a good job and Ollie certainly did that," England fast bowler Chris Woakes said. "To step up at short notice like that and do the job he did was fantastic. "For him to score runs just shows his character, putting his hand up for the team without any fuss and cracking on." England: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Jacob Bethell, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ollie Pope, Ben Stokes (c), Chris Woakes, Gus Atkinson, Brydon Carse and Shoaib Bashir.

## Spin expected to play a role in the second Test: Adelaide Oval's head curator

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Spin is expected to play a role in the second Test between India and Australia, but the Adelaide Oval's head curator Damian Hough has also promised a 6mm grass cover to ensure that the ball doesn't wear out early during the day-night game here. Hough said the grass will assist the pacers early on with the spinners coming into play as the match progresses. "History suggests that it is hard to bat under lights in Adelaide. The pitch will have 6mm of grass. We're trying to allow all facets of the game to shine at some stage during the game," Hough told media ahead of the second Test starting Friday. "What we're trying to do is have a coarse mat grass -- thatchy type of grass that's dry and hard. And the reason

we do that is we're trying to get as much pace and bounce out of the pitch as what we can get for us, for Adelaide, which is a lower clay content," he added. The opening Perth Test, which India won by a record 295 runs, lasted four days with batting becoming easier as the game moved ahead. Hough has similar plans for the pink-ball game. "Spin normally plays a role so it can get a good bite or purchase out of that grass and it normally gets good bounce. So that's a game plan. Hopefully, as the ball gets older, the batters can cash in and if there's a partnership out there, they cash in and go from there." While spinners didn't have much to do in the Perth Test, Hough said the tweekers will have more assistance at the Adelaide Oval.



"Spin always plays a role in Adelaide. You need to pick a front-line spinner. There should never be a question of 'do we, don't we?' It should always be 'do,'" Hough said highlighting the role of spinners in Adelaide. "From my side, always pick a spinner. The idea of leaving that extra bit of grass and that

matty grass is for the spinner to be able to get purchase out of that mat and get it to bite, grip, and bounce," he added. "We want spin to play a role at Adelaide. We might not be able to get as much as other places around the world, but spin traditionally plays a role." He reiterated that the aim is

to have a good, balanced contest. "Normally the quicks should be able to get some assistance throughout the game. And we know the quicks can. Spin can come into it in that night session. Under lights, if they can get hold of a new ball in that night session, normally is quite entertaining. "We're trying to get that balance right...We're trying really hard to ensure that the balance between bat and ball is there and we can allow the batters to shine strategically throughout the course of the game." Potential thunderstorms are forecast for the opening day of the match, which is unusual for Adelaide at this time of the year. "I am not sure exactly on the timing of those storms coming through, but we're expecting to pull covers a bit

on Friday. Hopefully it clears out on Saturday morning ... Then it should be good for the remainder of the Test." Hough said weather has a huge role to play in the the movement of the pink ball. "The ball hooping around has got nothing to do with the pitch. Under right conditions, right weather, the ball will move." It will be India's first pink-ball Test in Australia since they were infamously bundled out for 36 at the same venue back in 2020 but Hough maintained there were no demons in the pitch even back then. "On the morning of day three, no one would have expected that Test match to finish in three days. That was just really good bowling from Australia...I don't think the pitch played a part in that," he said.

## Rishabh Pant has taken to Test cricket like a duck to water, says Rahul Dravid

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The void left by MS Dhoni's retirement in Indian cricket lineup was quickly filled by Rishabh Pant, who embraced Test cricket like a "duck to water", feels former head coach Rahul Dravid. The flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter, who returned after surviving a horrific car crash in December 2022, scored a match-winning 89 in the fourth Test at the Gabba and contributed 274 runs throughout the series, playing a key role in India's historic 2-1 triumph in the 2020-21 tour. "It's hard to imagine that, after Dhoni left, you felt there might be some time for someone to come in and replace him," Dravid told Star Sports. "I'm not saying he's replaced him, but certainly in Test cricket, his performances have been absolutely sensational, an incredible performance. "Watching Rishabh there and chasing to get 89 to win that Test match at the Gabba, with

everything on the line and such a depleted side, to put in that kind of performance under that kind of pressure -- truly sensational... What a special cricketer he's been. He's just taken to Test cricket like a duck to water. It's just phenomenal." Pant's heroics that included two fifties at 68.50 in five innings helped India become the first Asian side to win successive Test series wins Down Under. In the ongoing five-Test series, the 27-year-old scored a vital 37 off 78 balls in the first innings of the Perth Test, including a remarkable six that lifted India's spirits, helping them recover from 59/5 to 150 all out. The Jasprit Bumrah-led team then bowled out Australia for 104 and won the match by 295 runs to take a 1-0 lead going into the Adelaide Test beginning on Friday. While India have dominated Australia lately, Dravid's knock of 233 during the Adelaide Test in 2003 still remains a fan-favourite. Nostalgia and regrets Reflecting on his knock, Dravid



admitted that he still regrets not winning the series. "I'm grateful for it, but I wouldn't

have voted for myself, put it that way. Probably, I've got a lot of recency bias as well," he

continued. "I think the way India has performed in Australia over the

last two series in particular -- winning series there -- that counts for a lot. "However great my performances or India's performances were, we couldn't actually win that series. We came close, but we couldn't get the wickets on the final day in Sydney that we needed. "The last two teams that have gone to Australia have done that, and that's a fantastic achievement -- a terrific achievement -- and there have been some absolutely sensational performances right through those." Dravid was joined by VVS Laxman when India were reeling at 85/4, especially after the hosts had posted a mammoth 556 in just a day and a half. Ganguly run-out: My mistake The 51-year-old reflected on the incident where he had accidentally run out his captain Sourav Ganguly and admitted it was his "mistake". "I was thinking, 'I've got the captain run out. I better do something meaningful.' It was totally my mistake getting Sourav (Ganguly) run out. I will own up

to that one -- it was my mistake. "But, I think you're just trying to bat, you're just trying to build a partnership, you're just trying to get to the target. "The thing with Laxman and me is that we had batted together a couple of really big partnerships before that. We did it once in Kolkata in 2001 and even in a domestic game when we first played South Zone against West Zone. "So, we had kind of batted a lot together and built this partnership. Not that we were thinking about that when we got out there, but I think the idea was really just to bat and try and build partnerships, stitch something together." "It's always nice batting with Laxman as well... Because he's just a beautiful player to watch and such a lovely player. "He really attacked back, which, in some ways, complemented me quite well in how we went about our innings," he recalled as Indian won the Adelaide Test by four wickets but the series ended in a 1-1 draw.



WEDDING ALERT!

Bellamkonda Suresh's elder son to tie knot soon

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Producer Bellamkonda Suresh has completed 25 years in the Telugu Film Industry. He made his debut with the film *Sambayya* that stars late Srihari as the lead. The film was released in 1999. Today, Bellamkonda is celebrating his 57th birthday. "It's been a wonderful journey for me. I've made about 38 films as a producer and my last film, *Ganga* in 2015," recalls Bellamkonda. However, the hiatus? Reason he says it was his sons. "My elder son Sai Sreenivas is well settled and busy with few projects and my younger son Ganesh is also settling now. I am planning to produce a film next April," said Suresh. The producer said though he didn't produce any film, he is in the industry and working. "I executed the Hindi film *Chatrapathi* in which my son Sreenivas made his debut in Hindi," said the producer. The film, however, didn't do well. "Some of my friends told me that May 12 was the best date, so we released it on that date. It collected 98 lakhs gross on the first day and we expected a good collection on the second day. But one week before this film *The Kerala Story* was released our film didn't do well initially, but picked up in the second week remarkably. So, our film didn't collect much on the second day as it collected Rs 30 lakhs. We made a mistake somewhere,



so it didn't go well," said the producer. Talking about his journey of 25 years, the producer was a bit sad that his first film's lead actor is no more. "My first film was with Srihari and he is no more now. He passed away at a young age and he was a very good friend of mine. The director of the film KS Nageswara Rao is also no more, so I always feel bad whenever I think of my debut film," said the producer. The producer aid that he is now in a good position because of the Telugu film industry. He is planning to release a film every three months. The producer said in these years he has seen lows and highs. "There is no regret for anything. I balanced both highs and lows in the same way and that's why I can continue till now. In 2015 once I looked at my balance sheet, I got Rs 38 crore loss and I settled each and everyone selling my properties. Those properties are now Rs 1,000 worth and I never regret it. But in these nine years, I earned a lot of money and now I am ready to produce films," said Bellamkonda. Bellamkonda also introduced VV Vinayak as director with the film *Aadi*. Vinayak became one of the top directors of Telugu Cinema. "I am in touch with him regularly and also many others in the industry," said Suresh. He added that before he turned as producer, he worked as Manager for Mohan Babu's film. "Mohan Babu garu is my Godfather, he actually offered me as manager for his film," he said.

Bellamkonda did few remakes as producer in his career like *Naa Autograph*, *Sambo Siva Sambo*, *Lakshmi Narasimha* and *Bodyguard*. "Though there is an OTT platform where you can see films in all languages, I still feel that we can do remakes. I bought the rights for a film to remake in Telugu and I will announce the details soon," said. He added that if the film has good entertainment and emotions, it is definitely successful whether it's a remake or a straight film. When asked at present which director he wanted to work with? "Definitely, Puri Jagannadh. He is a director who can project the lead actor in a different way and he also completes the film in 90 days. If you ask, I want to work with Puri Jagannadh," said Bellamkonda. For another question he said that his elder son is getting married soon. "It's almost confirmed and I will announce the details in a few days," he said.

PRODUCER BELLAMKONDA SURESH, WHO IS CURRENTLY CELEBRATING HIS 25 YEARS IN THE INDUSTRY AS A PRODUCER, SPEAKS OF HIS HIATUS, HIS SON'S DEBUT FILM *CHATRAPATHI* BEING A FLOP AND MORE



CHAY AND SOBHITA TIE KNOT WITH TRADITIONAL BLISS

Naga Chaitanya and Sobhita Dhulipala tied the knot in an intimate ceremony on Wednesday, surrounded by close family and friends. The wedding, held at Annapurna Studios in Hyderabad, was a beautiful blend of traditional and modern elements. The 8-hour-long wedding ceremony was rooted in age-old customs, showcasing the couple's commitment to their cultural heritage. Guests praised the couple's simplicity and reverence for their roots, amidst the grandeur of the celebrations. As of 8:55 pm, the couple's wedding photos were out on social media. While, Sobhita was seen wearing a traditional golden saree, Chaitanya, on the other hand, wore a traditional pancha, which was paired with a kurta. Meanwhile, according to an independent source, "As per traditional customs, the first thing a couple is expected to do after the wedding is visit a temple to express their gratitude for the wonderful journey ahead. Sobhita and Naga Chaitanya will be following this ritual and are planning to visit either the Tirupati Balaji Temple or the Srisailem Temple." The guest list includes prominent names such as Allu Arjun With family, Prabhas, SS Rajamouli, Chiranjeevi, PV Sindhu, Nayanthara, the entire Akkineni and Daggubati families, NTR, as well as power couples Ram Charan and Upasana Konidela and Mahesh Babu and Namrata Shirodkar.

How one 'last try' led to *Kissik* magic

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Subhashini, the voice behind the sensational *Kissik* from *Pushpa 2*, has become the talk of the town. In an exclusive chat, the rising star shared insights into her journey and the energy-packed process of creating this chart-topping hit. Her journey into the world of music began as a natural expression of her love for singing, a talent she nurtured from her childhood. Without formal training, she found her voice in school competitions, where the seeds of her musical passion were sown. The timbre of her voice and the vocal ranges of English tracks resonated with her far more than Tamil or regional music, which felt distant in tone and pitch. As she explored this new world of sound, her creative instincts flourished. Writing poetry had always been a part of her life, an instinctive way of capturing her thoughts. "I wouldn't call myself a voracious writer, but I loved expressing myself through words whenever inspiration struck," she admits. From self-discovery to collaboration, has shaped her identity as an artist, setting the stage for her breakout with *Kissik*, the trending track from *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. Her debut single, *Katadi*, marked the first milestone in her musical career, a song that started as a casual experiment but turned into something unexpectedly significant. "It wasn't planned as a grand release or anything," she shares. "We initially created it for Instagram, but once we realised how much we loved it, we decided to develop a full version." When asked about her foray into playback singing, she revealed that it wasn't a career she had envisioned. "Playback singing just happened," she admits. During her school days, even as she practiced diligently, she never saw herself entering the playback world. "The voices I heard on screen felt unattainable—too high-pitched and out of my range. It was always easier for me to replicate male voices rather than female ones," she explains.

Her journey to *Pushpa 2*'s much-anticipated track *Kissik* began serendipitously. Renowned composer Devi Sri Prasad (DSP) was on the hunt for a fresh voice, something unique and unexplored. "He and his team were listening to a variety of songs late one night and my track *Golden Sparrow* was among them. He found my voice interesting and that's how it all started. At the time, I had no idea it was for *Pushpa 2*. It wasn't until I got the event invitation that his manager casually mentioned, 'Oh, this is for *Pushpa 2*.' I was stunned." Working with DSP proved to be an unforgettable experience. "He's the most energetic person I've met in the industry," she shares, her admiration clear. "Even when the track is recorded, he's dancing and completely immersed in the music. His energy is contagious." She recalls how his warmth and approachability turned the studio into a second home. "I was nervous on my first day, but he's built an environment that feels like a family. It's a space where creativity flows naturally, without any intimidation." When it came to delivering the electrifying vocals for *Kissik*, she admits it was a challenge to rise to the song's intense energy. "It took me an entire day to crack it," she recalls. "I was in the studio from morning and while they recorded and tested, doubts started creeping in, both for me and maybe for them too. By night, we were all exhausted and ready to give up, but then someone suggested, 'Let's try one last time.' That's when something clicked." She describes the moment as almost magical, a sudden surge of energy unlocking the power needed for the track. "I'm just grateful that out of nowhere, the energy poured out of me and we finally got what we wanted." For her, the transition from creating independent music to playback singing came with its own set of adjustments. "When I'm making independent music, I'm in complete control. I know exactly what I want. But in playback, especially when there's no reference vocal, it's about cracking what others envision. That takes time for me," she explains. The high-energy vibe of *Kissik* also meant stepping into the shadow of *Oo Antava*. *Oo Antava*, a massive success from *Pushpa*. Did the weight of expectations affect her? Surprisingly, it didn't. "I didn't even know I had to match *Oo Antava*'s energy," she laughs. "Being in the dark about the song's context worked in my favour. I wasn't overwhelmed by the pressure and everything fell into place naturally. But I definitely think I would have been intimidated had I known I had to match that song's energy," she confesses.



ADDING TO THE CHART-BUSTER LIST OF THE *PUSHPA* FRANCHISE, *KISSIK* HAS BEEN CREATING ITS OWN NOISE, WITH THE VOCALS BY SUBLASHINI. IN AN EXCLUSIVE CHAT WITH *THE PIONEER*, SHE SPEAKS OF HER INCLINATION TOWARDS MUSIC, SINGING THE TRACK AND MORE

With *Kissik*, she's proven that sometimes, trusting the process and the magic of one last take, can lead to unforgettable results. She describes the recording process of *Kissik* as a transformative and theatrical experience, one that pushed her out of her comfort zone. "It felt like I was acting, not just singing. I had to bring out a whole sensual vibe that I had never explored before," she shares. "To deliver that energy vocally, I had to embody it physically, whether through gestures, expressions, or even imagined movements. It wasn't just about hitting the right notes; it was about performing with my whole being." This new approach came with its challenges. "The first day was tough," she admits. "It took time to soak in the energy required and match the sensual tone they wanted. And with the Telugu version, there were multiple lyric iterations, so I became deeply familiar with the song, almost memorizing each version by heart. It felt more natural with time, but it was definitely a learning curve." The high-energy track marks a milestone in her career, as *Kissik* is her first major Telugu playback release, and also her first song in Hindi. "The response has been incredible. People from different parts of India have reached out to say they loved it, even if they didn't understand the lyrics," she says. "It's amazing to connect with listeners in their own languages and resonate with such a wide audience." As for the future, she is keeping her creative options open. "I don't like boxing myself into one genre. I write what I feel, and the music takes its shape from there. Working in multiple languages this time was such a rewarding experience that I'd love to continue experimenting with different styles and learning new languages," she says. "I want to remain fluid and explore as much as I possibly can." When asked about her dream collaborations, Her excitement is contagious "At this point, the list is endless," she laughs. "Playback singing wasn't something I even considered possible, and now that it's happening, the doors feel wide open. I'd love to work with so many music directors, and even contribute as a lyricist, if the opportunity arises. I write my own lyrics in Tamil and English, so that's something I'd like to explore further." "AR Rahman definitely" she says, one name stands out in her wishlist. Anirudh Ravichander, she says with enthusiasm. "Even if it's far-fetched, I'd be thrilled to work with him someday. Fingers crossed, it could happen when I'm 60 and he's 70! Whenever it happens, I'll be ready and happy."

Balakrishna completes *Daaku Maharaj* shoot

Actor-turned-politician Nandamuri Balakrishna is busy with politics and also as an actor. The actor is seeing his best phase as an actor with successful films. He is now working with Bobby Kolli for the film *Daaku Maharaj* which the teaser released recently. Sithara Entertainments is producing this film and this is one of the high budget films in Balakrishna's career. Director Bobby Kolli, known for his powerful and stylish presentation of his leading actors, is making this movie with a huge ambition on a massive scale. With stunning visuals, the director has promised an unique theatrical experience for everyone. He stated that the movie and the character will be most violent and he kept his promise with high voltage sequences.

Now, the makers have revealed that the movie shoot is wrapped and they are going to release the movie on schedule. S Thaman is scoring music for the film. *Daaku Maharaj* is set to hit the screens for Sankranti 2025, worldwide in a grand manner.



SEQUEL TO ADITYA 369

Meanwhile, in an exciting development, Balakrishna announced a sequel to *Aditya 369* during the sixth episode of *Unstoppable With NBK* (Season 4), set to air on December 6, 2024. The sequel, titled *Aditya 999 Max*, is officially in the works,

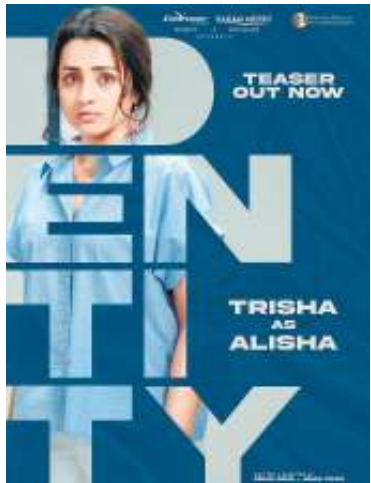
sparking excitement among fans eager for the next chapter in this beloved time-travel saga.

Balakrishna's son, Nandamuri Mokshagna, will take the lead role in this sequel. Balakrishna is closely involved in the script, ensuring that the sequel preserves

the legacy of the original while incorporating modern cinematic elements. In this episode the actor is seen in *Aditya 369* avatar, revealing more details about the sequel and offering an exclusive glimpse into the making of *Aditya 999 Max*.

IDENTITY DROPS TEASER!

The much-awaited official teaser for *Identity* has just dropped, offering a sneak peek into an intriguing and suspense-filled narrative. Starring Tovino Thomas and Trisha Krishnan, this gripping thriller directed by Akhil Paul is set to keep viewers on the edge of their seats. Produced by Raju Malliath, Dr. Roy CJ and Gokula Gopalan, *Identity* promises an exciting cinematic journey, with a plot that is sure to captivate audiences.



Gunasekhar and Bhumika Chawla reunite after 20 years

Director Gunasekhar, renowned for his unique storytelling and hit films, is currently busy with a new youthful social drama titled *Euphoria*. The film is an edgy and fast-paced take on contemporary evils and it has raised curiosity ever since it was announced. The recently released glimpse was a stunner, taking expectations to the next level. The film is currently under production and began the second schedule with euphoric energy. Revealing a special update, the makers unveiled a short video from the sets.



In the video, the ever-gorgeous actress Bhumika is seen entering the sets, doing her makeup, and joining the shoot. Her presence makes the set come alive. Bhumika and Gunasekhar previously collaborated for the massive blockbuster *Okkadu*. Now, this combination has reunited after 20 years for *Euphoria*. Gunasekhar has written a powerful and important character for Bhumika in the film. *Euphoria* will be produced by Neelima Guna with Kaala Bhairava scoring the music.