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GRAY' ADITI GOVITRIKAR'S HUN FOR COMPLEXITY IN HER ROLES



jewellery. No one in the world changes their mother's representation, but the Congress Government is attempting to distort the essence of Telangana Thalli

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-SPORTS

He has extensive experience in finance and taxation at the state as well as the central government levels. As a part of his present assignment, he plays an instrumental role in tax policy formulation in respect of direct and indirect taxes.

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expected to emerge during the investigation.

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He recalled that former chief minister NT Rama Rao had introduced the Rs 2 per kg rice scheme for the poor, a programme extended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Ann Yojana (PM-GKAY) to provide free rice to the needy.

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Last month, the SEC and the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York charged Adani with alleged involvement in a "massive bribery scheme" involving millions of dollars that were paid to officials of an Indian state. The Adani group dismissed the allegations as baseless.

Adani and seven others, alleging conspiracies to commit securities fraud and wire fraud, along with substantive securities fraud.

The SEC has also filed a civil case

An alternative approach to improve the finances of DISCOMs

The financial challenges facing India's electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs) have become a persistent issue. Despite years of reforms, particularly after the implementation of the Electricity Act of 2003, the distribution segment remains financially fragile, even though generation and transmission continue to be relatively profitable. This imbalance highlights the need for innovative solutions to address the deep-rooted problems of DISCOMs.

THE PRIVATISATION DEBATE
The idea of privatising DISCOMs has often been proposed as a panacea for their financial woes. While examples from Delhi, parts of Uttar

Pradesh and Odisha show that privatisation can lead to better operational efficiency and financial health, the picture is far from uniform. States like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and some regions of Maharashtra have struggled to replicate these successes due to systemic inefficiencies, political resistance and employee concerns over job security. This polarised experience suggests that privatisation, while beneficial in some contexts, cannot be a universal solution.

UNDERSTANDING THE CORE ISSUES
DISCOMs face several entrenched challenges. High power procurement costs,

DISCOMs face several entrenched challenges. High power procurement costs, stemming from long-term contracts and outdated tariff regulations, are a significant burden. The National Tariff Policy's 15% Return on Equity (ROE) is increasingly seen as misaligned with current economic realities, particularly as banking interest rates have fallen and the profit margins of power generators have risen.

stemming from long-term contracts and outdated tariff regulations, are a significant burden. The National Tariff Policy's 15% Return on Equity (ROE) is increasingly seen as misaligned with current economic realities, particularly as banking interest rates have fallen and the profit margins of power generators have risen. The same is the case with transmission charges as transmission charges are now exorbitant and even free renewable transmission charges are loaded on to the remaining consumers forcing them to

bear it. Technical and commercial inefficiencies also add to the problem. High Aggregate Technical and Commercial (AT&C) losses, often above permissible thresholds, exacerbate financial deficits. Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPOs), although environmentally crucial, place additional financial strain on DISCOMs without adequate compensation mechanisms. Tariff structures further complicate matters. Frequent hikes, implemented to cover losses, have led to public dissatisfaction while doing little to



close revenue gaps. Cross-subsidisation, where industrial and commercial users are charged significantly higher rates to offset lower tariffs for domestic and agricultural consumers, leads to revenue leakages and inefficiencies.

REIMAGINING SOLUTIONS
A more balanced approach is needed to resolve these issues. First, revisiting ROE

and tariff structures could help ensure fairer financial responsibility among stakeholders. Modernising infrastructure through smart meters and advanced grid technologies could reduce AT & C losses, while gradually phasing out cross-subsidisation and replacing it with direct benefit transfers for targeted consumers could improve cost recovery. Privatisation, where pursued, must include stringent safeguards to protect employees, ensure regulatory oversight and incentivise performance. Community engagement is equally important to build trust and ensure the smooth implementation of reforms.

THE DYNAMICS OF FREE AND SUBSIDISED POWER
The political and economic implications of providing free or subsidised electricity add a layer of complexity. On the one hand, these schemes often come with government

assurances of reimbursement to DISCOMs, offering a degree of revenue security. For many DISCOMs, this arrangement simplifies the revenue cycle and minimises the risk of default by individual consumers. However, delays in state payments frequently force DISCOMs to borrow at high interest rates, compounding their financial problems. Moreover, free power distorts demand patterns, particularly in agriculture, where it encourages wasteful energy use and over-extraction of groundwater. It also reduces cross-subsidisation revenue from profitable industrial and commercial segments, weakening the financial base of DISCOMs.

A BALANCED WAY FORWARD
The way forward lies in prioritising long-term solutions over temporary fixes. While free or subsidised power

schemes may ease immediate financial challenges for DISCOMs, they cannot be a substitute for structural reforms in pricing, operations and governance. A state-specific approach that combines regulatory innovation, operational efficiency and stakeholder collaboration is essential to ensure the sustainable delivery of reliable and affordable electricity. Balancing social welfare with financial sustainability is no easy task. However, with the right mix of policies and strategies, it is possible to stabilise the financial health of DISCOMs without compromising on the accessibility and affordability of power for consumers. As India moves towards a more energy-secure future, these reforms will be pivotal in transforming the power distribution landscape.

(D. Radhakrishna former Chairman of TERC)

Jagan a 'great actor', says Minister Anagani

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Minister Anagani Sathya Prasad launched a scathing attack on YSRCP chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, calling him a 'great actor' and accusing him of breaking promises while presenting himself as a 'protector of the people.' The Minister questioned, "Who can maintain such a facade other than you, Jagan?" Anagani alleged that Jagan's tenure has been marked by violence, murders, and misuse of legal provisions, followed by what he termed "crocodile tears" as things spiral out of control. Criticising Jagan's comments on education reforms, the Minister said, "While Chandrababu Naidu is striving to transform the state into a knowledge hub, you dismiss his efforts as drama. The people are rejecting you for such atti-



tudes." He further accused the YSRCP government of burdening students and teachers, leading to a decline in the quality of education. "Your incompetence has caused a sharp drop in 10th-grade pass rates," he remarked. Highlighting the efforts of Nara Lokesh, Anagani stated, "Our young leader is working

hard to repair the broken education system. Unable to digest his progress, you are resorting to baseless allegations." The Minister urged Jagan to focus on public welfare instead of theatrics, warning, "If you continue on this path, you risk becoming an even bigger failure."

CM compliments TTD on success of Tiruchanoor Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on Monday lauded the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) for successfully organising the annual 'Karthika Brahmotsavams' at Tiruchanoor with grand arrangements for the large influx of devotees.

Taking to the social media platform X, the Chief Minister expressed his delight, stating, "Truly delighted to witness the divine grandeur of this year's annual 'Karthika Brahmotsavam' of Sri Padmavathi Ammavaru at Tiruchanoor. This sacred festival symbolises the boundless blessings of the Goddess, filling our hearts with spiritual fervour and celebrating our rich traditions. I commend @TTDevasthanams for their meticulous arrangements, which enabled devotees to fully immerse themselves in the divine grace and blessings of the Goddess."

This year's Brahmotsavam began on 28 November and



concluded on 6 December, with tens of thousands of devotees participating in the 'Panchami Theertha Snanam' at the holy Padma Pushkarini.

Under the guidance of TTD Chairman B.R. Naidu and Executive Officer Syamala Rao, elaborate arrangements were made, including 'Annaprasadam', drinking water, sanitation, queue management, and traffic regulation. These measures were executed in coordination with the district administration and police, ensuring the festival was on par with the annual 'Srivari Brahmotsavam' at Tirumala and winning the hearts of devotees.

House panel inspects Visakha Dairy

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/ VISAKHAPATNAM

A House Committee constituted by the Assembly to investigate alleged irregularities at Visakha Dairy conducted an inspection of the facility on Monday. The committee, headed by MLA Jyothula Nehru, visited the dairy as part of their ongoing inquiry. Speaking after the inspection, Nehru stated that the Speaker had directed the committee to conduct the investigation. While some issues were clarified during the visit, new concerns emerged, prompting the need for expert consultation. He also stressed the importance of auditing the dairy's operations.

The committee, formed by Assembly Speaker Ch. Ayyannapratrudu is chaired by Nehru and includes MLAs Bonda Umamaheswara Rao, Velagapudi Ramakrishna Babu, Palla Srinivas Rao, Gautu Shireesh, RVSKK Rangarao, and Datla



Subbaraju. Nehru noted that during the inspection, the dairy's Chairman was absent, and only the Managing Director interacted with the committee.

Highlighting the dairy's operations across four districts, Nehru stated that the committee would gather public feedback from these regions. He assured that measures would be taken to protect the interests of dairy farmers and prevent losses. The findings of the inquiry would be

submitted to the Assembly. MLA Palla Srinivas Rao, speaking to the media, confirmed that the House Committee was constituted based on the Speaker's orders to address various allegations and concerns regarding the dairy's functioning. He mentioned that dairy farmers had raised complaints about reduced payments, which the management denied. Rao added that the committee would revisit the dairy for further investigation.

Teenage girl burnt...

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In the early hours of Monday, Raghavendra reportedly went to her house, knocked on the door, and forced his way inside when she opened it. He then allegedly poured petrol on her and set her on fire. Tragically, Lahari succumbed to the flames almost instantly. During the incident, Raghavendra also sustained severe burn injuries.

Alerted by the commotion, neighbours rushed to the scene, restrained the accused, and handed him over to the police. He was later shifted to the Government General Hospital (GGH) in Kurnool for treatment. The girl's parents, grieving inconsolably at the hospital, alleged that they had previously warned the accused's family about his harassment, but no action was taken. The incident has sent shockwaves through Nandikotkur town.

Home Minister V Anitha spoke to Nandyal district SP Adhiraj Singh Rana regarding the case and instructed the formation of special teams to investigate the incident. She condemned the crime.

PM POSHAN SCHEME

Rs 1.63 cr allocated for AP in 5 years

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Prime Minister's Poshan Shakti Nirman Scheme (PM Poshan) has allocated Rs 1.63 crore to Andhra Pradesh over the past five years, according to Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State for Education. Addressing the Lok Sabha on Monday, Chaudhary shared details of the funds disbursed under the scheme and its impact on schools in the state.

The annual allocations included Rs 28,563.77 lakh in 2019-20, Rs 37,510.17 lakh in 2020-21, Rs 35,731.48 lakh in 2021-22, Rs 36,531.92 lakh in 2022-23, and Rs 25,342.88 lakh in 2023-24. The information was provided in

response to questions raised by MPs Kesineni Sivanath, B.K. Parthasarathi, and Daggumalla Prasadrao.

The scheme, which ensures mid-day meals for students from Classes 1 to 8 and pre-primary students in government and government-affiliated schools, registered 2,24,751 schools in Andhra Pradesh over the last five years. The number of schools fluctuated annually, with 45,484 schools registered in 2019-20, gradually decreasing to 44,150 schools in 2023-24. Notably, in Hindupur constituency, the number of registered schools declined from 2,116 in 2019-20 to 2,098 in 2023-24, while Chittoor constituency saw an increase

from 2,501 to 2,514 during the same period.

The scheme has benefitted 1.55 crore students in Andhra Pradesh since its inception, with 520 social audits conducted during the 2023-24 academic year. Additionally, 81,232 women have been engaged in meal preparation and related support roles.

Jayant Chaudhary emphasised that the PM Poshan scheme, jointly implemented by the central and state governments, plays a vital role in ensuring nutritious meals for students, enhancing attendance, and improving the effectiveness of mid-day meal programmes in the state.

982 MPHAs sacked...

Continued from Page 1

Special Chief Secretary for Health, Medical & Family Welfare MT Krishna Babu addressed the media on Monday, explaining that the legal dispute stemmed from a 2002 recruitment process for 2,324 MPFA (Male) positions in the undivided state of Andhra Pradesh. The controversy began when the initial notification set the qualification requirements as an SSC (Secondary School Certificate) and one year of MPFA training. However, due to interim court orders, recruitment was allowed based on Intermediate qualifications, leading to multiple legal challenges over the years.

In 2011, the Supreme Court ruled that SSC was the mandatory qualification, resulting in the termination of 1,200 MPHAs who had been recruited based on Intermediate qualifications. Despite this ruling, the affected candidates were reappointed in 2013 under Government Order (GO) Rt No 1207, which sparked further litigation.

On November 29, 2024, the High Court delivered its final verdict, declaring the reappointments under GO 1207 as 'backdoor entries' and invalidating the recruitment of an additional 216 MPHAs. Consequently, 766 MPHAs recruited under GO 1207 and 216 others appointed through interim court orders were terminated.

Krishna Babu emphasised that the judgment marked the conclusion of a protracted legal battle involving 299 writ petitions and contempt cases. He highlighted the significant administrative resources spent on addressing the issue, exacerbated by conflicting court orders over the years.

While acknowledging the long tenure of the terminated employees, the High Court upheld the legal principle of adhering to established recruitment norms. The verdict marks the decisive end of one of the most complex and prolonged recruitment disputes in Andhra Pradesh's history. Krishna Babu further pointed out that a similar issue has not arisen in Telangana.

AP Discoms to buy 4,000...

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Officials from the AP Energy Department were unavailable for comment.

Earlier, the YSR Congress Party had refuted the bribery allegations, stating that the agreement was between the State government, the Discoms, and SECI, a central government organisation, with no third-party involvement.

Former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy defended the SECI agreement, claiming it would save the State over Rs 1 lakh crore in the next 25 years.

On November 22, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu informed the State Assembly that the US had "chargesheeted" officials in connection with the alleged bribery scam involving the previous regime and the Adani Group. He assured the Assembly that the government would act on these irregularities after studying them.

As per the terms of the PSA, 3,000 MW of power is to be supplied from October this year in the first phase, another 3,000 MW

from October 2025 in the second phase, and a final 1,000 MW from October 2026 in the third phase, totalling 17,000 MU. However, due to a delay in completing transmission elements by the Central Transmission Utility of India Limited, SECI has informed that the supply of 1,000 MW will begin from January 15, 2025, with 3,000 MW to be supplied in 2025-26 and the remaining 3,000 MW in 2026-27, as per the Discoms' filings.

To provide free power to the farming community on a sustained basis and reduce the power procurement cost and subsidy burden on the State government, the three AP Discoms entered into the agreement with SECI on December 1, 2021, to procure 7,000 MW in three tranches at Rs 2.49 per unit, a deal approved by the APERC.

The cost of procurement under this PSA will be borne by the State government, which is also a signatory to the agreement.

The solar power developers under this PSA are setting up plants in Rajasthan and Gujarat, the filings added.

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A delegation of YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leaders, including MPs Gurumurthy, Golla Babu Rao, Pili Subhash Chandra Bose, and former MPs Margani Bharat and Gorantla Madhav, met the National SC Commission (NSCC) S Chairman, Kishor Makwana, and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairperson, Vijayabharathi Sayanji, to complain about the alleged inhumane treatment of Dalit youth Puli Sagar by the Rajamahendravaram police.

Accompanied by Puli Sagar, the delegation shared his account of the incident. Sagar revealed that he was summoned to the Prakash Nagar Police



Station for a social media post questioning TDP MLA Adireddy Srinivas's flood relief claims.

He alleged that at the station, he was verbally abused, stripped, and locked in a cell under the supervision of

women constables. Inspector S.K. Baji allegedly threatened to kill him if necessary.

Addressing the media after the meetings, the YSRCP leaders condemned the actions of the police, highlighting procedural lapses, including the failure to issue a mandatory notice under Section 41 of the CrPc.


They asserted that such violations of constitutional rights, including the right to life and freedom of expression, are unacceptable in a democratic society.

The delegation urged the Commissions to take immediate action against the officers involved and ensure justice for Puli Sagar, calling the incident a blot on a civilised society.

Borra elected EG-WG...

Continued from Page 1

Other candidates included Gandham Narayan Rao with 5,259 votes, Deepak Pulugu with 102 votes, Naman Venkata Lakshmi (Vila Lakshmi) with 81 votes, and Dr Nageshwar Rao Kaval with 73 votes. Based on the valid votes, the Returning Officer and District Collector declared Gopi Murthy as the winner and issued the election certificate with the approval of the Election Commission. In his address to the media, Gopi Murthy thanked the teachers for their trust and support, emphasising the pivotal role of education in national progress. He assured that he would work to resolve issues faced by teachers and the education sector in the Legislative Council.



GOVERNMENT OF ANDHRA PRADESH
DEPARTMENT OF PRISONS
ABRIDGED TENDER NOTICE

Unit officers of concerned jails of (8) districts from Srikakulam to Rajamahendravaram invite sealed tenders for supply of food items, various goods and raw material to jails and industrial units in jails from 1-4-2025 to 31-3-2026 till 1.00 p.m. on the dates specified below.

Name of the organization and the last date for submission of tenders:
1. The Superintendent, Central Prison, Rajamahendravaram and The Superintendent, Special Prison for Women at Rajamahendravaram: 16-12-2024.
2. The Superintendent, Central Prison, Visakhapatnam, Visakhapatnam district: 17-12-2024. 3. The District Sub-Jail Officer, East Godavari District: 19-12-2024. 4. The Superintendent, District Jail, Srikakulam district: 18-12-2024. 5. District Sub-Jail Officer, Visakhapatnam, Visakhapatnam district: 20-12-2024. 6. District Sub-Jail Officer, Vizianagaram, Vizianagaram district: 19-12-2024 and 7. District Sub-Jail Officer, Srikakulam district: 20-12-2024.

Tender forms and other information can be had from the officials concerned.
5d-Deputy Inspector General of Prisons, Coastal Andhra Region, Rajamahendravaram

R.O.No: 14796/CL/ENT/1/2021-22, Dt: 08.12.2024

Spl team makes headway in missing cases in AP

89 women and children were traced within 30 days

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The NTR District Police Commissionerate has made remarkable progress in addressing missing women and child cases, tracing 89 individuals within 30 days of forming a special team to investigate the missing cases. The team, created on November 10 by Commissioner SV Rajasekhara

Babu after reviewing pending cases, focused on resolving 121 missing person cases reported across the district, including 114 women and seven girls.

Under the supervision of Deputy Police Commissioner (DCP) Gowthamishali, the team used technology, analysed evidence, reviewed CCTV footage, and coordinated closely with family

members and other law enforcement agencies. These efforts led to the successful reunion of 89 missing individuals with their families. The cases were reported under various police stations across the district.

On Monday, the Commissioner and the DCP conducted a review meeting to assess the special team's progress. Inspector P

Chandrasekhar and Sub-Inspector U Hymavathi detailed the strategies employed to trace the missing individuals and assured that the remaining 32 cases would also be resolved soon.

The Commissioner commended the special team's efforts, emphasising the importance of expediting investigations and continuing to prioritise such cases.

Woman, her two children electrocuted

PNS ■ PADERU

In a tragic incident, a woman and her two children were electrocuted when they came into contact with a live electric wire at Kimudupalle village in Pedabayalu mandal in ASR district on Monday.

Police said that one of the deceased Korra Santhosh (13) was hanging wet clothes on a wire for drying. As electricity passed through the wire, he was electrocuted. Her mother, the deceased Korra Lakshmi (36) went to her son's rescue but she was also electrocuted. Another deceased Anjali (10) went to rescue her mother and brother but she was also electrocuted. All three died on the spot.

NGOs highlight urgent need for action on sex workers' rights

Around 1.33 lakh women are engaged in sex work in Andhra Pradesh



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

On Human Rights Day, VIMUKTHI and HELP organised an awareness meeting at Vambe Colony, focusing on the theme "Sex Workers' Rights, Future, Right Now". On the occasion, Apurva, president of VIMUKTHI, a State-level forum for rescued trafficking survivors, delivered a powerful address, stressing that prostitution must be recognised as a system that strips women and girls of their dignity and equality. She pointed out that prostitution perpetuates discrimination and violence, reducing women to mere commodities. According to her, factors such as patriarchal norms, economic disparities, and globalisation continue to exploit marginalised women, leaving them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Apurva highlighted that sex work, which is prevalent in Andhra Pradesh where an estimated 1.33 lakh women are

engaged in it, is marred by stigma and violence. Studies show that over 88 per cent of sex workers in the State face discrimination in accessing basic services like healthcare, housing, and education. This marginalisation, she stressed, often leads to the breakdown of family support, leaving 63 per cent of sex workers and trafficking survivors isolated and without protection.

Violence against sex workers remains rampant, with 60 per cent of them reporting abuse from clients, intimate partners, or even husbands. Despite this, legal protection remains minimal, leaving survivors with little recourse. Additionally, nearly 40 per cent of sex workers lack access to adequate healthcare, and many suffer from mental health issues, including stress, anxiety, and depression, aggravated by their experiences of exploitation.

The situation of children of sex workers is equally dire.

Over 15,000 children are at risk of exploitation, with many dropping out of school between grades 8 and 10, further entrenching cycles of poverty and vulnerability to trafficking.

Rajini, vice-president of VIMUKTHI, and Mounika, joint secretary of the organisation, also spoke at the event, urging policymakers to adopt an abolitionist legal framework that distinguishes between trafficking for sexual exploitation and consensual sex work. They called for victim compensation schemes, witness protection mechanisms, and improved legal aid services to ensure that survivors can access justice without fear.

VIMUKTHI and HELP have urged governments, civil society, and communities to work together to protect the human rights of sex workers, recognising their dignity and creating inclusive opportunities for empowerment.

GITAM to host Smart India Hackathon from tomorrow

Student teams will be tackling problem statements submitted by various ministries, departments, and industries

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

GITAM Deemed to be University is set to host the seventh edition of the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) on December 11, in collaboration with 51 centres across the nation. Organised by the Ministry of Education, the event offers a unique platform for students to address real-world challenges while promoting a culture of product innovation and problem-solving.

Speaking about the event, hackathon in-charge B. Raja Kumar said, "Twenty-nine teams from 14 States, including one Union Territory, will be participating in the Smart India Hackathon at GITAM. This edition promises to be a great opportunity for students to engage with cutting-edge problems and showcase their creativity."

The hackathon will see student teams tackling problem statements submitted by various ministries, departments, and industries, as well as submitting innovative ideas under the Student Innovation category. The event will focus on 17 key themes of national importance, including Healthcare, Supply Chain & Logistics, Smart Technologies, Heritage & Culture, Sustainability, Education & Skill



Development, Water, Agriculture & Food, Emerging Technologies, and Disaster Management.

More than 250 problem statements have been submitted for the 2024 edition of the hackathon by 54 ministries, departments, State governments, PSUs, and industries. This makes the event one of the largest of its kind in India. "The SIH grand finale offers a unique opportunity for students and educators to

engage directly with officials from various government ministries and departments, promoting collaboration and inspiring innovation," Raja Kumar added.

Over the years, the Smart India Hackathon has made a name in India's innovation landscape.

One of the key elements of its success is the SIH Alumni Network, which shares inspiring success stories through its dedicated portal.

Delhi HC issues summons to media Houses in Jagan's defamation suit

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA/DELHI

The Delhi High Court has issued summons in a defamation suit filed by YSRCP chief and former Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy against several media houses. Jagan is seeking a permanent injunction, a mandatory injunction, and damages amounting to Rs 100 crore over articles allegedly linking him to indictment proceedings involving the Adani Group in the United States.

The suit was filed after reports claimed Jagan's involvement in legal actions against the Adani Group. However, his legal team, led by Senior Advocate Dayan Krishnan and supported by

Advocates Amit Agrawal, Sahil Raveen, and Rahul Kukreja, contended that the articles were baseless and defamatory. They asserted that the US indictment referenced in the reports did not name Jagan Mohan Reddy, nor had he received any related notice.

The High Court issued a summons in the main defamation suit and also took note of an interim application seeking the removal of the allegedly defamatory content. Additionally, the Court cautioned the defendants against further publications on the matter, warning of legal repercussions.

The case has been posted for the next hearing on December 16, 2024.

Cong leaders celebrate Sonia Gandhi's birthday

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Congress leaders in Vijayawada celebrated the birthday of former AICC President and MP Sonia Gandhi at the Congress office on Monday.

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) vice-president Kolanukonda Sivaji, City Congress president Naraharasetti Narasimha Rao, and other senior leaders participated in the celebrations, which included cutting a cake and addressing party workers.

Speaking to the media, Kolanukonda Sivaji strongly condemned the BJP's allegations linking Sonia Gandhi



with billionaire George Soros, who is alleged to have connections with an organisation advocating for Kashmir as a "separate entity."

He criticised BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra

for making baseless accusations against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi. "The Gandhi family has given three Prime Ministers to this country. Linking Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi with

George Soros is absurd and condemnable. The BJP is resorting to dirty politics," Shivaji stated.

He demanded an unconditional apology from Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

Home Minister Amit Shah, and other senior BJP leaders for what he described as defamatory statements.

Meanwhile, APCC president YS Sharmila extended her wishes to Sonia Gandhi on social media platform X. She praised Sonia Gandhi's resilience and leadership, saying, "If there were to be one person that epitomises an incredible spirit of empathy and sacrifice, carries an indelible mark of strength, and inspires an exemplary saga of leadership, it is undoubtedly you. On this momentous day, I pray to the Almighty that you be blessed with good health, long life, and unending energy."



Retired IAS Officer AMD Imtiaz addressing the gathering at the Andhra Loyola College in Vijayawada on Monday

Intl Anti-Corruption Day observed

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A poetry gathering was organised at Andhra Loyola College, Vijayawada, on Monday morning to observe International Anti-Corruption Day. The event, themed "End Corruption - That is Our Pledge", was jointly conducted by the Pinakini Youth Welfare Association and the college.

The gathering reinforced the message that ending corruption is not merely a goal but a collective responsibility, urging everyone to take a stand against it and pledge to uphold integrity in all walks of life. During the event, Assistant Sub-Inspector Dr B Kameswara Rao of Gurla Mandal, Vizianagaram district, was honoured with the Best Service Award in recognition of his honesty and dedicated service.

Thirteen poets graced the occasion, sharing their powerful verses on the theme of anti-corruption, adding vibrancy and thoughtfulness to the event. The programme was coordinated by Pinakini Youth Welfare Association president K Murali Mohan Raju and

Andhra Loyola College Telugu Department Head Dr K Shekhar.

Retired IAS officer AMD Imtiaz, addressing the gathering, highlighted the far-reaching consequences of corruption, calling it a significant social, political, and economic issue affecting countries worldwide. He expressed his concern that corruption undermines the very foundations of democratic institutions, posing a grave threat to societal progress.

Dr Samaram, former national president of the Indian Medical Association, echoed similar sentiments, explaining how corruption hampers economic development, destabilises governments, and weakens democratic processes.

The programme was presided over by Vemula Hazaratthaya, former international president of Vasavi Club International, and saw the participation of Andhra Loyola College Principal Dr GAP Kishore, Vice Principal Kiran, and Gandhi Desam Welfare Trust founder RR Gandhi Nagarajan.

Botsa to meet PM, Home Minister over 'misuse of probe agencies'

Accuses TDP of political conspiracy, demands SIT report on land scams

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Leader of Opposition in the Legislative Council, Botsa Satyanarayana, has announced plans to meet the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to demand action against investigative agencies accused of making false claims about drug shipments in Visakhapatnam.

Speaking at a media conference at his camp office in Visakhapatnam, he called for exposing the individuals behind what he termed a politically motivated "drug drama" that tarnished the State's reputation. Botsa alleged that investigative agencies were manipulated for political gains, emphasising the need for an investigation into their conduct. He stated that if denied an audience, he will write to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.

Botsa criticised the TDP government for previously alleging that containers containing drugs had arrived from Brazil. He recalled how Operation Garuda, Interpol, and the CBI conducted an investigation, resulting in arrests and container seizures. However, after eight months, the CBI clarified that no drugs were found in the containers. Botsa questioned the motives behind this pre-election drama, alleging a conspiracy to discredit the YSRCP and harm the State and national



image.

Botsa urged the coalition government to release the SIT investigation report on land scams that was initiated during the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) tenure and continued under the YSRCP. Accusing Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of system manipulation, he challenged the coalition to act against culprits if they were sincere.

Expressing disappointment over the exclusion of MLCs from the parliamentary committee to investigate Visakhapatnam Dairy, Botsa alleged political bias and called for fair representation of both legislative houses.

Highlighting incomplete Nadu-Nedu projects aimed at modernising schools, Botsa appealed to the coalition government to finish the work. He accused them of rolling back initiatives such as English-medium education,

Botsa urged the coalition government to release the SIT investigation report on land scams that was initiated during the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) tenure and continued under the YSRCP. Accusing Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu of system manipulation, he challenged the coalition to act against culprits if they were sincere.

CBSE system, and digital learning tools like BYJU's tabs, introduced under the YSRCP government. He warned against linking student welfare with politics.

Botsa criticised the coalition government for its failures in grain procurement, citing reports of administrative negligence and inefficiency. He called upon the government to ensure proper monitoring of officials to support farmers.

The YSRCP has outlined an action plan to protest against the coalition government's

policies and failures, scheduling demonstrations on December 13 to address paddy procurement issues, and on January 3 to demand the clearance of fee reimbursement arrears.

Botsa declared the party's commitment to fight against anti-people policies and ensure justice for citizens. Meetings were held with district presidents and party leaders to mobilise support for these programmes.



Girls' hostel inmates allege physical assault, sexual harassment

Warden comes drunk; her husband engages in inappropriate behaviour

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Inmates of the government-run BC girls' hostel in Kothavalasa mandal centre have accused the warden, Neeraja Kumari, of routinely consuming alcohol, physically assaulting them, and allowing her husband to engage in inappropriate behaviour. On Monday, a group of students, accompanied by the Kothavalasa Tehsildar, filed a formal complaint at the local police station. They detailed a harrowing account of the mistreatment they have endured. "We are living in constant fear," one student said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "The warden often comes drunk and beats us. She uses vulgar language, and her husband makes us feel unsafe. We are terrified to even go to the bathroom at night."

The students also alleged that the warden frequently sold off the hostel's food rations, leaving them hungry and malnourished. "We are not given enough to eat. The warden sells the ration, and we often go without meals," another student said.

"Sometimes, we have to skip meals or eat just one meal a day."

The students have demanded immediate action, including the suspension of the warden and legal action against her husband. They have also requested relocation to a safer hostel. "We demand justice," the students' complaint reads. "We cannot stay in this environment any longer. The warden and her husband should be held accountable for their heinous actions. We want to live in a safe and secure environment where we can study without fear."

The local police have initiated an investigation into the matter, assuring swift action. "We are taking this matter very seriously," said a police official. "We will conduct a thorough investigation and take appropriate legal action against the accused." The Kothavalasa Tehsildar has also promised to look into the allegations and take appropriate measures. "We will ensure the safety and well-being of the students," said the Tehsildar.

Min Manohar: Paddy purchase expedited; payment within 48 hrs

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

Minister for Civil Supplies, Nandendla Manohar, stated that paddy procurement from farmers in the State is progressing smoothly and payments are being made within 48 hours.

The Minister inspected a paddy procurement centre at Chandakapet village in Denkada mandal on Monday. He interacted with farmers, listened to their concerns, and sought feedback on the procurement process.

Addressing the farmers, Manohar emphasised the Government's commitment to purchasing paddy without any hurdles. He alleged that the previous YSRCP government had accumulated arrears of Rs 1,674 crore, which the current government, under Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, has cleared.

"Deputy Chief Minister K Pawan Kalyan is keen on ensuring remunerative prices for farmers. Accordingly, the government has streamlined paddy procurement," he said.

Manohar announced that farmers are free to sell their produce to rice mills of their choice. He clarified that paddy with up to 17% moisture con-



tent is being purchased, and arrangements have been made to procure paddy with 24% moisture by deducting 5 kg per quintal.

"So far, 78,000 metric tonnes of paddy have been procured across the State. In the last 24 hours alone, Rs 174 crore has been disbursed to over 16,000 farmers. Additionally, 2,000 tarpaulins have been distrib-

uted to protect the produce from rain," he noted.

The Minister revealed that the government aims to procure 32 lakh metric tonnes of paddy this season, of which 13.24 lakh metric tonnes have already been purchased.

Manohar urged farmers to safeguard their produce against rain and adhere to guidelines issued by agricultural officers.

MLA Lokam Naga Madhavi highlighted the favourable weather conditions and timely rains that have boosted yields this year. She observed that farmers in the district depend on bore wells due to the absence of major irrigation projects and can grow only one crop annually due to water scarcity.

Joint Collector S Sethu

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HM inspects V'wada jail

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Home Minister Vangalapudi Anitha conducted a surprise inspection of Gandhinagar jail in Vijayawada on Monday to assess the conditions and ensure the provision of basic facilities to prisoners. During her visit, she emphasised the need for the police to respond promptly and impartially to public grievances.

She warned that unilateral actions by anyone, regardless of their position, would not be tolerated and reiterated the coalition government's commitment to strengthening the police system.

The inspection also addressed recent allegations against jail officials, particularly related to the Borugadda Anil case. The Minister revealed that an investigation is underway and assured that a

report would be submitted within two days. Legal action will be taken against those found guilty.

Criticising the previous YSRCP government, Anitha claimed that several irregularities from their tenure were now surfacing. She accused YSRCP leaders of making baseless allegations against Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and his son Lokesh to divert attention from their misdeeds.

She condemned remarks by YSRCP MP Vijayasai Reddy and announced plans to file cases against him. The Minister accused Reddy of threatening officials of Kakinada SEZ and the port for financial gain and alleged that relatives of YSRCP leaders, including YV Subba Reddy, were involved in such activities.

Anitha asserted that attempts by the YSRCP to dis-

rupt the coalition government would fail. She vowed that those responsible for financial misappropriation during the YSRCP's rule would face consequences.

She accused the previous administration of looting public resources, fostering fear among officials, and coercing individuals into transferring assets. The Minister cited instances of violent attacks on those who opposed such actions as evidence of their misgovernance.

Regarding the ongoing Kakinada Port investigation, Anitha confirmed that the inquiry is progressing rapidly and assured that all culprits would be held accountable. She reaffirmed the government's zero-tolerance policy towards undermining public institutions or intimidating officials.

Rs 450 cr worth of paddy procured, 2,000 tarpaulins distributed: DC

PNS ■ ELURU

District Collector K Vetri Selvi has said that Rs 450 crore worth of paddy produce has been purchased in the district so far from 25,493 farmers.

In a statement here on Monday, the Collector said that in view of the rain threat to the district, the agriculture and civil supply officials were directed to take all steps to ensure that the paddy produce was not damaged due to rain.

The Collector highlighted that 2000 tarpaulins had been distributed to the farmers and another 500 tarpaulins would be distributed to them to save their paddy from being drenched in the rain. The farmers in the district have 1.65 lakh metric tonnes of



paddy to sell.

She asserted that necessary instructions were issued to the rice millers on the procurement of paddy from farmers. The Collector stated that 1,95,366 Metric Tonnes of paddy produce had been purchased from 25,493 farmers.

"As of now, 22,826 metric tonnes of paddy produce is ready to be shifted to the rice millers in the district. Moreover, 16,296 metric tonnes of paddy produce is in the agriculture fields and for their protection from rain, 2000 tarpaulins have been distributed and another 500 will be distributed to the farmers," the Collector revealed, adding that if needed, some more tarpaulins would be distributed to the farmers.

The Collector appealed to the farmers to take up the harvesting of paddy in accordance with the advice of the Agriculture officials. The farmers can dial 18004256453 or 08812-230448, 7702003584 for help.

'80,000 petitions received on land disputes'

PNS ■ KADAPA

Minister for BC and EWS Welfare, S Savitha, stated that 1.70 lakh petitions have been received from the public in the last five months, with over 80,000 relating to land disputes.

The Minister, accompanied by MLA Varadarajula Reddy, participated in the Revenue Sadassu held at Dorasanipalli village in the Proddatur constituency on Monday. She personally received petitions from the public during the programme.

Savitha explained that the government is organising these Revenue Sadassus to address the land disputes of the people and assured that efforts would be made to resolve the issues within 45 days. She also instructed officials and employees to treat the public with respect and refrain from any harsh behaviour when



they approach the authorities with their grievances.

Highlighting the government's focus on both welfare and development, Savitha said that parallel efforts are being made in the state. "Construction of CC roads and drainage systems is underway in rural areas across the

state, while Anna canteens have been reopened. The free sand policy is being implemented smoothly," she added, also noting that the controversial Land Titling Act had been revoked by the new government.

The Minister further mentioned that a High Court

bench will be established in Kurnool, and significant investments are coming to the state. "Rs 20,000 crore in investments are being brought in as industrialists show interest in setting up industries in Andhra Pradesh," Savitha noted.

She also promised to restore

the past glory of the textile industry in the state, announcing a new textile policy with Rs 10,000 crore in investments. A textile park will be established in Mylavaram, she revealed. Joint Collector Adithi Singh, RDO Aadya, and former MLA Linga Reddy were also present at the event.

'Farmers neglected by coalition govt'

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM/ NELLORE

The YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) has criticised the coalition government for its alleged neglect of the agricultural sector and announced plans to picket collectorates across the state on 13th December. Addressing separate press conferences, MLC Botsa Satyanarayana and former minister Kakani Govardhan Reddy accused the government of ignoring farmers' welfare. They highlighted issues such as delays in paddy procurement, the abolition of Minimum Support Price (MSP) and input subsidies, and exploitation by middlemen.

The YSRCP leaders stated that dharnas would be organised at collector offices statewide to expose the coalition government's failures. They plan to submit memorandums contrasting the pro-farmer initiatives of the YS Jagan Mohan Reddy government with the alleged betrayal of farmers during the coalition's six-month tenure and the 2014-19 term of Chandrababu Naidu.

They praised Jagan Mohan Reddy for implementing schemes like Rythu Bharosa, which transferred Rs 13,500 directly to farmers and supported them from sowing to marketing through RBKs. In contrast, they claimed the coalition government has failed to deliver the promised input subsidies or provide relief for crops damaged in recent rains.

Botsa Satyanarayana demanded a rollback of increased power tariffs and announced that the party would submit memorandums to Superintending Engineers (SEs) in protest.

Regarding the Vizag drug container controversy, Botsa remarked that transferring the case to the CBI was a positive step but criticised the mudslinging between coalition partners as reflecting their lack of unity. He further stated that the Parents' Meetings conducted by the coalition government had inadvertently highlighted the progress achieved under the Nadu-Nedu initiative in schools during the YSRCP's tenure.

Special train services for Sabarimala pilgrims

Railway authorities appeal to pilgrims to prioritise safety

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The Waltair Division of East Coast Railway has announced the operation of special trains to accommodate the growing number of pilgrim passengers travelling to Sabarimala. While ensuring convenience, the Railway authorities have also issued a stern appeal to passengers to prioritise safety during their journey.

Highlighting recent concerns, the authorities revealed that some pilgrims have been engaging in potentially hazardous activities like lighting camphor, performing Aarti, and using matches or incense sticks inside train coaches. These actions, involving fire or inflammable materials, are strictly prohibited as they pose significant safety risks.

"Lighting fire onboard trains is not just dangerous but can lead to catastrophic consequences, including fire accidents that endanger lives and damage railway property," stated Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Manoj Kumar Sahoo. "Passengers found indulging in such activities will face strict action under The Railways Act, 1989, including imprisonment, fines, or both, and will be held liable for any damage caused."

To ensure compliance, the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Commercial Department have intensified vigilance across the division, conducting thorough checks on trains and at railway stations.

BRS slams 'Congress Thalli' statue on secretariat premises, plans protest

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BRS launched a scathing attack against the Telangana Thalli statue installed on the premises of the Telangana secretariat and referred to it as the "Congress Thalli."

The BRS said the statue undermines the cultural and historical identity of Telangana and accused the Congress Government of distorting the legacy of Telangana Thalli for political gains.

Addressing the issue, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao (KTR) highlighted the controversial changes made to the statue's design, including the omission of culturally significant symbols like Bathukamma and the crown etc. This is not Telangana Thalli, but 'Congress Thalli,' and it looks like a pauper, he said.

KTR pointed out the addition of the Congress's hand symbol, which he described as an attempt to align Telangana's identity with the party's political agenda.

"No one in the world changes the representation of their

mother, but here in Telangana, the Congress Government is attempting to distort the essence of Telangana Thalli," KTR said during a public address in Medchal where he unveiled the Telangana Thalli statue.

He condemned the statue installed by the Congress as an insult to the people who fought for Telangana's statehood, calling it a mockery of the state's struggles and aspirations.

KTR did not mince words, describing the statue as a "symbol of Congress deception." He accused the government of using the statue to mislead the public while diluting the cultural essence of Telangana. He warned that if the BRS returns to power, the statue will be removed and sent to Gandhi Bhavan.

"Telangana Thalli represents the collective spirit of Telangana, and not any political party or individual," KTR emphasised, adding that the Congress Government is not only damaging cultural symbols like Bathukamma but is also tarnishing the state's identity.

Low pressure area to move towards TN

PNS ■ GUNTUR

A low pressure area over the Bay of Bengal is expected to become more marked in the next 24 hours and is likely to move towards the Tamil Nadu coast. The Meteorological Department, in its Monday update, stated that the low pressure area over the Southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining East Equatorial Indian Ocean, with an associated cyclonic circulation extending up to middle tropospheric levels, persists. The system is expected to move west-northwestwards and strengthen in the next 24 hours. It is very likely to continue its west-northwestward movement and reach the southwest Bay of Bengal off the Sri Lanka-Tamil Nadu coasts around December 11.

Heavy rainfall is likely at isolated places in South Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema on December 11 and 12, the Meteorological Centre informed. The daily weather report also predicted thunderstorms with lightning at isolated places in these regions during the same period.

Complaints filed against Vamsi's followers for illegal activities



PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Allegations of illegal activities, including job frauds and land grabs, have surfaced against followers of former MLA Vallabhaneni Vamsi. Victims have lodged complaints against these leaders, accusing them of extorting large sums of money. One such case involves ₹1.30 crore being taken in exchange for job promises.

Further complaints highlight attempts by YSRCP leaders to seize land from individuals sympathetic to the Telugu Desam Party (TDP). Several victims have filed reports of land encroachments by these leaders.

Vamsi's associates, including Nimmagadda Brahmani, Thodeti Benjamin, and others, are accused of criminal activities

such as attacks on TDP offices, rowdiness, land encroachments, forgery, illegal registrations, and bank frauds.

A grievance was filed on Monday at the TDP central office, where Labour Minister Vasamshetti Subhash and Housing Board Chairman Battula Tatayya Babu assured action after inquiries.

In a separate case, a farmer from Pedda Tumbalam village in Kurnool district complained about illegal land seizures by YSRCP followers of former MLA Sai Pratap Reddy and Bala Nagi Reddy. Other victims, including those from Tirupati, Kadapa, and Annamaya districts, have reported cases of cheating, harassment, and unfulfilled promises, seeking government intervention.

4 kg ganja seized; 12 arrested

PNS ■ ONGOLE

The police have seized 4 kg of cannabis in bulk from the Andhra-Odisha border and sold it at retail in the area. The Maddipadu police have registered cases under Cr. No. 249/2024 U/s 8 (c), 20 (b) ii (B), 27, r/w the NDPS Act. Some of the arrested members are from Odisha and Bihar. The SDPO revealed that Prashant Kumar Sahi, one of the accused, had worked at the spinning mill. After the mill closed, he formed a gang with 11 others and began selling ganja.

Rs 30,000 in cash.

The gang reportedly sourced the cannabis in bulk from the Andhra-Odisha border and sold it at retail in the area.

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Complete road works: VMC Commissioner

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation (VMC) Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra has directed the officials concerned to ensure the completion of road works to facilitate public access without any inconvenience. He made a field visit to Canal Road, Gandhi Bomma Centre, Wynchipeta, Nizam Gate and other areas in the city on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion,



VMC Commissioner HM Dhyanaachandra speaking to the officials during his visit to various areas in Vijayawada on Monday

Commissioner Dhyanaachandra said that in view of the upcoming Bhavani Deekshas relinquishment, officials should repair the road dug for drinking water pipeline works. Also, he directed the officials to complete the road up to Kaleswara Rao Market from the Main Bazaar. He asked the L&T agency to complete the work as early as possible.

Later, he inspected the CC road work in the VMC 55th division and spoke to the work-

ers. Quality standards should be maintained. The work agency should take appropriate steps to avoid inconvenience to the public, he asked.

After that, he visited the Nizam Gate area and inspected the outfall drain de-silting work. Also, he visited the desilting work at the Gandhi Bomma Centre at Wynchipeta.

VMC Chief Engineer R Srinath, In-charge Chief Medical & Health Officer Dr Suresh Babu and others accompanied him.

ACROSS THE STATES



Father attempts to kill child over family dispute

A father allegedly attempted to kill his four-year-old daughter in Erode on Monday due to a family dispute, police said. Thirumalai Selvan (30) was living with his wife Sukanya (23), their seven-year-old son, and four-year-old daughter in Madurai. Following a family quarrel, Sukanya moved to her parental home in Manickampalayam, Erode, with her children several months ago. On Monday morning, Thirumalai Selvan, reportedly intoxicated, went to his wife's place, quarrelled with her, and compelled her to return to Madurai with him. When she refused, he allegedly poured petrol from a bottle onto his wife and two children and attempted to set them on fire, in a fit of anger, police said. While Sukanya and their son managed to escape, Thirumalai Selvan allegedly set their daughter on fire. The girl screamed for help, prompting her mother and neighbours to rush to the spot and try to extinguish the flames.



Seer upset over curbs on protests

Lingayat seer Jayamruthyunjaya Swami has expressed his anger over the prohibitory orders imposed in Belagavi where the winter session of the Karnataka legislature started on Monday. The seer had planned a tractor rally in the town on Tuesday, but the district administration clamped prohibitory orders, restricting the entry of tractors in town. The pontiff of the Panchamasali Guru Peetha of Kudala Sangama has been pressing the successive governments to bring the Panchamasali community under the 2A category of the Other Backward Castes since December 2012. Addressing reporters, the seer said such restrictions were uncalled for when he was carrying out a protest in a democratic way. The community is presently under the 3B category and gets five per cent reservation in government education institutions and jobs. If the demand is met, the community would get 15 per cent reservation.



No land provided by Centre to Waqf board since 2019: Govt

No land has been provided by the Central government to the Waqf Board since 2019, the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry told Rajya Sabha on Monday. In a written reply to a question about the total area of land represented by the Waqf Board by the Central and state governments from 2019 till date, MoS Tokhan Sahu said land is a state subject and hence, no data of land provided by the state governments is available with the ministry. He, however, said as far as the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is concerned, no land has been provided to the Waqf Board by the Government of India since 2019. In August, the government introduced the Waqf (Amendment) Bill and referred it to a joint parliamentary committee after a heated debate. The government asserted the proposed law did not intend to interfere with the functioning of mosques while the opposition called it targeting of Muslims and an attack on the Constitution. Last week, Jagdambika Pal, the chairman of the joint parliamentary committee, said the panel has written to state governments.

CUET-UG, PG set to undergo changes, revised norms soon: UGC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET) for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate courses is set to undergo several changes in the 2025 edition following a review by an expert panel, according to UGC Chairman Jagadeesh Kumar. The University Grants Commission (UGC) has constituted an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and PG.

"Based on the feedback from the past years, it is also essential to continuously improve the examination process to provide a better, more efficient and



conductive environment for students taking CUET. In this spirit, the UGC has constituted an expert committee to review the conduct of CUET-UG and CUET-PG for 2025," Kumar told PTI. "The committee has examined various aspects of the test, such as its structure, number of papers, duration of test papers, syllabus alignment and operational logistics.

India calls for ensuring territorial integrity of Syria

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A day after rebel forces overthrew President Bashar Assad's authoritarian government in Syria, India on Monday joined leading nations to call for stability and preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Arab nation.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said it is monitoring the unfolding developments in Syria and advocated a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process going forward in that country.

The Syrian government collapsed on Sunday as the rebels seized control of the capital Damascus after capturing several other prominent cities and towns.

Assad fled the country after the rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) took control of Damascus, marking the end of his family's 50-year rule.

"We are monitoring the situation in Syria in the light of ongoing developments. We underline the need for all parties to work towards preserving the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria," the MEA said in a statement.

"We advocate a peaceful and inclusive Syrian-led political process respecting the interests and aspirations of all sections of Syrian society," it said.

The MEA said the Indian embassy in Damascus is in contact with the Indian community in Syria for their "safety and security".

Hours after the rebels cap-



tured power, official sources in Delhi on Sunday said all Indian nationals in Syria are safe.

Russian state media reported that Assad is in Moscow and will be given asylum. His nearly 14-year tenure was marked by civil war, bloodshed and brutal crackdown on his political opponents. Many leading countries have also welcomed fall of the nearly 14-year-long Assad regime that witnessed civil strife across Syria.

"It is a moment of historic opportunity for the long-suffering people of Syria to build a better future for their country. It is also a moment of risk and uncertainty," US President Joe Biden said. "This is the best opportunity in generations for Syrians to forge their own future -- free of opposition," he said. British Prime Minister

Keir Starmer described the developments in Syria as "unprecedented".

"The Syrian people have suffered under Assad's barbaric regime for too long and we welcome his departure. Our focus is now on ensuring a political solution prevails, and peace and stability is restored," he said. "We call on all sides to protect civilians and minorities and ensure essential aid can reach the most vulnerable in the coming hours and days," Starmer added.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the US strongly supports a peaceful transition of power to an accountable Syrian government through an inclusive Syrian-led process.

"During this transitional period, the Syrian people have every right to demand the

preservation of state institutions, the resumption of key services, and the protection of vulnerable communities," he said. The French foreign ministry welcomed the fall of Assad's regime and said the time for unity has come.

"France calls for weapons to fall silent, for the democratic institutions to be preserved, for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria to be respected," it said. France also pitched for peaceful political transition, one that respects the diversity of the Syrian people, and protects civilians and all minorities, in accordance with international law.

"It calls on all Syrians to unite, to reconcile, and to reject all forms of extremism," the French foreign ministry said.

Fadnavis-led ministry wins trust motion

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The Devendra Fadnavis-led ministry on Monday sailed through a trust vote in the Maharashtra assembly. The trust motion, tabled by Shiv Sena MLA Uday Samant and others, was passed by a voice vote. Speaker Rahul Narwekar announced that the trust motion has been approved by

the House. The BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP 'Mahayuti' coalition has a commanding majority of 230 seats in the 288-member state assembly.

Fadnavis was sworn in as the chief minister for the third time on December 5. Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar took oath as deputy chief ministers at the ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Mumbai.



MANIPUR VIOLENCE

SC asks state to give details on arson, property encroachments

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed the Manipur government to submit a detailed sealed cover report on the number of properties that were fully or partially burnt, looted, or encroached upon during the ongoing ethnic violence in the state. The bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar emphasised the need for the state to address the grievances of the displaced persons and take steps to restore their properties.

It therefore asked the Manipur government, represented by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, to provide specific details such as "buildings burnt or partially burnt, buildings looted, buildings trespassed or encroached upon". The report should also provide information about the owners and current occupants of these properties, along with the



The bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Sanjay Kumar emphasised the need for the state to address the grievances of the displaced

details of any legal actions taken against trespassers, the CJ said. "We also direct the state government to provide the following details: 1. Buildings burnt and partially burnt, 2. buildings which are looted; and (3) the buildings

trespassed and encroached upon," the SC order stated.

The bench further directed, "In all these, give details of the name and address of the owner as well as the person, if any, in occupation of the property.

‘Will we have lollipop while you come to occupy our land’

Mamata dig at Bangla politicians

PNS ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday strongly reacted to provocative statements by a section of Bangladeshi politicians that Bangladesh could occupy Bengal within days, calling them "absurd" and dismissing it by saying, "you will occupy Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, and we will have lollipops?"

While addressing the West Bengal Assembly, Banerjee, without naming anyone, condemned the circulation of certain fake videos on this side of the border and blamed a certain political party for attempting to stoke tensions in the state. The chief minister condemned the persecution of minorities in Bangladesh, calling it unacceptable, and stressed the need for unity among India's religious communities.

Banerjee strongly rejected provocative statements from across the border, including a Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) leader who said that Bangladesh has claims over Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, and a viral video featuring Bangladesh Army veterans suggesting the country could occupy West Bengal within days, remarking, "You will occupy Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, and we will have lollipops? Don't even think that."

"No one has the guts to take our lands, don't even think about it," she said. Mocking some Bangladeshi leaders, who



have made provocative statements recently, she said, "Stay calm and healthy and have peace of mind." She also cautioned those seeking to politicise the situation in India, saying that such actions would harm West Bengal and its people.

"Those thinking of politicising this must remember that it will hurt our state too, and your friends, sisters, and brothers in Bangladesh," she said.

"A certain political party is responsible for the circulation of fake videos to stoke fire. I appeal to everyone to stay away from such misinformation. We are not in favour of any one group, we care for everyone here," she said.

Banerjee urged restraint, saying, "We should not make unnecessary statements that may threaten the situation

here." The chief minister condemned the ongoing persecution of minorities, especially Hindus, in Bangladesh, calling it unacceptable, and stressed the need for unity among India's religious communities.

"We condemn the ongoing violence on Hindus in Bangladesh. Communal violence is not done by Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, or Christians; it is done by anti-social elements that are burden on the society. We should all remember this and avoid making statements that could disrupt the peace in West Bengal," she said.

The Hindu community in Bangladesh, the country's largest minority group, has faced increasing persecution following the resignation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, triggered by widespread student protests.



DELHI ASSEMBLY POLLS

‘Pushpa 2’ leads to poster war between AAP and BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Allu Arjun-starrer blockbuster "Pushpa 2" has led to a poster war between the ruling AAP in Delhi and the opposition BJP ahead of the Assembly polls scheduled early next year. AAP recently issued a poster on the lines of the movie, titling it in bold letters "Kejriwal Jhukega Nahi" based on the cult dialogue of the movie.

In the poster, Kejriwal poses as the protagonist of the film, carrying AAP's symbol 'jhaadu' (broom) on his shoulder. "4th Term Coming Soon" read the poster, referring to the previous electoral successes of Kejriwal-led AAP in 2013, 2015 and 2020 in the Delhi Assembly polls.

In the poster, Kejriwal poses as the protagonist of the film, carrying AAP's symbol 'jhaadu' (broom) on his shoulder. "4th Term Coming Soon" read the poster, referring to the previous electoral successes of Kejriwal-led AAP in 2013, 2015 and 2020 in the Delhi Assembly polls

working hard to retain power in Delhi for a third time after its massive electoral successes in 2015 and 2020 in which it routed the BJP, winning 67 and 63 seats, respectively, in the 70-member Assembly. The leaders in the BJP, out of power in Delhi since 1998, consider the upcoming Assembly polls their best opportunity to end AAP's sway in Delhi's politics.

How physical activity helps muscles produce energy?

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Researchers have identified a new process thought which physical exercise triggers the production of energy in muscles, even in those with genetic errors.

Researchers said the results, published in the journal Nature Communications, could pave the way for treating disorders affecting one's muscles, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

"We have identified a new, important mechanism for energy production of the muscle cells and shown that it is activated by physical exercise -- regardless of age, gender and state of health," Lykke Sylow, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen,



Researchers said the results, published in the journal Nature Communications, could pave the way for treating disorders affecting one's muscles, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease

Denmark, and corresponding author of the paper describing

the findings, said. The team showed that a protein, vital to

the newly discovered process and named 'SLIRP', played a

key role in producing energy, which is known to occur in cells' energy factory -- the mitochondria.

They further found that through fitness, or aerobic, training, the SLIRP protein's role in energy production could be dodged.

"Our research shows that exercise can counteract genetic errors in muscular energy production. If this (SLIRP) protein is missing, exercise can activate alternative processes which recreate the muscle's energy capacity and circumvent the genetic error," first author, Tang Cam Phung Pham, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Copenhagen, said.

The results showed how useful exercise can be in over-

coming genetic errors, Cam Phung Pham said.

The study could help develop a drug that mimics the health benefits of physical training in people who are unable to exercise, according to Sylow.

"It opens up the possibility of developing new treatments for more than 200 different disorders related to defects in the muscles' energy production," Sylow said.

"This includes rare mitochondrial genetic disorders as well as more common diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and neurodegenerative disorders - in which (a) lower muscle function is associated with increased mortality," the corresponding author said

Renewed vigour

PM Modi and the King Wangchuck’s meeting strengthens ties with the Himalayan kingdom and lays the groundwork for future collaboration

India and Bhutan share a relationship rooted in historical ties, cultural affinity and a deep commitment to mutual progress. This bond was reaffirmed during a recent high-level meeting between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bhutan’s King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck. The meeting underscores the enduring importance both nations place on their friendship amidst a dynamic geopolitical landscape. The foundation of India-Bhutan relations was laid with the signing of the Treaty of Friendship in 1949, which established perpetual peace and friendship, free trade and mutual cooperation. This treaty was updated in 2007 to reflect evolving dynamics. It continued to emphasise close cooperation on defence, trade and cultural exchange. India has been a steadfast partner in Bhutan’s development journey, assisting in key sectors such as hydropower, infrastructure, education and health. Bhutan, in turn, has been a reliable neighbour, sharing India’s security concerns and supporting its diplomatic endeavours.



The recent interaction between PM Modi and King Jigme Khesar sought to address emerging challenges and explore avenues for deeper collaboration. Hydropower is a cornerstone of India-Bhutan relations. Bhutan exports surplus electricity generated from its rivers to India, a mutually beneficial arrangement. Discussions focused on scaling up hydropower projects, ensuring sustainable energy practices, and addressing financial challenges related to project execution. India remains Bhutan’s largest trading partner and the leaders explored ways to diversify trade and enhance connectivity. Emphasis

was also placed on digital infrastructure and technology transfer to support Bhutan’s aspirations for modernisation. Geopolitical developments, particularly in the Indo-Pacific and Himalayan region, were key discussion points. Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to regional stability and countering security threats, including transnational crimes and emerging cyber risks. Recognising the importance of fostering people-to-people ties, leaders pledged to expand scholarship programmes, skill development initiatives and cultural exchanges. These efforts aim to empower the youth and deepen cultural understanding. The dialogue between India and Bhutan holds broader geopolitical significance. As China increases its outreach in South Asia, including in the Himalayan region, India’s proactive engagement with Bhutan reaffirms its commitment to its smaller neighbours. Bhutan’s strategic location makes its partnership vital for India’s security and regional influence. India’s support for Bhutan’s participation in global forums reflects its willingness to amplify Bhutan’s voice on international issues, including climate change. As both nations work toward common goals, their relationship serves as a model for regional cooperation based on trust, benefit and mutual respect.

PICTALK



Farmers carry harvested cauliflower at a field on a winter morning, in Kolkata

PTI

Be receptive to contrary point of view!

As social beings, our lives are deeply intertwined with communication, but the same can often become a source of conflict

We are social beings. Communication with others is as integral to us as breathing. We often find conflicting conversations blowing out of proportion, sometimes leading to even a break in relationships. Unpleasantness can be avoided if we are mindful of others. We had lived in bungalows in well-planned colonies for a better part of our lives. It was easy to be more social in such surroundings when we met only on social occasions. We, and more like us, have moved to condominium complexes only over the past few years. Private spaces are diminishing as neighbours fall over each other, literally and figuratively. This is a new life that we are still adjusting to. I noticed something different about a neighbour recently as we gathered for a meeting. We indulged in some idle banter before the start of serious business. It was a light-hearted conversation, over which we could smile or chuckle. Or so I thought, till I received his call the next day. I got the message loud and clear that



he was upset over the reference to his receding hairline. I apologised profusely for the faux pas. He does not seem to have forgiven me and has stopped greeting me when we cross each other during walks. He is the same person who does not think twice before breaking into a sarcastic verse on the community WhatsApp group, without considering the hurt he might cause to the intended victim. We have regular meetings with the governing body of our welfare association. There are arguments galore on any subject, which would not be such a bad thing, and may sometimes even be considered as a humorous interlude in an otherwise charged

environment, were it not for the seriousness with which the adversaries try to push their viewpoint to the exclusion of even listening to the other’s perspective. One morning, one of the members told me that it was good that he was now a part of the management body, otherwise he would have vehemently opposed some of the proposals. I could not fathom the logic. A wrong could not have been right only by his being inside the team. In yet another instance recently, two ladies insisted that they were right in their respective contentions. As the arguments went back and forth, I could see the gradual stubborn look on the faces of both, an indication that they were no longer listening to each other. As an independent observer, I realized that both were talking the same, albeit in different words. They were not taking the time to pause and reflect before responding. There is one more incident that I may not forget easily. I felt aggrieved enough to write to the promoter of our condominium complex about the supposed

transgressions of a neighbour in handling the community affairs. The latter was still working as an employee with the builder. I was upset and did not deem it fit to consider the latter’s point of view or the adverse impact that it might have on his professional prospects. I apologised to him in later years. He has moved on and continues to accord me respect. However, I could have avoided the unpleasantness had I taken the time to talk to him about my grievances. It would be good for everyone to be more respectful and less impulsive in an argument. If only we could follow the words of Chinese philosopher Zhuangzi, “We cling to our own point of view, as though everything depended on it. Yet our opinions have no permanence; like autumn and winter, they gradually pass away.”

(The writer is an author, speaker, coach, arbitrator and strategy consultant. He conducts workshops on creative writing for young adults and corporate executives. The views expressed are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

Superpower retreats and their fallout

Russians abandoning Assads is a stark reminder of the fact that promises of steadfast allegiance can falter when geopolitical will and resources wane

The Vietnam War was fought between the forces of the North (supported by the Soviet Union and China) and those of the South (supported by the United States of America). While it lasted twenty years (1955 to 1975) the direct involvement of the American troops lasted about a decade from 1965 onwards. The scars of 58,281 US fatalities and 303,644 wounded had tired the spirits, emotions and morale of the Americans, and they secretly negotiated a pull-out plan under the garb of the Paris Peace Accords that the Americans knew would not hold up.

The Americans made many insincere and knowingly immoral promises to intervene on behalf of its ally, the Southern side, but when the push came to shove, it pushed the Southern side under the bus with non-intervention or support. Later day US President Ronald Reagan was to coin the term ‘Vietnam Syndrome’ to suggest a reluctance to support an international military intervention, beyond a point. A similar renege of support after almost a decade of direct military intervention was to face the Soviet-propped puppet government of Afghanistan, under Mohammad Najibullah.

Ultimately the political and popular will of the Soviets had waned as the human and financial cost of continuing the war in Afghanistan had waned. A few years later, exactly as it had happened in Vietnam, the Afghan government was ousted in a bloody offensive and Najibullah’s corpse was dragged behind a truck through the streets of Kabul. Eventually, the Soviets left him to his fate. It was the sort of end of a regime that was far less than ideal as the land of many ‘Great Games’ earlier i.e., Afghanistan, had seen similar consequences of bloodlust with the British troops leaving Afghanistan in Jan 1842 (only one survivor had managed to reach the British controlled township of Jalalabad). Sadly, even Najibullah’s ouster wasn’t to be the last of the ‘abandoning’ of a regime in Kabul. In 2021, an exhausted and dispirited American force ‘abandoned’



its ally i.e., the Ashraf Ghani government, in Kabul on the pretext of a deal signed between the Taliban and the US in Doha.

Everyone knew that the deal would not hold up and lo behold the Taliban stormed into Kabul, soon after. The ‘longest war in US history’ with a two trillion financial cost, a no-win situation, and mounting pictures of ‘US body bags’ had yet again forced the Americans to push their ally under the bus. By blindsiding its purported ally, the Americans had unilaterally let down its ally after making promises to defend the same. Afghan Vice President Amrullah Saleh was left mocking the US on its pusillanimous stand, “when a superpower decided to become a mini power”.

Recently, and yet again, it was the decisive reluctance of a major power and ally i.e., Russia and Iran, that left the beleaguered Syrian Government of Bashar Al Assad, to its inevitable fate and within days of some token support, the Syrian capital of Damascus fell to rebels, who routed the Russia-Iran supported Bashar Al Assad regime. To be fair, the ‘abandonment’ of Bashar Al Assad cannot be compared to the Vietnam or Afghanistan situations, as the principal power



AFTER THE SYRIAN REBELS HAD TAKEN OVER IDLIB AND WERE DASHING THE NEXT PROFILE TARGET OF HOMS, THE RUSSIAN FIGHTER PLANES DID BOMB SOME REBEL STRONGHOLDS, BUT IT SIMPLY WASN’T ENOUGH

behind the Syrian regime no longer had the wherewithal to continue supporting, even if they wanted to.

Russia is already bleeding and reeling under the humiliating and costly stalemate on the Ukrainian front, whereas the Iranians and their strategic regional proxies (e.g. Hezbollah and the Houthis) were getting systematically decimated and attacked with literal impunity.

After the Syrian rebels had taken over Idlib and were dashing the next profile target of Homs, the Russian fighter planes did bomb some rebel strongholds, but it simply wasn’t enough. Soon, the Syrian rebels made the kill for Damascus, and the isolated and unsupported forces of Bashar Al Assad simply couldn’t hold on. History repeated itself and in the face of supporting foreign allies failing the regime, it was tantamount to pushing the same under the bus!

The lessons are substantial for other regions facing similar belligerence or circumstances i.e., counting on declared allies cannot be assumed, definitely and certainly not, infinitely. When there were grave tensions on Indo-Sino borders in 2020, then President Donald Trump (author of a book aptly titled, ‘The Art of Deal’) made mean-

ingless offers to ‘negotiate’ between the two sides, as opposed to denouncing Chinese expansionism and aggression, unequivocally. While certain military orders with Delhi were indeed signed and expedited – the same made great transactional and commercial sense to the American defence sector. This is something that the already cornered Ukrainian President Zelensky must be fearing as President-elect Donald Trump sheepishly talks about yet another ‘deal’ to supposedly end the Russia-Ukraine war. History is instructive of the consequences that await whenever similar ‘deals’ (read, abandonment) are made by a Superpower, be it the Americans or most recently, the Russians in Syria. Reveling on the latest situation in Syria, Donald Trump tweeted, “Assad is gone. He has fled his country. His protector, Russia...led by Vladimir Putin, was not interested in protecting him any longer” – while it is true, it has been no different for the US, throughout history. Trump too has the blood of letting down Afghanistan on his hands.

(The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands & Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WEST ASIA IN TURMOIL

Madam — This refers to the editorial on the developments in Syria (December 9). In West Asia, mostly countries are dominated by Muslims, the people have hardly anything to feel elated about. The hate against the subjects of the same religion is dominating the scene in most of the countries there. Each group is in constant war against the other not for economic benefits but for an upper hand over the other group. In the process the struggling groups have taken the path of terrorism forgetting that the one who wins is not the permanent winner and victories are purely ephemeral. In Syria also the number of such groups divided by sub-divisions of the same religion, culture, etc., is too many, and this makes it clear that whoever has won now is only for a temporary period, as the deprived groups will always be waiting to take revenge and capture power. In this entire game, the real beneficiaries are the developed nations whose main plank of economy is weapon trade. Selling weapons to every terrorist and warring group is a flourishing trade. Therefore, either of the groups is provoked, promoted, and equipped with enough weapons and the fire is kept alive. In the case of Syria, though Assad has fled the country, bowing to the rebels, the civil war among the groups will continue to be there. But all the groups call it a jihad meaning I am killing you to satisfy the same God whom we both worship piously. Terrorism knows no economy, no logic, no rationality, and no ideology, and it is simply a mental affair capable of destroying anything and nothing constructive.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

AUSTRALIA DEFEATS INDIA

Madam — Indian cricket is not in the pink of health and the second test at Adelaide was a highly disappointing one for the fans by this indigestible defeat. The scores of 180 and 175 in the first and second innings, respectively, by Indian batters were a little more than 19 runs behind the chase for the

World Meditation Day declared



Meditation is a timeless element that connects the soul’s depth, offering humanity a path to mental peace, physical health, and spiritual growth. Recognising December 21 as World Meditation Day honours this ancient practice and symbolises global recognition of India’s cultural heritage. In modern life, meditation has evolved as a science for holistic development, offering hope to those grappling with stress and spiritual unrest.

The winter solstice, marking the start of Uttarayan in Indian tradition, is especially sacred for meditation, as the flow of energy in nature fosters spiritual awakening. Amid personal, social, and economic challenges, meditation offers mental stability, reduces stress, and enhances concentration while alleviating disorders like anxiety and depression. Its benefits extend to physical health, stabilising blood pressure, heart rate, and boosting immunity. World Meditation Day, endorsed by the UN, reflects India’s cultural strength and influence.

R K Jain | Barwani

Aussies in the second innings, winning this test by 10 wickets. The coach, Gautam Gambhir, has got no time to spare except to bring in fresh changes to boost the morale of the team, which is certainly too low at the moment. The colour of the ball shouldn’t make them blind by coming out with lame excuses for their grand failure. Skipper Rohit Sharma, by batting lower down in this test, has signalled his poor form. Except for N K Reddy, the other batters took a stroll to the wicket by spending more time at the pavilion. Why did they drop Washington Sundar? He has no clue. It’s not good for Indian old horses to rest on old laurels to continue their guest appearances in the team. While going by retaining them despite single-digit scores on the board creates a serious doubt about whether they have been retained to promote their commercials in their ongoing contract. The selection policy needs more transparency, and there shouldn’t be format-based selections. The head coach must look for consistent performers by taking into account players like ‘Head’ to be

in our team rather than overlooking young talents at this crucial phase of Indian cricket. With 1 win each, the remaining tests will be the test of time for the future of Indian cricket.

A P Thiruvadi | Chennai

MORE SCHOOLS FOR RURAL AREAS


Madam — PM Modi’s Saturday-X post, stating the Cabinet decision to open the 85 new Kendriya Vidyalayas and 28 Navodaya Vidyalayas across the country and make accessible school education maximal, is a top-notch contribution. From the vantage point of the present, it seems that, ostensibly, rural students are still under scrutiny over facilities as compared to urban. There are far fewer schools, poorly qualified teachers, and miserable schools, grinding the little students’ study zeal and future immeasurably. The government must consolidate the correlation of urban development with rural. Pull up its socks to upgrade the situation of being more adept.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

FIRST COLUMN

BRAIN ROT IN THE DIGITAL AGE

There is alarming cognitive decline linked to overindulgence in mindless digital content



SAKSHI SETHI

In a world saturated with endless entertainment, constant notifications and superficial distractions, the human brain faces unprecedented challenges. The term brain rot refers to the perceived decline in cognitive abilities or intellectual engagement due to excessive consumption of mindless or unproductive content. While it is colloquial and not a clinical diagnosis, it describes mental fog, reduced attention span and diminished problem-solving abilities often linked to prolonged screen time or low-value content. Studies suggest that heavy screen usage can correlate with reduced grey matter in the brain, which may impair critical thinking and memory, particularly among younger individuals. It also contributes to mental health issues like anxiety and depression, driven by constant comparisons and exposure to idealised online content. The rise of social media, streaming platforms and short-form content has revolutionised how we consume information and entertainment.

While these platforms offer unprecedented access to global knowledge, they also foster habits of passive consumption. Endless scrolling and binge-watching also lead to mental fatigue and reduced attention spans, making it harder for individuals to engage with more complex ideas or tasks. Brain rot can also stem from a lack of intellectual stimulation. Activities that challenge the brain such as reading, problem-solving, or engaging in creative pursuits are often sidelined in favour of easier, low-effort distractions. Over time, this neglect can lead to a decline in critical thinking, memory retention and problem-solving skills.



The modern lifestyle, characterised by high levels of stress and constant multitasking, can contribute to cognitive decline. It is often said that chronic stress impairs brain function, particularly in areas responsible for memory and learning which creates a vicious cycle where individuals turn to mindless activities to escape stress, further exacerbating mental stagnation. Moreover, a sedentary lifestyle, coupled with a diet lacking in nutrients essential for brain function, can also lead to cognitive decline. In maintaining mental clarity and overall brain health, physical exercise and a balanced diet play crucial roles.


The effects of brain rot are far-reaching and can manifest in various aspects of life. A lack of focus and motivation often results in decreased efficiency and the inability to complete tasks effectively. Overindulgence in passive entertainment stifles the ability to think creatively or generate original ideas. The overuse of escapist media can lead to a disconnect from real-world emotions and experiences, fostering feelings of emptiness or dissatisfaction. Excessive reliance on digital communication can impair interpersonal relationships and the ability to engage in meaningful, face-to-face interactions.

Addressing brain rot requires a multifaceted approach that emphasises mindfulness, discipline and a commitment to personal growth. Setting boundaries for screen time and being intentional about the type of content consumed can help reduce the effects of brain rot. By choosing educational or thought-provoking material over passive entertainment the mind can be stimulated; by prioritising physical health such as regular physical exercise, a balanced diet and setting goals for personal and intellectual growth learning can help foster mental resilience and creativity. They will also help reduce stress and combat mental inertia.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

The imperative of continuous learning in India’s AI-driven future

The rapid growth of AI, has intensified the demand for skilled professionals. Yet, a stark talent gap threatens this progress




SUMIT SHUKLA

COM indicate that the AI market in the country could grow to \$17 billion by 2027, with an annual growth rate of 25–35 per cent. However, this growth is accompanied by a stark shortage of experts in advanced technologies. NASSCOM estimates that over a million skilled engineers specialising in AI and related technologies will be

needed in the coming years. Alarmingly, the talent gap could rise from 25 per cent to nearly 30 per cent by 2028, emphasising the critical need for skill development among both new graduates and experienced professionals.

One significant challenge is the disconnect between formal education and the practical skills required in the job market. Every year, approximately 1.5 million engineering graduates enter the workforce in India, yet only a fraction secure jobs aligned with their field of study. This mismatch is not due to a lack of opportunities but stems from the gap between the theoretical knowledge imparted in academic institutions and the hands-on skills sought by employers. Beyond technical



AI AND JOBS FUTURE OF WORK

trends and practical learning experiences into their courses. Today's workforce needs to think critically across disciplines and understand the broader implications of technology on economic, social, and cultural contexts. Flexible and continuous education plays a pivotal role in closing the divide between academic knowledge and the realities of the job market.

Digital learning platforms offer a promising solution in this context. With over 50 per cent of Indians actively using the internet, online education provides accessible opportunities to acquire new skills. Edtech platforms specialising in skill enhancement allow individuals to enroll in tailored courses and programmes, preparing them for rapidly evolving job landscapes.

The benefits of continuous learning extend beyond career advancement. Employees who are adaptable and committed to enhancing their knowledge contribute to organisational innovation and help businesses navigate shifting market dynamics. For instance, as AI becomes more integrated across industries, the demand for experts in

(The writer is CEO at Scholars Merit, views are personal)

IN BRIEF



PSB loan write off in H1 FY25 at Rs 42,000 cr

Public sector banks have written off loans worth Rs 42,000 crore in the first six months of the current fiscal, Parliament was informed on Monday. State Bank of India (SBI) wrote off loans worth Rs 8,312 crore, Punjab National Bank (Rs 8,061 crore), Union Bank of India (Rs 6,344 crore) and Bank of Baroda (Rs 5,925 crore) during the April-September period. "Such write-off does not result in waiver of liabilities of borrowers and therefore, it does not benefit the borrower. The borrowers continue to be liable for repayment and banks continue to pursue recovery actions initiated in these accounts through various recovery mechanisms available to them," Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary said. The loans written off by public sector banks during April-September of the current fiscal stood at Rs 42,035 crore, while recovery of Rs 37,253 crore was made.



Gautam Solar seeks patent for defect detection system

Gautam Solar on Monday said it has sought patent for its artificial intelligence (AI)-based system to detect defects in solar panels. This innovative solution integrates advanced imaging and AI technologies to enhance the efficiency and precision of defect detection in photovoltaic cells, setting a new benchmark in the solar industry. The system includes 100 per cent EL Testing, incorporating both pre and post-production stages with AI-assisted analysis. "This AI-powered defect detection system will transform quality control in the solar manufacturing process, ensuring greater reliability and performance for Technically Advanced Modules™ while reducing production inefficiencies," Gautam Mohanka, Director of Gautam Solar, said.



Vedanta to invest Rs 1 lakh cr in Rajasthan

Vedanta Group will invest Rs 1 lakh crore in Rajasthan over next 2-3 years to enhance production capacity of its companies in the state which will create additional 1 lakh employment, a top official of the conglomerate said on Monday. Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal in an interview to PTI also said that the group firm Hindustan Zinc is producing 1 million tonne zinc at present which the company plans to double to 2 million tonne. "It also makes 800 kilogram silver, which we are going to double to 1.6 tonne. Our all group companies will operate entirely on renewables. We will produce 3 lakh barrel oil and gas. This will lead to Rs 1 lakh crore investment," Agarwal said.

Pixxel to speed up deploying its satellite constellation

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bengaluru-based space start-up Pixxel on Monday announced it has raised USD 24 million in additional funding as part of the Series B round, which would allow them to deploy more spacecraft for its unique hyperspectral satellite constellation.

With the latest round of funding, Pixxel has raised a total of USD 60 million in Series B funding and USD 95 million across all funding rounds, making it the highest-funded space-tech start-ups in the country.

"The new infusion of capital will help us launch more satellites quicker, transforming how humanity understands and acts on the challenges of our time," Awaish Ahmed, founder and CEO Pixxel said in a statement. Pixxel is preparing to launch six hyper-spectral imaging satellites -- Fireflies -- with five-metre native resolution from 550 km altitude and more than 150 wavelengths of light. The first batch of six satellites have already been shipped from Pixxel's headquarters in Bengaluru to the launch site for deployment early next year.

India, Australia review progress of FTA talks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior officials of India and Australia have reviewed the progress of talks on the proposed free trade agreement between the two countries, the commerce ministry said on Monday.

The two countries had implemented an interim trade pact in December 2022 and now they are negotiating to widen the scope of the pact for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

"The three-day stocktake visit for the India-Australia CECA concluded in New Delhi on December 6," the ministry said. The stocktake discussions covered several critical areas of the agreement, including trade in goods, services, mobility, agri-tech cooperation, and more.

"The discussions also centered on market access modalities that align with India's food security objectives," it said. Both parties evaluated the



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progress made so far and outlined a path forward for the early conclusion of the CECA.

The Indian delegation was headed by Additional Secretary and Chief Negotiator, Department of

Commerce, Rajesh Agrawal, and the Australian delegation was headed by First Assistant Secretary and Chief Negotiator, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ravi Kewalram.

Gold declines Rs 190 to Rs 78,960/10g

SILVER CLIMBS RS 350

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined Rs 190 to Rs 78,960 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity settled at Rs 79,150 per 10 grams on Friday.

However, silver climbed Rs 350 to Rs 93,850 per kg on Monday. The metal had ended at Rs 93,500 per kg in the previous session.

Price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity slipped Rs 190 to Rs 78,560 per 10 grams. On Friday, the yellow metal closed at Rs 78,750 per 10 grams.

Meanwhile, in futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery jumped Rs 410 or 0.54 per cent to Rs 77,029 per 10 grams.

"Gold prices surged on MCX, as geopolitical turmoil reignited safe-haven demand. Rebel forces ousted Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, with reports of Israeli involve-



ment in Syrian territory and Turkey-backed rebel activity escalating tensions.

"Meanwhile, South Korea's leadership crisis, involving President Yoon Suk Yeol's criminal investigation and impeachment survival, added to global uncertainty," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said.

Silver contracts for March delivery advanced Rs 738 or 0.8 per cent to Rs 93,186 per kg on the bourse.

Hiring in IT sector to witness 15-20 growth in jobs

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The IT sector, which is on the path of recovery, is expected to witness 15-20 per cent growth in job opportunities across various industries in 2025, talent solutions company NLB Services said on Monday.

The IT industry has gained back momentum in H2 2024 and is gearing up for a promising 2025 on multiple fronts, said NLB Services.

In the coming year, fresher hiring in the Indian IT sector is poised for significant growth, with an anticipated increase of 15-20 per cent in job opportunities across various industries, it added.

At the same time, the demand for highly specialised tech roles, including artificial intelligence, machine learning (ML), data analytics, and cloud technologies, is expected to surge by 30-35 per cent, driven by the increasing reliance on emerging technologies, it said.

This surge in demand is not limited to hiring but extends to a strategic focus on tech upskilling, with companies

investing heavily in training initiatives to equip their workforce with the necessary skills to meet the evolving technological landscape, the company noted.

NLB Services' analysis is based on the brand's view of the macro ecosystem, industry trends, and demand.

Further, the company stated that campus hiring remains the core focus for larger companies that are looking to hire aggressively for the second half of 2024-25.

Since the 2021-22, global economic slowdown, clients have curtailed their discretionary spending due to on-demand hiring patterns and global macroeconomic challenges, this has impacted the project pipeline however, it is expected to stabilise in 2025, thus promising hopes for freshers, it said.

IT fresher hiring in 2025, is projected to increase with high demand for roles in artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), data analytics, Python, cloud technologies, and cybersecurity.

Tata Motors, Kia India to hike vehicle prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Motors and Kia India on Monday announced plans to hike vehicle prices from January to offset the impact of rising input costs.

Tata Motors said it will hike the price of its passenger vehicle portfolio, including electric vehicles, by up to 3 per cent from January next year.

The price hike is being undertaken to partially offset the rise in input costs and inflation, the Mumbai-based auto major said in a statement.

"Effective January 2025, the price increase will vary depending on model and variant," it added.

Tata Motors sells a range of passenger vehicle models ranging from Tiago hatchback to SUVs Harrier and Safari.



Kia India, which sells models like Seltos and Sonet, said it will increase prices of its entire model range by 2 per cent from January.

The price hike, effective from January 1, 2025, is primarily due to rising commodity prices and escalating supply chain-related costs, the auto maker said in a statement.

Kia India Senior Vice President - Sales and Marketing - Hardeep Singh Brar said the company is committed to delivering technologically advanced vehicles of the highest quality to customers.

"However, due to the persistent rise in commodity prices, unfavourable exchange rates, and increased input costs, a necessary price adjustment has become unavoidable," he added.

Sensex falls 200 pts due to selling in FMCG, PSU bank shares

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Monday, dragged down by selling in blue-chip stocks Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, Axis Bank amid mixed global trends.

After oscillating between highs and lows during the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 200.66 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 81,508.46. During the day, it moved between a high of 81,783.28 and a low of 81,411.55.

The NSE Nifty dropped 58.80 points or 0.24 per cent to close at 24,619.

From the 30-share pack, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors, Axis Bank, Nestle India, Asian Paints, ITC, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank and State Bank of India were among the laggards.

Larsen & Toubro, Tata Steel,



JSW Steel, HDFC Bank, Adani Ports, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bharti Airtel and PowerGrid were among the gainers.

"Markets witnessed a range-bound session and mostly languished in negative territory due to lack of investors' enthusiasm after last week's rally," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

The BSE smallcap gauge climbed 0.46 per cent and midcap index gained 0.32 per cent.

CEAT shares rally over 10 pc

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of tyre maker CEAT rallied over 10 per cent on Monday after the RPG Group firm entered into a definitive agreement with Michelin to acquire Camso brand's Off-highway Tyres and tracks business for about Rs 1,905 crore. On the BSE, the stock of the company soared 10.10 per cent to finish at Rs 3,404.45 apiece. On the NSE, it climbed 7.54 per cent to end at Rs 3,329 per piece. In the intraday trade, CEAT's shares advanced 16 per cent to hit a 52-week high of Rs 3,581.45 and Rs 3,578.80, on the BSE and NSE, respectively. In terms of volume, 55.55 lakh equity shares of CEAT were traded on the National Stock Exchange.

Retail inflation for farm, rural workers eases

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation for farm workers and rural labourers eased to 5.96 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively, in October from 6.36 per cent and 6.39 per cent in September.

The All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL) and Rural Labourers (CPI-RL) registered an increase of 11 points and 10 points, respectively, in October 2024, reaching levels of 1,315 and 1,326, a labour ministry statement said.

According to the statement, the CPI-AL and CPI-RL were at 1,304 points and 1,316 points, respectively, in September 2024.

"The year-on-year inflation rates based on CPI-AL and CPI-RL for October 2024 were recorded at 5.96% and 6.0%."

Sebi warns investors against trading in unlisted securities

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi on Monday warned investors against conducting transactions in securities of unlisted public limited companies on unauthorised electronic platforms and websites.

The markets watchdog highlighted that such activities violate the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956, and the SEBI Act, 1992, both aimed at safeguarding the interests of investors in the securities market.

In its statement, Sebi noted that some electronic platforms are facilitating the trading of unlisted securities without proper authorisation.

Cautioning investors, the regulator asked them "not to

conduct any transactions on such electronic platforms or share any sensitive personal details on the same as these platforms are neither authorised nor recognised by Sebi".

This cautionary statement came following a similar warnings from the regulator regarding unauthorised virtual trading platforms, paper trading, fantasy games, and platforms offering unlisted debt securities. In the latest release, Sebi emphasised that only recognised stock exchanges are authorised to provide platforms for fundraising and trading securities of listed or "to-be-listed" companies.

The list of Sebi-recognised stock exchanges is available on the regulator's official website.



Cautioning investors, the regulator asked them "not to conduct any transactions on such electronic platforms or share any sensitive personal details on the same as these platforms are neither authorised nor recognised by Sebi"

Air India places order to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Private carrier Air India on Monday announced placing an order to purchase 100 more Airbus aircraft, comprising 10 wide-body A350 and 90 narrow-body A320 family aircraft including A321neo.

These 100 new aircraft are in addition to the orders of 470 aircraft that Air India had placed with Airbus and Boeing last year, Air India said in a statement.

The airline also announced it has tied up with Airbus for component and maintenance support for its A350 fleet.

The latest order takes the total number of aircraft that Air India

ordered with Airbus from 250 to 350.

The order placed in 2023 for 250 planes comprised 40 A350 and 210 A320 family aircraft.

Air India in February 2023 announced that it would place an order for 470 aircraft, with an additional 370 options.

This was confirmed in June 2023, with the order comprising 40 Airbus A350s, 20 Boeing 787s and 10 Boeing 777-9s wide-body aircraft, as well as 210 Airbus A320/321 Neos and 190 Boeing 737 MAX single-aisle aircraft.

However, in December last year, the airline rejigged this order with 140 neo planes and 70 A320neo, as



against the earlier order of 140 A320neo and 70 A321 neo aircraft.

Besides, it also reshuffled its A350 order with 20 A350-900s and 20 A350-1000s as against six A350-900 and 34 A350-1000s ordered in February 2023.

"With India's passenger growth outpacing the rest of the world, its significantly improving infrastructure and an aspirational young population increasingly going global, we see a clear case for Air India to expand its future fleet beyond the firm orders of the 470 aircraft placed last year," said Natarajan Chandra sekaran, Chairman, Tata Sons and Air India.



After *Housefull 5*, Sanju baba onboards *Baaghi 4*

Sanjay Dutt, one of Bollywood's most iconic actors, has joined the cast of Sajid Nadiadwala's much-awaited *Baaghi 4*. The makers have released the gripping first look poster of Sanjay Dutt from *Baaghi 4* in a fierce avatar. Dutt is seen seated on a throne with blood all over his clothes, holding a lifeless woman in his arms exuding pain and anger. The tagline, "Every Aashiq Is A Villain," has further spiked the curiosity amongst fans. Sanjay Dutt's rugged persona and commanding screen presence make him an exciting addition to the *Baaghi* universe. *Baaghi 4* will have raw action with the direction of A Harsha. The *Baaghi* franchise, led by action star

Tiger Shroff, is celebrated for its adrenaline-pumping sequences and gripping narratives. Sajid Nadiadwala, known for his ability to blend blockbuster action with compelling storytelling, has reportedly lined up a formidable role for Dutt, aiming to elevate the stakes in this fourth instalment. With *Housefull 5* already under production, Nadiadwala and Dutt have collaborated back-back to deliver two mass entertainers with completely different genres. Prestented by Nadiadwala Grandson Entertainment, *Baaghi 4* is produced by Sajid Nadiadwala and is directed by A Harsha. *Baaghi 4* will release on September 5, 2025.



Mouni Roy expresses her desire to work in a dance-based film

Mouni Roy wishes to do a dance-themed movie, given her love for learning different dance forms. Mouni Roy calls dance her "love language" and expresses eagerness to be part of a dance-themed film. Mouni Roy, the entrepreneur-actress, is no stranger to stealing the limelight with her on-screen presence. In a recent conversation, she revealed her passion for learning different dance forms and expressed a keen interest in doing a dance-themed film. She shared, "I like to learn different dance forms. I look forward to the opportunity to work on a film like that one day!" Mouni has frequently expressed her passion for dance through her social media. She often shares videos of herself performing various dance styles and sharing impromptu dance sessions. The actress, known for her grace on screen, revealed that dancing is her "love language" and it holds a special place in her heart. Currently, Mouni is focused on several exciting projects, leaving fans curious about what's next. She has been actively reading through multiple interesting scripts. With her growing enthusiasm for dance and a promising slate of projects, Mouni Roy is all set to continue impressing her fans with her on-screen charisma.



Shilpa Shirodkar recalls Farah Khan's rejection due to weight concerns!

Actor Shilpa Shirodkar, who is presently competing on *Bigg Boss 18*, which is hosted by Salman Khan, talked candidly about how she lost out on the chance to feature in the *Chaiyya Chaiyya* song. Shilpa revealed that choreographer Farah Khan had approached her for the song but later decided she was "too fat" for the part during a latest episode talk with fellow competitors Chum Darang and Karanveer Mehra. Shilpa disclosed, "She [Farah] approached me for *Chaiyya Chaiyya*," saying that Farah first requested that she reduce weight for the song, which also included Shah Rukh Khan. But ten days later, Shilpa claimed that Farah had turned her down. Shilpa remembered Farah saying, "You are too fat for the song," in response to Karanveer's question about if she was rejected because she hadn't lost weight. After laughing, Karanveer remarked in jest, "Tu chadti toh train rukh jaati

kyaa? (If you had been aboard the train, would it have stopped?) In response, Shilpa said that only Mani Ratnam, the director of *Farah* and *Dil Se*, would understand why Malaika Arora had taken her place. It is interesting to note that Farah Khan previously disclosed on Malaika Arora's show, *Moving In With Malaika*, that Malaika was not the initial pick for *Chaiyya Chaiyya*. "You're the *Chaiyya Chaiyya* girl," Farah had remarked. Fortunately for you, however, about five heroines had declined to board the train. There was no mention of Malaika. We went up to Shilpa Shirodkar, Shilpa Shetty Kundra and two or three other individuals. One was unavailable, while the other was afraid of climbing aboard the train." One of Bollywood's most famous songs, *Chaiyya Chaiyya*, which was filmed with Shah Rukh Khan and Malaika Arora on a moving train in Ooty, made Malaika an overnight sensation.

VARUN DHAWAN'S ACTION-PACKED *BABY JOHN* TRAILER IS HERE

The hype and excitement around *Baby John* has been huge and the trailer has built the anticipation for the film further. The stars Varun Dhawan, Wamiqa Gabbi, along with Presenter Atlee and Producers Murad Khetani and Priya Atlee released the trailer of this big-ticket family entertainer amidst a huge crowd in Pune.

Directed by Kalees, the trailer gives the preview in the world of *Baby John* which is a perfect combination of action, entertainment, humour and foot-tapping tracks. The legendary S. Thaman's music

and background score (BGM) takes the trailer to another level, leaving audiences wanting for more.

Varun Dhawan shares, "I'm beyond thrilled to be a part of *Baby John*. This film is a deeply emotional and powerful journey, and it's been an incredible experience bringing this character to life. The trailer offers just a glimpse of the intensity and heart this story carries, and I can't wait for the audience to witness it on the big screen. Working on this project has been truly special, and I'm so excited to share it with everyone."

Meanwhile, presenter Atlee shares, "*Baby John* addresses a very important and timely subject. While it is a highly entertaining family film, it also highlights critical issues like women's safety, which is a major concern today. Additionally, it explores the impact of parenting, portraying the contrast between a good father and a bad father, and how good parenting can shape a better society. I'm incredibly proud to have produced this meaningful project."

Baby John also stars national award-winning actress Keerthy Suresh, Jackie Shroff and Rajpal Yadav.




ARCHIE




CALVIN AND HOBBS




GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD

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SUDOKU

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Yesterdays solution

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Rules

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

ACROSS

1 Gigantic

6 The organs of sight

7 Cardboard box

9 Move on hands and knees

11 Hurt by a bee

12 Three times twenty

13 Yell

16 Gave out a long deep breath to show sadness or happiness

18 A sheet-like garment worn in ancient Rome

19 Think differently to someone else

2 A sung musical drama

3 One time

4 Make longer by pulling

5 A place to see animals

8 A frightening dream

10 Observed

14 A smell

15 Counts up

17 Unwell

DOWN

1 Do these to strengthen your muscles and keep fit

SOLUTION

S	A	F	E	S						
J	O	R	N	A	L	I	S			
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‘Shades of gray’

Aditi Govitrikar’s hunt for complexity in her roles

TEJAL SINHA
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From the runway to the silver screen, Aditi Govitrikar has made an indelible mark on the Indian entertainment industry. With her stunning looks, captivating on-screen presence and tireless work ethic, she is a name synonymous with talent, beauty and dedication. With a filmography that boasts an impressive array of roles, she has solidified her position as a powerhouse in the Indian entertainment industry. From her early days as a model to her current status as a versatile actress, Aditi has consistently pushed boundaries and defied expectations.

A renowned actress and model, she has been an integral part of the popular web series *Mismatched*. As the show gears up for its third season, we caught up with her to talk about her experience, her character’s development and what audiences can expect from the upcoming season. For people who think this is her much-awaited comeback, Ah Ah! She’s actively been involved in multiple works.

Looking back on her association with *Mismatched*, she expressed her happiness with the way the show has progressed.

When asked about what drew her to the project initially, the *De Dana Dan* actress cited the show’s modern and relatable storyline. “The story was

In a career spanning multiple seasons and roles, **Aditi Govitrikar** has established herself as a powerhouse in the Indian entertainment industry. In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Aditi opens up about her experiences, the upcoming season of *Mismatched*, her passion for complex characters and what’s next for this talented actress



very modern,” she said. “It was about what’s happening today.” She also praised the show’s creator, noting that they have been “tremendous” since season one.

For the universe, she plays the character of none other than Rishi’s mother. As for her character’s development in season three, the *Thammudu* actress hinted that audiences can expect to see her character grow and evolve. “My character is pretty much a steady drop. There is no ‘oh my god’ kind of trajectory, unfortunately.” However, she expressed hope that her character’s storyline would become more complex in future seasons.

The *Soch* actress also spoke about how her own life experiences as a woman and mother influence her approach to her role. “I think what was interesting was that, in this also, the mother is very supportive of the children,” she said, highlighting the importance of supportive parenting.

When asked about the central themes and messages of season three, Govitrikar emphasized the show’s focus on relationships, identity and family. “It’s about how relationships evolve over time. What are the issues? What are the joys? What are the bondings that happen between two people in our group?” She noted that the show tackles complex issues in a relatable and realistic way.

Going ahead, she touched on the show’s ability to tackle different issues with each season. “It’s not the same thing as season one,” she said. “There are more complex issues coming up.” Aditi praised the show’s creators for their willingness to take on tough topics and explore the complexities of human relationships.

Apart from her acting career, Aditi has also been actively involved in the *Marvelous Mrs India*, a pageant that aims to empower married women. In this interview, Aditi shares her thoughts on *Marvelous Mrs India*, her philanthropic works and her upcoming projects.

Her passion for the *Marvelous Mrs India* is evident as she talks about the pageant’s mission to give married women a platform to rediscover themselves. “The fact that they go out of the pageant gives a lot more confidence in themselves... because there is disease and all those are required; it’s essential,” she explains. Aditi believes that married women often lose their identity after getting married or having kids, and *Marvelous Mrs India* provides them with an opportunity to reclaim their individuality.

As for her philanthropic works, Aditi is committed to using her platform to make a positive impact. While she didn’t delve into specifics, it’s clear that giving back to the community is an essential part of her values.

In terms of her acting career, Aditi admits to being choosy about the projects she takes on. “I’ve got a few offers that are fine,” she says, “but I don’t want to create any controversy.” Aditi is looking for roles that challenge her as an actress, particularly those with complex characters. “Mundane roles are easy to play. But if there are shades of gray or even black, that’s somebody who is eager, a manipulator, or a negative character—that’s very, very interesting to play.”



Tattoos over taboos

Ink-volution being the new era of self-expression

PNŚ|HYDERABAD

The tattoo industry in India is undergoing a remarkable transformation, driven by shifting perceptions and a surge in demand, particularly among younger generations. While the precise market value remains elusive, global projections indicate that the tattoo market could surpass \$3.93 billion by 2030, with India emerging as one of the fastest-growing regions in this space.

Today, they symbolise more than rebellion or personal identity; they serve as vessels for personal stories, cultural legacies and cutting-edge artistic innovation. As we look toward 2025, the tattoo landscape is poised to fuse tradition with experimentation, ushering in an era of exciting transformation.

Tattoos—a combination of art and pain, deeply embedded with meaning. But why do people endure the discomfort of the tattooing process? “The pain is certainly discomforting, but it’s that very sensation of earning the mark that drives people to seek more,” says Vikas Malani, a veteran celebrity tattoo artist and founder of BodyCanvas Tattoos. “The permanent ink is a commitment to memories, passions and beliefs. It’s a reminder that life is a journey, punctuated by meaningful milestones. The slight discomfort of the process becomes a symbol—reminding us that beauty often arises from challenge. It’s a test of courage and self-confidence.”

In recent years, the tattoo industry has experienced rapid growth, particularly in cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Hyderabad. Vicky Rao, CEO of Naksh Tattoos in A.S Rao Nagar and other locations in Hyderabad, explains, “While some tattoo artists are embracing digital tools like iPads to create intricate designs, many still rely on pre-existing patterns from platforms like Pinterest. However, a growing group of artists is creating original, personalised tattoos by hand, demonstrating a significant shift toward custom designs. We already conducted a free workshop for awareness and are also planning a tattoo convention in Hyderabad soon to give people the opportunity to explore trends and the nuances of the tattoo industry.”

While minimalism once dominated, this trend has faded, with fewer clients opting for simple, understated designs. An emerging trend in the industry is the growing interest in hyper-realistic tattoos, which employ shading and negative space to create lifelike images. “These tattoos are often confused with 3D tattoos, but they actually use techniques like realism and hyper-realism to generate a three-

From inked stories to cultural revolutions, India’s tattoo scene is morphing into a global canvas, blending tradition with innovation as it redefines self-expression in 2025

dimensional effect on the skin. Artists use varying shades of dark ink and carefully applied color to create depth and dimension, pushing the boundaries of traditional tattoo artistry,” cautions Vicky.

In cities like Delhi and Bangalore, tattoo conventions have proven successful in raising awareness and promoting the art form. While Hyderabad has yet to host a similar event, there is hope that in the coming years, such conventions will help raise awareness and establish higher professional standards within the city.

Meanwhile, Trisha Ganguly, 32, a corporate worker in Gachibowli, found solace in Buddhism amidst the challenges of the pandemic. Recently, she adorned herself with a tattoo of the “lotus flower,” representing purity and enlightenment, as it emerges from muddy waters to bloom into a beautiful flower. She says, “I was never really into tattooing but recently I decided to give it a try. I honestly loved the experience right from sitting with the tattoo artist discuss the design to finally getting inked and feeling the meditative power.”

Amid the rise of minimalist and aesthetic tattoos, Sak Yant stands out for its spiritual and cultural depth. Award-winning tattoo artist Prashant Yaduvanshi, Founder of Shaman Ink, shares, “Originating in Thailand, these sacred designs are traditionally created by monks and imbued with protective blessings. Featuring intricate geometric patterns and ancient symbols, Sak Yant tattoos carry a profound sense of purpose.” As mindfulness and spirituality gain prominence, Sak Yant is resonating with a new generation of seekers.

In addition, the evolution of cover-up tattoos has marked a significant shift in tattoo artistry, moving away from the traditional, heavy-handed approach of concealing old designs

with bold, dark patches.

Prashant Yaduvanshi has unlocked an innovative approach to tattooing over old designs without resorting to the typical cover-up methods. Rather than using dark patches to mask existing ink, he employs lighter hues, crafting new, seamless works of art that blend effortlessly with the skin. “The trust my clients place in me is something I hold with great responsibility. Their reactions to the transformed designs are the most rewarding part of my work. Many come to me feeling trapped by tattoos they no longer connect with, believing their only option is to live with them. But when they see their old tattoos reimagined into something fresh and beautiful, their joy and surprise are the greatest affirmations of my craft.”

Artists are increasingly embracing diversity and exploring new avenues. Take, for instance, Hyderabad-based freelance tattoo artist Alamdar Aju, who is gaining recognition for his work in Dubai. Reflecting on emerging design trends, he says, “In 2025, Japanese-style tattoos are poised for a global renaissance, reflecting a growing fascination with their aesthetic depth, cultural resonance, and historical significance. Known for their intricate designs and profound symbolism, Japanese tattoos have evolved far beyond their traditional roots. The hallmark of Japanese tattoos—whether it’s the majestic dragon, the graceful koi fish, or the vibrant cherry blossoms—is their meticulous attention to detail and their ability to tell a story through imagery, often invoking themes of strength, perseverance, and spirituality.”

Tattoos, like many forms of self-expression, reflect the social class and cultural influences of the individuals who choose them. In Hyderabad, Bunty Bugs of Stud-In Tattoos, which operates in both Hyderabad and Vijayawada, comments, “For the masses, tattoos inspired by film stars have gained significant popularity, with tattoos from Prabhas’ movie *Salaar* showing a sharp rise. These tattoos symbolize fandom and personal connection to celebrity culture. Among the middle class, face tattoos are gaining traction, marking a shift towards bolder, more visible expressions of identity. Meanwhile, wealthier individuals tend to opt for tattoos that reflect their beliefs, such as religious or spiritual symbols, often featuring gods.”

In addition, young people, particularly women, are embracing more abstract or personal symbols like angel numbers, which are believed to carry meaningful guidance. This diverse range of tattoo choices underscores how body art continues to evolve, influenced by personal values, societal trends and the ongoing quest for self-expression.

Thyrocare, has released a comprehensive research report uncovering critical insights into the prevalence of diabetes and prediabetes across India. The study, which analysed HbA1c test results from a staggering

1,966,449

adults nationwide undergoing a routine health check up, highlights alarming trends and regional disparities in the incidence of the disease. Key findings indicate that

49.43%

of the tested population exhibited abnormal blood glucose levels, with

22.25%

identified as prediabetic and

27.18%

as diabetics. These statistics emphasise the growing burden of this metabolic disorder, positioning diabetes as a “pandemic in the making” and calling for urgent action.

DISTURBING TRENDS IN PREDIABETES & DIABETES

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF STUDY

High prevalence across regions

Odisha reported the highest prevalence of both prediabetes and diabetes, while Jammu & Kashmir recorded the lowest levels. This underscores the need for the implementation of region-specific health programs to tackle the disparity.

Dietary patterns and diabetes

The study revealed a striking correlation between dietary habits and diabetes prevalence. States with higher rice consumption showed a greater incidence of diabetes and prediabetes, while states with predominantly wheat-based diets demonstrated lower prevalence rates, highlighting the role of diet in managing disease risk.

Gender and age trends

- Males had a significantly higher diabetes prevalence (30.84%) compared to females (23.51%).
- Prediabetes prevalence remained relatively balanced between genders.
- The data shows the highest diabetic burden in 65+ individuals, with worrying trends showing increasing prevalence in the economically active age group of 36-65 years. Young adults between 18-35 years show higher prevalence of prediabetes than diabetes, indicating a high potential to develop the disease.

Socioeconomic and healthcare challenges

The study warns of a severe strain on India’s healthcare infrastructure and individual finances, advocating for regular screening and awareness campaigns to mitigate the impact of undiagnosed cases.

Screening insights and policy implications

By leveraging HbA1c—a stable and reliable marker for long-term glucose monitoring—the research highlights the importance of routine testing. The findings urge policymakers to implement targeted preventive measures in high-burden regions, emphasizing lifestyle modifications and public health education.



Kapil Dev backs Rohit, says captain doesn't need to prove himself

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Let's not doubt Rohit Sharma's ability to bounce back, said the legendary Kapil Dev, who also felt that under-fire India skipper doesn't need to prove himself at this stage of his career. Rohit, who managed scores of 3 and 6 in the the Adelaide pink-ball Test after dropping down the batting order, is being criticized by fans and former players for being subdued. India lost the game by 10 wickets in just two and a half days. "He doesn't have to prove himself. He has done this for many, many years, so let's not doubt somebody. I won't doubt him. I hope his form comes back, that's important," Kapil said during the launch of the Vishwa Samudra Open, a

PGTI event set to begin at the Delhi Golf Club on Tuesday. Rohit had missed the opening Test due to the birth of his second child. Despite scoring most of his runs as an opener, the 37-year-old dropped down to the number six position, offering the top spot to KL Rahul, who played a pivotal role in the Perth win. "With one or two performances, if you doubt someone's captaincy, I mean, just six months back when he won the T20 World Cup, you wouldn't have asked me this question. Let it go, knowing his ability and talent, he will come back. They will come back strongly." Asked if it was a mistake to include young Harshit Rana in the second Test, Kapil said: "I am a nobody. How can I judge? There are people



up there who have the responsibility to decide who should be in the team." "We shouldn't talk. My former colleagues are sitting

there, and I hope they will do a good job." In Rohit's absence, vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah had led India to a 295-run in



Perth. Asked if Bumrah is shaping up well to take over the reins from Rohit, Kapil said: "I think it is too early to talk

about that. With one performance, you can't say he is the best, and with one bad performance, you can't say he doesn't deserve it.

"Let a player play a lot of cricket, take on a lot of captaincy. Ups and downs will come, and then you judge a person by how he reacts in difficult times, not in good times. In good times, we don't have to judge. When he is down and out. Virat Kohli, who also looked subdued coming into the five-Test series in Australia, managed to hit his first hundred in 18 months in Perth. However, the star batter failed in the second Test with scores of 7 and 11 in his two innings. "Like Virat Kohli, he is one of the best cricketers in our country. If you put the four top batsmen, he will be there. If he is going through a rough time, it is only up to him how fast he can bounce back," Kapil said. Kampli needs to go back to rehab. Former India batter Vinod

Kampli has been struggling with alcohol-related and other health issues. He appeared frail during a recent public event held in memory of legendary coach Ramakant Achrekar. He was seen refusing to let go of his childhood friend Sachin Tendulkar. Kapil expressed sadness over Kampli's condition, emphasising the need for self-help alongside external support. "We should all try to support him. But more than us, he has to support himself. We can't look after anybody if that person can't look after himself," Kapil said. "All the cricketers feel very sad about what we have seen. I wish his closest friends can try to get him some help, to look after himself, to go back to rehab. People do get this illness, but you have to get back to rehab."



Siraj fined, Head also sanctioned by ICC for Adelaide confrontation

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Indian pacer Mohammed Siraj was fined 20 per cent of his match fee, while Australian batter Travis Head was also "sanctioned" by the ICC for indulging in a heated exchange of words during the just-concluded day-night Test here. Siraj and Head were held guilty of breaching the world body's code of conduct following a disciplinary hearing on Monday. "Siraj has been penalised 20 per cent of his match fee after being found guilty of breaching article 2.5 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel," the ICC said in a statement. The cited rule relates to "using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon dismissal." The ICC said Head too was "sanctioned" for breaching Article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. However, he escaped a fine for breaching the rule that relates to the "abuse of a player, player support personnel, umpire or match referee during an international match." Siraj and Head also received one demerit point each on their disciplinary records, marking their first offence in the last 24 months. "Both admitted their offences and accepted the sanctions

proposed by Match Referee Ranjan Madugalle," the ICC said. Head and Siraj had a brief showdown on day two of the match that Australia won by 10 wickets on Sunday. Head had struck a splendid 141-ball knock of 140 before being castled by Siraj, who went on to give him an aggressive send-off following an exchange of words. The Indian endured boos from the Adelaide crowd following the confrontation. Head later claimed that he had merely said "well bowled" to Siraj and that he was disappointed at how the visiting bowler had responded. Siraj disputed that claim, asserting that Head had abused him. "I only celebrated and he abused me and you saw that on TV too. I only celebrated at the start, I didn't say anything to him," Siraj told broadcaster 'Star Sports'. "What he said in the press conference wasn't right, it's a lie that he only said 'well bowled' to me. It's there for everyone to see that that's not what he said to me." Head also acknowledged his role in the incident. "There was no confrontation leading up to him and I felt like it was probably, yeah, a little bit far at the time, and that's why I am disappointed in the reaction that I gave back," he said in a post-play press conference. The two teams are tied 1-1 in the five-match series.

World Chess Championship: Gukesh loses to Ding Liren in 12th game

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Indian challenger D Gukesh lost the 12th game against defending champion Ding Liren of China to allow his opponent bounce back and level the World Chess Championship match here on Monday. The 18-year-old Gukesh was ahead by one point after he notched his second win of the match on Sunday, which came after seven consecutive draws, but Liren's win on Monday brought the things on an even keel. The two players are now tied at 6 points each with just two games left in the 14-round classical time control format, still shy of 1.5 points in order to win the title. The remaining two games will be played on Wednesday and Thursday, after rest day on Tuesday. Irrespective of what happens in the next game on Wednesday, the match will go the distance (14 games) and more likely there will be tiebreaker - where games are of shorter duration - to determine the winner. The 32-year-old Liren had won the opening game before Gukesh emerged victorious in



the third game. The second, and the fourth to 10th games were drawn. In what was the first victory for Liren with his white pieces, Gukesh's preparation did not come as good as the other 11 games that he played here. The start was an English opening by the Chinese and much to the surprise of the fans, Gukesh went for a position that led to a Benoni defense with colours reversed. Gukesh started to miss out creating counter play in the middle game as white played just normal developing moves. By the 15th move, though less on time on the

clock, white had a small advantage as a central breakthrough looked inevitable, giving Liren the space advantage. Gukesh's 17th move did not help his cause as white was able to get the desired break in the centre. Five moves later, another error by Gukesh gave Liren a huge advantage. Liren's central pawn made a foray to the sixth rank in what was a near-decisive blow on the 27th move. Gukesh had to part with a couple of pawns. Adding to Gukesh's woes was an imminent rook invasion. The game ended through a fine tactic by Liren who sacrificed a rook to force

matters. The game ended in 39 moves. For Gukesh, much would depend on how he does in his last remaining white game after the final rest day on Tuesday. Liren has proved again that he is a tough nut to crack and his second victory in the match was pretty much one-sided compared to many other games in the match that had chances for both sides. In the previous world championship match against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia, Liren had to come back from behind as many as three times before being crowned the world champion. The Moves: 1.C4 e6 2.G3 d5 3.Bg2 Nf6 4.Nf3 d4 5.0-0 Nc6 6.E3 Be7 7.D3 dxe3 8.Bxe3 e5 9.Nc3 0-0 10.Re1 h6 11.A3 a5 12.H3 Be6 13.Kh2 Rb8 14.Qc2 Re8 15.Nb5 Bf5 16.Rad1 Nd7 17.Qd2 Bg6 18.D4 e4 19.Ng1 Nb6 20.Qc3 Bf6 21.Qc2 a4 22.Ne2 Bg5 23.Nf4 Bxf4 24.Bxf4 Rc8 25.Qc3 Nb8 26.D5 Qd7 27.D6 c5 28.Nc7 Rf8 29.Bxe4 Nc6 30.Bg2 Rcd8 31.Nd5 Nxd5 32.Cxd5 Nb8 33.Qxc5 Rc8 34.Qd4 Na6 35.Re7 Qb5 36.D7 Rc4 37.Qe3 Rc2 38.Bd6 f6 39.Rxg7+ Black resigned.



India gets tricky group in 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers final round

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India was on Sunday drawn in a tricky group along with Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Singapore for the 2027 Asian Cup Qualifiers final round matches, beginning March 25 next year. The draw, which saw 24 teams divided into six groups of four, was held at the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) House in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Only the six group winners will qualify for the main tournament to be held in Saudi Arabia in 2027 and join the 18 teams who have already booked their tickets after the second round of qualifying. The final round will be contested over six match days in a home-and-away format between March 25, 2025 and March 31, 2026. Aiming to qualify for the third successive time, India will begin its Group C campaign at home against Bangladesh. India is the highest-ranked team in the group at 127, followed by Hong Kong (156), Singapore (161) and Bangladesh (185). But, they won't be easy opponents. India has faced all three opponents in the recent past.

The Blue Tigers last faced Bangladesh (1-1 draw) in the 2021 SAFF Championship, Hong Kong (India won 4-0) in the AFC Asian Cup Qualifiers in Kolkata in June 2022, and Singapore (1-1 draw) in the Hung Thinh Friendly Tournament in Vietnam in September 2022. After the draw, India head coach Manolo Marquez said, "We are a Pot 1 team and we need to show why we are the favourites to qualify. There are not too many differences between groups. Every group is difficult. "Hong Kong has improved a lot with naturalised players and with their coach Ashley Westwood. "We will play against Bangladesh first in March, who have been our regular opponents in the SAFF Championship. We know the calendar. We have six games and we need to top the group and qualify for the Asian Cup." India's fixtures: March 25, 2025: India vs Bangladesh (home) June 10, 2025: Hong Kong vs India (away) October 9, 2025: India vs Singapore (home) October 14, 2025: Singapore vs India (away) November 18, 2025: Bangladesh vs India (away)

South Africa go on top in WTC points table

PTI ■ DUBAI

South Africa on Monday replaced Australia at the top of the ICC World Test Championship table after their massive 109-run over Sri Lanka while India are now in the third place following their defeat in the Adelaide Test. South Africa now have 63.33 percentage points after 10 matches in the cycle and they are followed by Australia (60.71 PTC). India were leading the WTC table, heading into the Adelaide Test after their massive win in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy opener in Perth. India had 61.11 points heading into the pink ball Test in Adelaide which they



lost inside three days and they now stand third with 57.29 percentage points. The best possible way for India to make a third appearance in the WTC final next year would be to win

each of the three remaining Tests in Australia. Australia had 57.69 percentage points before the Adelaide Test which improved to 60.71 after their win.

But even as they grabbed the top spot with the contest ending on Sunday, Australia remained table-toppers only for one day as the Proteas surged ahead with their win in the second Test at St George's Park in Gqeberha. With the Border-Gavaskar series now tied at 1-1, Australia are in a strong position for a top-two finish. They will also tour Sri Lanka next year for an additional two Tests, meaning they could theoretically draw 2-2 with India and stay in contention for a place in the final. Both England and New Zealand have been penalised with three WTC points each for slow over-rate in the Christchurch Test, according to the ICC.

Mohammed Siraj is a good character, he gets the crowd up like Kohli: Josh Hazlewood

PTI ■ ADELAIDE

Mohammed Siraj's hot temper has become a topic of discussion but Australian quick Josh Hazlewood says the Indian pacer is a "good character" who fires up the crowd and is passionate about the game like Indian superstar Virat Kohli. Siraj was involved in two incidents where his temper flared during the pink-ball Test that India lost by 10 wickets. In Australia's first innings, Siraj threw the ball wide off the stumps near Marnus Labuschagne after the Australian batter pulled away from his stance, forcing the bowler to halt his run-up. This occurred when a man holding a tower of beer cups walked into Labuschagne's line of sight. The next day, Siraj was involved in a verbal altercation with Travis Head soon after cleaning him up, drawing the ire of the Adelaide crowd which booed him. "He's just a good character and it's

good to see sometimes," said Hazlewood, who shared the dressing room with both Siraj and Kohli during his time at the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL. "I really enjoyed my time at RCB with Siraj. He's probably the leader of the attack there, to a degree. He's another one who's a bit like Virat, very passionate, goes with the flow of the game, gets the crowd up. He has bowled serious spells in the IPL in the last few years," he added. Hazlewood, who missed the second Test due to a side strain, had dismissed Kohli for 5 in the first innings in the opening Test at Perth. It was the fourth time the Australian quick dismissed Kohli in red-ball cricket. "It just comes down to who executes well on the day, whether he leaves you well until the ball gets soft or someone else comes on the balls and doesn't ball quite well enough," he said. "There's a lot of match-ups like that throughout international cricket. You know, we've played each other



so much. If you've been around for 10 years, you pretty much know each other inside out." Hazlewood said the current crop of batters are much more eager to go after the ball as compared to the players who wielded the willow 10 years ago. "There are different players in different teams there are some players you really need to be patient with. There are others who come after you, so you don't have to be patient but they are dangerous because they can score. "I don't think betters are probably as patient as they were 10 years ago. They like to feel the ball and we've seen the way England play and even players in the Indian team with (Rishabh) Pant and (Nitish) Reddy and guys like that." India suffered a 10-wicket loss in the pink ball Test as Australia levelled the five match series 1-1 following their 295-run loss in the opener. The two sides now head to Brisbane for the third match, starting December 14. Australia have lost the last two

matches in the Gabba and will look to get back to winning ways at the venue, where they have done well, traditionally. The last time they played at the Gabba, pacer Shamar Joseph ripped through Australia to fashion West Indies 8-run win in the day night fixture. "We always play pretty well in Brisbane (but) the last Test was obviously pink-ball," Hazlewood said. "The pink-ball gets quite soft in Brisbane quite early on, with the wicket being quite hard, it doesn't have that that grass that we see here at Adelaide. "So we're back to the red-ball there, which suits us. We obviously haven't won recently up there, but it's a place we like to play as it suits our guys. "It's an experienced team, so we've all been there a lot of times. It's probably more just the time difference - the going from day-night and sleeping in - to your sleeping patterns, getting that adjusted and getting back on track."

Rajendra Prasad's shady remarks on Allu Arjun



Senior actor Rajendra Prasad has acted in numerous notable films as a lead actor over the past 48 years. During a latest event of his upcoming film, he remarked that nowadays, even a red sandalwood thief can become a hero, making an indirect reference to *Pushpa 2*. Additionally, he commented on the recent ticket price hike, which also appears to target the same film

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Senior actor Rajendra Prasad's web series, *Harikatha: Sambhavami Yuge Yuge*, is set to stream on Disney Hotstar from December 13. At a promotional event for the series, Rajendra Prasad made some remarks that indirectly targeted Allu Arjun and his film *Pushpa*.

Rajendra Prasad reflected on his 48-year career in the film industry,

saying, "It's not a joke to work in this industry for so long." He expressed his gratitude for the opportunities he has received and acknowledged that he has been fortunate to work on many good projects.

The actor emphasised that he has played the lead role in many films, including *Aa Naluguru*, *Senapathi*, *Ladies Tailor*, *Appala Appa Rao*, *Pekata Paparao* and *April 1 Vidudala*. He noted that these characters were inspired by society and his surroundings. In an indirect reference to

Pushpa, Rajendra Prasad said, "You are all seeing, recently a red sandalwood thief has become a hero." He added, "But I am lucky that I was a different kind of hero."

Rajendra Prasad also commented on the recent ticket price hike, which is believed to be related to *Pushpa 2*. He said, "You don't need to pay Rs 1000 to watch this web series; you can watch it at your home."

The senior actor acknowledged that the film industry is undergoing a significant change, with the rise of

digital platforms. "Now, the theater is coming to every home," he said. "The content should be strong, and we are presenting such strong content in this *Harikatha*."

Rajendra Prasad has acted with five generations of actors throughout his 48-year-long career. He listed some of the notable actors he has worked with, including NTR, ANR, Krishna, Sobhan Babu, Chiranjeevi, Mahesh Babu, Jr NTR and Allu Arjun.

The actor praised the director

Maggie for coming up with the web series *Harikatha*. He noted that some scenes in the series have drawn comparisons to late NTR's mythological roles.

Rajendra Prasad plays the role of Rangachari in *Harikatha*, a character who tells Harikathas and chants the name of Hari throughout his life. The web series is produced by Peoples Media Factory and features a talented cast, including Sriram, Divi, Pujitha Ponnada and Mounika Reddy.

ANKITH KOYYA TAKES LEAD IN 14 DAYS GIRLFRIEND INTLO

Ankith Koyya, an upcoming actor, has already proven himself as a successful actor with films like *Aay* and *Maruthi Nagar Subramanyam*. He is now set to play the lead role in the upcoming film *14 Days Girlfriend Intlo*, which is slated for release soon. Shriya Kontham stars as the female lead, while Sriharsha directs the film.

A promotional video from the film was released on Monday at a function in Hyderabad. The film is a romantic comedy, and Ankith is confident that the audience will enjoy it. "We hope the audience will enjoy this film as much as they enjoyed the *Amrutham* serial. Sometimes, we find humour in the struggles of others," said Ankith. Talking about the story, Ankith revealed that it revolves around his character, Harsha, who gets locked in his girlfriend's house for fourteen days. "The film explores what happens during those fourteen days. This is the main plot and it will keep you laughing. I particularly liked the unique angle of Harsha's character," said Ankith.

The actor praised his co-star and female lead Shriya, saying she gave an outstanding performance. "I'm confident her work will impress everyone," he said. Ankith added that he is eagerly waiting for the release of this film. "It's been worth the wait. We've come this far thanks to Krish Garu. Vennela Kishore garu's track has been fantastic, and the film will soon hit theatres. I'm sure it will impress the audience," said Ankith. The film is produced by Satya Komal.



Mega pressure on Ram Charan's Game Changer

Allu Arjun's *Pushpa 2* has shattered records on its first day, reaching the Rs 500 crore club in just two days. Interestingly, many Mega fans have been vocal about their opposition to Allu Arjun, with some even boycotting the film. This backlash may have contributed to the film's relatively low premiere show numbers. However, despite this, *Pushpa 2* performed exceptionally well, especially in the Hindi belt, creating history on its first day. The success of *Pushpa 2*

has now put pressure on Ram Charan, son of Mega Star Chiranjeevi. His upcoming film *Game Changer*, directed by Shankar and produced by Dil Raju, is scheduled to release on January 10, 2025, coinciding with the Sankranti holidays. Mega fans and Pawan Kalyan supporters are reportedly circulating messages on social media, urging fans to work towards achieving bigger collections on the first day. According to sources, the target is to collect at least Rs 200 crore on the first day. The film's release has

become a highly anticipated event, with many in the industry eagerly waiting to see how *Game Changer* will perform. However, one concern is that director Shankar's previous film, *Bharatheeyudu 2*, was a major flop, leading some to question whether he has lost his touch.

To generate buzz and attract overseas audiences, the makers are organising a grand event in the USA. Additional events are planned in both Telugu states and other regions to promote the film and woo audiences.

Jani Master vows to fight back after removal from association



Jani Master, the former president of the Telugu Film TV Dancers and Dance Directors Association, has been removed from his position and had his membership terminated. This decision was made after Joseph Prakash was elected as the new president, marking his fifth time in the role.

According to reports, Jani Master's removal was due to the ongoing POCISO case against him and his alleged aggressive behaviour. However, Jani Master has denied these allegations, taking to social media to clarify his position.

In a video statement, Jani Master said, "Rumours are circulating in the media that I have been permanently expelled from the union

citing unsubstantiated allegations. Don't believe these rumours."

He emphasised that he is still the president of the association, as his term has not yet expired. "No one has the right to take their own decisions and positions by holding elections in an unethical manner," Jani Master said. "I am going to proceed legally against those responsible." On a separate note, Jani Master expressed his excitement about *Game Changer*, which he has choreographed. "A good song is coming from *GameChanger* in my choreography and you all will definitely like it," he said.

Vikram-starrer Veera Dheera Sooran Part 2 teaser is out now

Chiyaan Vikram, known for his versatile roles, joined forces with acclaimed director S.U. Arun Kumar of *Chithitha* (Chinna in Telugu) fame, for the highly anticipated film *Veera Dheera Sooran Part 2*. Young and passionate producer Riya Shibu is producing this prestigious project under the H.R. Pictures banner. Earlier, she produced films like *Mumbaikar*, *Mura and Thugs*, and distributed blockbusters such as *RRR* and *Vikram*. The film's visual glimpse which was released earlier this year garnered immense reception from the audience and amassed over 14 million views on YouTube. Now, the makers unveiled the stunning teaser of the film, leaving audiences even more excited.

The teaser initially presents Vikram as a loving father and husband but with a dark, hidden side. His character is part of a dangerous gangster network and is driven by a mysterious mission. As someone who conceals



his true identity for a greater cause, Vikram's character arc has raised expectations and fueled curiosity for the film.

The shooting of *Veera Dheera Sooran Part 2* has been completed and post-production work is currently in full swing. The film features an impressive ensemble cast, including the talented SJ Suryah, acclaimed actress Dushara Vijayan and popular Malayalam actor Sooraj Venjaramoodu.

The gripping musical score is

composed by GV Prakash Kumar. While Theni Easwar handles the cinematography, GK Prasanna takes charge of editing. The art direction is done by C. S. Balachander. *Veera Dheera Sooran Part 2* will be released in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi in January 2025 and promises to be a thrilling cinematic experience.



Despite her great successes, Rashmika remains as humble as ever: VD

Rashmika Mandanna is basking in the glory of her latest success, *Pushpa 2*, where she played the iconic character of Srivalli. Her performance and dancing skills have earned her widespread recognition at the national level.

Rashmika is now set to play the female lead in the upcoming film *The Girlfriend*, opposite Deekshith Shetty. Directed by Rahul Ravindran, the movie tells a beautiful love story. The film is produced by Dheeraj Mogilineni and Vidya Koppineedi.

On Monday, actor Vijay Deverakonda unveiled the teaser of *The Girlfriend*. Sharing his thoughts on the teaser, Vijay Deverakonda wrote on his social media page, "Every visual in the teaser of *The Girlfriend* is impressive. I'm eagerly waiting to watch this movie. I met Rashmika on set 8 years ago, and despite her many great successes, she remains as humble as ever. *The Girlfriend* has given her more responsibility as an actress and I believe she will take on that responsibility successfully. I'm confident that director Rahul will tell a beautiful story with this film that will touch the hearts of every audience. I wish the entire team of *The Girlfriend* all the best."

The teaser of *The Girlfriend* begins with Rashmika's character entering a college hostel. It introduces the characters of Deekshith Shetty and Rashmika, showcasing the beautiful relationship between them. The emotional journey of the lead pair during their time in college is depicted with heartfelt moments, accompanied by Vijay Deverakonda's captivating voice over.