



es, the world witnesses a united front of naval forces actively building bridges and strengthening global maritime security. This collaborative effort reflects a shared dedication to a safer and more secure maritime environment.



# Monday Mirchi

**NO OFFICER HAS BEEN COMING IN TIME**  
Regimes must and do change; but most of the staff in government offices, like the dog's curly tail, remain unchanged. In Telangana, it took a Minister's 'surprise' visit (for photo-op, says a wag) to discover the unpalatable fact that no officer has been coming in time for over nine years now. After Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy's discovery of 'time lapse' in work flow, everyone in the loop responsible for maintaining HR records was left red-faced. For, nobody had ever signed the register for recording attendance. It is understandable; for, they were bindaas en bloc because of the fact that former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao himself largely 'worked from home' and hardly visited the Secretariat. As for those who do not like to work, be it at home or in office, things have changed. 'Working' officials are divided over the sudden accent on sticking to office timings. The Congress government, having credited government employees for its victory in the Assembly elections, cannot afford to kick the ladder of its success. Surprise inspections apart, the ongoing ACB raids have also irked the employees, who, of course, cannot be expected to become nirmohi saints overnight even if they are primed ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

**BABUS NOT PREPARED TO LEAVE OFFICIAL RESIDENCE**  
For Telangana officials who have continued in their positions long after their retirement because of what they had brought to the table under the previous dispensation, the regime change is yet to sink in. Such officials were evidently not prepared for a tumultuous change. S Narsing Rao, who used to call the shots in the Chief Minister's Office, has taken noticeably a long period for vacating his official residence. It is understood that he has just given notice and is preparing to move out of his official quarters.

**TRANSFERS OR GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS?**  
Police transfers, particularly at DSP level, have been equated with the game of musical chairs across Telangana. Some officers, despite being promoted in 2018-19, are yet to get law and order posting, notwithstanding the regime change. There are others who had enjoyed sinecures and plum postings in the BRS regime but who managed to get transferred and posted within the city of their choice by cosying up with the new administration in the context of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Officers who await posting without scope for behind-the-scene action are resentful that, despite change in regime, their fortunes have not changed.

**CELEBRATED AS TOPPER BUT DETESTED AS COP**  
Gaush Alam, celebrated as topper of 2017 batch, is today detested as an insensitive cop.

As the Superintendent of Police, he not only slapped his subordinate Ravi Kumar, ASI, for allowing his family to offer prayers at Sammakka-Saralamma Jatara but also made him kneel down and insulted him otherwise too in front his family members. The ASI, who broke down, gained support and quaffed the milk of human kindness from his peers and others. Official circles are now discussing that cops at top levels are interested more in taking care of political strategist Sunil Kanugolu, chief advisor of Karnataka's Congress unit, than in treating their fraternal colleagues fairly.

**AAKU VS MULLU: THE ATTRACTION AND THE INVARIABLE LOSER**  
Tainted ministers and ministers need to only know how to coordinate their responses whenever scams surface. Those who fail in this dicey task, particularly officials, cannot help facing the music. When scams surface; officials are in the dock first, but ministers manage to wriggle out of the situation at least initially. Going by recent scams, regardless of the party in power, action has been initiated only against officials. No action has been initiated against the minister(s) concerned. Sleuths of the Anti Corruption Bureau in Telangana recently arrested four officials in the 'sheep distribution scam' case relating to the previous BRS government. Official circles believe that only babus have been made scapegoats in the case. This being so, the Telangana High Court recently asked the state government why no penal action had been taken against officials under the erstwhile TDP government in combined Andhra Pradesh over allotting 850 acres of prime land in Hyderabad to IMG Bharat Academies two decades ago. Some bureaucrats feel that only smart officials and wily politicians who are in power mix like water and milk to insulate themselves from scams. "Aaku yegiri mullu medha padda, mullu vachi aaku medha padda chirigedhi aaakee," goes a Telugu proverb. Babus in particular realize the truth of this quite late.

**GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS AFTER HIGHER LEVEL INTERVENTION**  
In Andhra Pradesh, it took the hospitalization of over 100 people with diarrhea and intense pressure from Minister Vidadala Rajini, Special CS Krishna Babu and other top officials to wake up officials of the Guntur Municipal Corporation who had remained clueless for over 10 days about the cause of the outbreak. Thanks to reactive measures under watch, the civic officials found out belatedly that certain mineral water plants had supplied contaminated water in the affected areas. Six of those plants were sealed and notices issued to 25 other plants for not maintaining prescribed norms in water quality.

-- Yours truly

## Sharmila lodges police complaint over 'derogatory' content

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Congress chief YS Sharmila Reddy has complained with the cyber-crime police in Hyderabad about some individuals running a "malicious" campaign against her on social media. Sharmila stated in her complaint that the accused were posting social media messages with "criminal intent to frighten" her.

She complained that they uploaded some contests on some YouTube channels and other social media platforms to tarnish her image. Cybercrime police have registered two cases based on the complaint made by Sharmila through her husband Anil Kumar.

She stated that ever since she started touring districts, some people have been targeting her and her followers. Sharmila, in her complaint, cited some of the insulting comments made against her and requested police to take action. The Congress leader also named eight persons in her complaint. A couple of them are reportedly based abroad.

Sharmila had earlier slammed YSR Congress Party leaders for making personal comments against her after she joined the Congress party.

# PM dedicates AIIMS Mangalagiri to nation

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the AIIMS Mangalagiri to the nation along with four AIIMS hospitals in various states across the country. On the occasion, PM Modi virtually congratulated the management, faculty, and students of AIIMS Mangalagiri. He highlighted the significant milestone achieved in healthcare infrastructure, stating, "Till 50 years after independence, there was only one AIIMS in the country, at Delhi. Today, Seven new AIIMS were inaugurated and foundation stones were laid. We are developing the country much faster than what happened in the last six decades."

Prime Minister Modi also laid the foundation for Nine Critical Care Blocks (CCBs) in Andhra Pradesh under the Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission, with seven CCBs at Government Medical Colleges and two in District Hospitals. Under this programme, Seven CCBs at Government Medical Colleges of Kadapa, SPSR Nellore, Srikakulam, Tirupati, East Godavari, Kurnool, Vizianagaram and Two CCBs in District Hospitals of Guntur and



Sri Satya Sai districts, will be constructed, at a total project cost of Rs.233 crores. Additionally, he inaugurated a 100-bed State-of-the-art ESI Hospital in Kakinada constructed for Rs 114 Crores.

The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Microbiology Food Testing Laboratory at Visakhapatnam and Four Mobile Food Testing Laboratories to strengthen the food safety testing ecosystem in Andhra Pradesh the State government in collaboration with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), under the Centrally sponsored schemes.

Governor of Andhra Pradesh S Abdul Nazeer, along with other dignitaries Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Prahalad Joshi, Union Minister

of Coal, Mines & Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Tribal Affairs and Prof. S.P.Singh Baghel, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers and Vidadala Rajini, Minister of Health, Medical and Family Welfare of Andhra Pradesh and Dr Madhabananda Kar, Director & CEO of AIIMS Mangalagiri attended the event at AIIMS Mangalagiri.

On this occasion, Governor Nazeer expressed his pleasure and extended greetings to the people of Andhra Pradesh on this historic occasion. He thanked Prime Minister Modi and other Union Ministers for their support in realizing the long-cherished dream of AIIMS Mangalagiri.

The AIIMS Mangalagiri, constructed with a project cost of Rs.1618.23 crores spread across 183.11 acres, comprises 960 beds, 41 departments, 13 specialty departments, and a 125-seat Medical College. This facility aims to address regional imbalances in quality tertiary-level healthcare and achieve self-sufficiency in medical education and training under the PMSSY.

He highlighted the achievement of AIIMS Mangalagiri, crossing the milestone of 10 lakh outpatient consultations in April 2023, which received praise from Prime Minister Modi.

Governor Abdul Nazeer, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Prahalad Joshi, Union Minister of Coal, Mines & Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Tribal Affairs and Prof. S.P.Singh Baghel, Union Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare and Chemicals & Fertilizers and Vidadala Rajini, Minister of Health, Medical and Family Welfare of Andhra Pradesh and Dr Madhabananda Kar, Director & CEO of AIIMS Mangalagiri were present at AIIMS Mangalagiri.

## Spl CS Krishnababu inaugurates 'Mega Health Camp'

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

As many as 450 people participated in the free mega health camp conducted at Nava Bharat Public School, Krishna Lanka on Sunday. The health camp was inaugurated by Special Chief Secretary MT Krishna Babu. The health camp was organized by the Andhra Pradesh Private Nursing Homes Association (APNA), Lions Club of Vijayawada East and Sameera East Lions Eye Hospital.

Speaking on the occasion, Special CS Krishna Babu appreciated the organizers for organizing the health camp to serve the poor. He praised the organizers for the costly tests being done and medicines being given free. He said that many super specialty hospitals are providing good treatment to the poor under the Jagananna Aarogya Suraksha scheme.



Lion's district governor Ln Sankara Gupta said that the Lions Club has been organizing various service activities on a regular basis to the poor and the needy for a long time.

Ln Dr Hanumaiah, president APNA NTR dist. & President Lions Club of Vijayawada East said that 17 IMA doctors were involved in conducting various tests on the

people who visited the camp and provided medicines free.

DM&HO NTR dist Dr M Suhashini, Lions past district governor Ln Gopinadh Ln Raghuram Sharma, Ln Kumudakar, Ln Atyutarao, Dr Choudary Bodepudi, Dr Manohar, Dr Suryanarayana Rao, Dr Swetha, Dr Bhuvaneshwararao & other doctors participated.

## Gear up...

Continued from Page 1

This is an unparalleled undertaking in Indian politics," Chandrababu maintained, urging the chosen candidates to strive for victory in every constituency.

Naidu cautioned candidates and party activists to ensure zero errors at every level of leadership, recognizing the critical nature of the next 40 days for the TDP.

"Remain accessible to the public and inspire confidence in them regarding their future," he advised the party's candidates.

"Prepare to face the challenges posed by YSRCP leaders, including Jagan, as part of their schemes. Remember, the Jana Sena is our ally, and it's imperative to treat them with respect and rally their support," Chandrababu Naidu instructed the TDP candidates contesting in the elections.

## APJAC defers 'Chalo Vijayawada' stir

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Joint Action Committee (APJAC) chairman, Bandi Srinivasa Rao, and secretary general, G. Hrudaya Raju, have announced the postponement of the planned 'Chalo Vijayawada' event slated for February 27. This postponement comes as they seek a resolution for the long-standing issues concerning employees, teachers, labourers, and pensioners.

Instead of the originally planned protest, APJAC will organize demonstrations opposing police detentions, illegal cases, and notices outside the offices of the AP NGO Associations across the state on the same day.

Following the submission of a representation outlining 49 demands from employees, teachers, labourers, and pensioners, the government has initiated a Group of Ministers (GOM) meeting to address these concerns. Furthermore, the government has disbursed Rs 250 crore for medical reimbursement, travel allowances, dearness allowances for police personnel, and grants for the Contributory Pension Scheme (CPS). Additionally, the state government has appointed nine staff members for the 12th PRC Commission office.

A meeting convened by APJAC leaders at the APNGO Association hall in Gandhinagar, Vijayawada, saw participation from some leaders online. It was decided during this meeting to defer the 'Chalo Vijayawada' initiative, while

simultaneous protests will be held at all district AP NGO offices on February 27.

Bandi Srinivasa Rao and Hrudaya Raju addressed the media, stating that the GOM has assured the implementation of the PRC in July. However, they reiterated their demand for 30 per cent Interim Relief (IR). Moreover, they highlighted the government's commitment to implementing the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) for police and teachers appointed after 2004, despite the notification being issued before 2004.

The leaders further noted assurances from the GOM regarding the reinstatement of an additional quantum of pension for pensioners, compassionate appointments for local bodies such as ZP and Aided management, and the phased regularisation of contract employees. They also mentioned the assurance of Child Care Leave for women teachers and employees without any time constraints, with the government having circulated the minutes.

Additionally, the government has committed to scheduling a special meeting with APJAC leaders within a week, to discuss pressing issues. Consequently, the proposed 'Chalo Vijayawada' event stands postponed.

The meeting was attended by APJAC Co-Chairmans M Raghunatha Reddy, N Chandrasekhar, Deputy Secretary General KV Siva Reddy, M Venkateswarlu, and others.

PNS ■ VIZIANAGARAM

In a significant stride towards legal reform, Supreme Court Judge Justice P S Narasimha emphasised the pivotal role of mediation in dispute resolution, advocating for a departure from the protracted waits for justice. Justice PS Narasimha along with State High Court Chief Justice Dhiraj Singh Thakur laid the foundation stone for the state-of-the-art court complex, a project sanctioned with R .99.20 crore by the State government. Envisioned to revamp the judi-



Supreme Court Judge Justice P S Narasimha addressing a meeting after laying the foundation stone for the state-of-the-art court complex, in Vizianagaram on Sunday.

cial infrastructure, the complex, spanning 6.58 acres, will feature modern amenities across six storeys, setting a new

standard for legal facilities in the region.

Addressing the legal fraternity, Justice P S Narasimha

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"So, I think that needs to be streamlined. Because on one side is the corporate and marketing side, the entire ecosystem of very different things. But performance is a purely different ball game."

"It needs a set of people who are really committed, whether it's players, coaches and support staff and an ecosystem which builds performance. We need to keep that isolated from the rest of it. So, I would really say 'boss get this done for us (athletes)'," he added.

While Gopichand was happy with the phenomenal success and growth of sports in the country, he also pointed out the flip side of it, saying, kids could be leaving education for better prospects in sports.

"We have grown too fast as a country in sport, we are still pushing forward in big force and that is amazing. But, I think, we need to look at the entire ecosystem, because all it takes is one generation of failed sportspersons to show to the society, or the society will see it and say, 'there is no use playing sports'. So, don't

want that to happen," he said.

"What is also happening is that kids, players are taking up sport (and) leaving education. For some it's happening at nine (years of age) and that is a big case of concern. Because, at the end of the day, sport has a very thin margin of people."

"We have people speaking about how there are 6,000 kids across various sports who are given Rs 6 lakh or Rs 3 lakh a month (year from the government)." He wondered what will happen to the "5,600 people who don't make it (to the top)".

"Where are they going for

underscored the need for legal evolution tailored to the changing dynamics of the country. He urged senior lawyers to mentor aspiring legal professionals, particularly advocating for their engagement in district courts. The ceremony, graced by eminent figures including poets, writers, and academics, celebrated the rich educational heritage of Vijayanagar. Echoing Justice PS Narasimha's sentiments, Chief Justice Thakur articulated the profound expectations vested in the judicial system. He emphasised

sised the imperative of conducting judicial affairs impartially and transparently to uphold public trust. Chief Justice Thakur also outlined plans to expedite the construction process, highlighting the substantial government allocations for enhancing court infrastructure.

State High Court Judge Justice U. Durga Prasada Rao, State Advocate General S. Sreeram, district Superintendent of Police Deepika Patil, and District Collector S Nagalakshmi were among those present.

## Subba Reddy...

Continued from Page 1

Sources close to the party reveal that the YSRCP is planning its next preparatory meeting next month, where crucial announcements regarding changes and additions to the candidate list are expected. This meeting is seen as crucial for the YSRCP, as the party grapples with the pressure of retaining its members and presenting a clear and unified front in the upcoming elections. The final list of candidates is expected to be revealed only after the Medarametta meeting, bringing an end to the current state of uncertainty and providing some much-needed clarity for the YSRCP and its supporters.



# Group 2 exam held peacefully in Eluru, Prakasam

PNS ■ ELURU/ONGOLE

The APPSC Group 2 examinations were conducted peacefully in Eluru district for which 11,696 candidates attended.

District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh said here on Sunday that out of the total 13,977 candidates, 11,696 candidates wrote the examination which works out to 83.68%. He said that the Group 2 examinations were conducted in 39 centres in the district and the examinations went off peacefully.

Collector Prasanna Venkatesh inspected the examination centres on the campus of Ramachandra Engineering College and CR Reddy Womens College.

He examined the signatures of candidates in the registers and also checked the roll number and seating arrangements. He directed the invigilators to ensure that the examinations were held peacefully.

He also inspected the security arrangements at the examination centre. Joint Collector B



Eluru District Collector V Prasanna Venkatesh inspecting an examination centre in the city on Sunday.

Lavanya Veni, RDO NSK Khajavali, and zonal manager K Babji were among those who accompanied the Collector.

In Prakasam district, Superintendent of Police P Parameswar Reddy personally inspected the security arrangements at the examination centres on Sunday. He visited the QUIZ Engineering College, RISE Engineering College, AKVK College, Nagarjuna Degree College and SSN

College and gave directions to the police officials. The SP told the media that the Group 2 screening test was conducted in 49 centres in Prakasam district. Section 144 was clamped at the examination centres.

All Xerox and printing centres remained closed till the examinations were concluded. All needed steps were taken to ensure that there would be no traffic congestion during the examination.

## 80.85% of candidates take APPSC Group-2 exam in combined Krishna

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Group-2 screening examination, conducted by the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC), proceeded smoothly in the Krishna and NTR districts on Sunday, without any untoward incidents. Attendance figures indicate that 77.38% of candidates appeared for the exam in Krishna district, while 83.31% attended in the NTR district.

The combined districts witnessed an overall attendance rate of 80.85%. District collectors P Raja Babu and Dr S Dilli Rao oversaw the examination centres in their respective jurisdictions. Dr Dilli Rao inspected various examination centres



NTR District Collector Dilli Rao inspecting an APPSC Group - 2 examination centre in Vijayawada on Sunday.

in Vijayawada, while Geetanjali Sarma, Joint Collector of Krishna district, visited centres in her district.

For the Group-2 screening examination, the Krishna dis-

trict administration arranged 51 centres for 17,241 candidates, while the NTR district administration provided 54 centres for 24,373 candidates. Special bus services by

APSRTC were deployed to facilitate candidates' transportation to the exam centres.

Official reports indicate that 13,341 candidates attended the Group-2 screening examination in Krishna district, with 3,900 absentees. In the NTR district, 20,304 candidates took the exam, while 4,069 were absent.

District collectors P Raja Babu and Dr S Dilli Rao credited the successful conduct of the examination to the collaboration of various departments including Revenue, Police, Education, Medical and Health, Electricity, and APSRTC. They expressed satisfaction with the absence of any adverse incidents during the examination in both districts.



Vijayawada-Central MLA Vishnu and NTR District Science Officer Hussain distributing the Physical Science question bank book at the Puchalapalli Sundarayya Municipal Corporation High School at Prakash Nagar in the city on Sunday.

## MLA releases SSC Physics question bank

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh Planning Commission Vice Chairman and Vijayawada Central MLA, Malladi Vishnu, in collaboration with NTR District Science Officer (DSO) Hussain, inaugurated the distribution of a Physical Science question bank comprising one-mark questions to class 10 students at Puchalapalli Sundarayya Municipal Corporation High School in Prakash Nagar on Sunday.

The book, authored by Hussain, who also serves as a Physical Science teacher at the aforementioned school, is being provided free of charge to students across all

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Schools.

Expressing his confidence in the utility of the question bank for the upcoming public examinations, MLA Malladi Vishnu commended Hussain for his decade-long commitment to providing this resource to students.

Encouraging students to make the most of the resource and excel in their examinations, Vishnu also urged fellow educators to draw inspiration from Hussain's initiative.

The event saw the participation of Puchalapalli Sundaraiah Municipal Corporation High School Headmaster D. Mohan and other school staff members.

## 'Suryopasana Seva' sees surge in throng at Durga temple

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A large number of devotees gathered at Sri Durga Malleswara Swamy Varla Devasthanam atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Sunday to seek the divine blessings of Goddess Durga Devi.

With Sunday coinciding with a holiday, a significant surge of devotees made their way to the hilltop to partake in the revered Durga Devi darshan. In anticipation of the influx, temple authorities diligently organized arrangements to facilitate the smooth flow of devotees.

As part of the day's rituals, the temple conducted the 'Suryopasana Seva' along with a series of other special poojas including Nitya Arjitha Sevas, Sri Ammavari Khadgamala Archana, Laksha Kumkumarchana, Sri Chakrasana, Chandihomam, and Shanti Kalyanam.

In a notable gesture of generosity, K. Venkateswara Rao and Jayanthi, residents of Visakhapatnam, contributed Rs. 1 lakh towards Nitya Annadanam, symbolizing their



Devotees waiting for darshan at the shrine of Goddess Kanaka Durga atop Indrakeeladri in Vijayawada on Sunday.

devotion and support to the temple's philanthropic endeavours. The couple graciously presented the donation cheque to the temple's Executive Officer (EO), KS Rama Rao, within the temple premises.

Expressing gratitude for their benevolence, the temple author-

ities accorded the donors the privilege of witnessing the goddess's darshan. Subsequently, Vedic Scholars bestowed their blessings upon the donors and presented them with Laddu Prasadam, Sesha Vastram, and a Portrait as tokens of appreciation.

## ACTING TOUGH

## Notices to 256 meat stalls in Guntur city

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Guntur Municipal Commissioner, Kirthi Chekuri, has taken decisive action to ensure public health standards are maintained in the city's meat-selling establishments. In response to recent concerns over hygiene and the spread of diseases like diarrhoea, the GMC public health officials issued notices to approximately 256 meat stalls and shops in Guntur city on Sunday.

Commissioner Kirthi emphasised the importance of maintaining a hygienic environment in all chicken, mutton, and other meat-selling outlets across the city. She highlighted the risks associated with unhygienic conditions, stressing that it could lead to health complications for consumers. Moreover, she directed that prohibited carry bags must not be used, and waste should be disposed of only through designated waste



collection agencies. The Commissioner sternly warned against the dumping of meat waste in canals or roads, stating that such actions would result in the immediate cancellation of D&O trade licenses and the imposition of heavy fines.

Underlining the necessity of obtaining and renewing trade licenses from the city administration, Commissioner Kirthi urged consumers to be vigilant and refrain from purchasing meat from unclean stalls to avoid potential health hazards.

## Discussion highlights the importance of holistic education

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Edara Ravi Kiran, Additional Director General of the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN), Visakhapatnam, underscored the imperative for education to transcend mere employment prospects. He emphasised that education must empower children to navigate the intricacies of everyday life effectively.

Speaking during a public discussion on children's education held at Gandhi Centre in Bullayya College on Sunday, Edara Ravi Kiran said in an era dominated by technological advancements like Chat GPT, he decried the diminishing relevance of memory-based rote learning. Kiran advocated for a shift away from undue emphasis on marks and ranks, urging for a pedagogy that fosters critical thinking and inde-



pendent reasoning. He cautioned against the perils of overlooking the cultivation of hobbies in childhood, warning that a dearth of recreational pursuits could render children's lives mechanical and monotonous.

Prof. V. Balmohan Das, president of the Gandhi Centre and former vice-chancellor of Nagarjuna University, echoed

Kiran's sentiments by highlighting the need to recognise the diverse intelligences inherent in every child. He announced plans for the Gandhi Centre to convene a comprehensive meeting with school management, intending to translate the discourse's outcomes into tangible actions within educational institutions.

Narava Prakasa Rao, honorary president of Bal Vikas Foundation, pledged to unveil a bespoke action plan tailored for schools, delineating essential reforms for the education system. He disclosed that the blueprint would be disseminated to the State Education Department and all schools Statewide. In a bid to empower parents with informed choices, Rao unveiled a curated video playlist showcasing alternative schooling options, accessible through the link: <https://t.ly/bXYez>.

## Action warned against vehicles sans high-security number plates

Owners of both new and older vehicles must comply with the installation of specialised plates

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Deputy Transport Commissioner G.C. Rajaratnam issued a stern warning on Sunday, declaring that stringent measures will be taken against motor vehicles found operating without high-security number plates. In a bid to enhance road safety and security, the new directive mandates that owners of both new and older vehicles comply with the installation of these specialised plates.

According to Rajaratnam, effective from March 1, new vehicle owners must obtain high-security number plates directly from authorised dealerships upon purchase. For existing vehicle owners, a reg-



istration process has been facilitated through the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) portal. Under the revamped system facilitated by the SIAM portal, vehicle owners can conveniently apply for high-security

number plates from the comfort of their homes. This initiative aims to simplify the process while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards.

Rajaratnam emphasised the importance of adhering to the new regulations, citing enhanced security and streamlined vehicle identification as primary objectives. He urged all vehicle owners, both old and new, to promptly comply with the directive to avoid potential penalties and legal consequences. The implementation of high-security number plates is expected to bolster road safety measures and facilitate efficient law enforcement practices across Visakhapatnam.



## Collector visits modernised Visakha Museum

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to enhance the cultural and tourist appeal of Visakhapatnam, District Collector Dr A. Mallikarjuna, accompanied by GVMC Commissioner CM Saikanth Verma and Joint Collector Mayur Ashok, paid a visit to the recently modernised Visakha Museum. The visit followed the inauguration of the floating bridge on Beach Road earlier on Sunday morning. The Collector and his team explored various sections of the museum, marvelling at the craftsmanship displayed by local artists.

Expressing satisfaction, Collector Mallikarjuna highlighted the significance of the art forms that beautifully depicted Visakha's cultural traditions, paintings capturing scenic beauty, and ancient sculptural skills reflected in the idols of deities. The officials also delved into historical books and records during their tour. The GVMC Commissioner briefed the Collector and Joint Collectors about the ongoing modernisation projects within the museum, including the arrangement of new pho-

tographs and art forms. During the programme, Intak member V. Edward Paul provided insights into the historical aspects of Visakha.

The Collector recommended to museum curator Venkataramana to strategically display information related to the objects throughout the Heritage and archaeology museum. Ensuring the safety and security of the museum, the GVMC Commissioner instructed the curator to implement regular cleaning measures, while also directing the installation of CCTV cameras and fire extinguishers, supervised by Deputy Executive Officer Satyanarayana Raju.

The Collector, GVMC Commissioner, and the Joint Collector honoured members of the Vizag Sketchers team for their outstanding photographic contributions to the documentation of the Visakha Museum premises. Preeti Sangeeta and PV Hanuman team members received special recognition during the felicitation. The event witnessed the presence of Assistant Director of Archaeology Museum Falguna Rao and other dignitaries.

The visit followed the inauguration of the floating bridge on Beach Road

## Thousands of devotees throng ongoing 'Veeramma Thalli' fete

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Thousands of devotees flocked to the Vuyyuru Veeramma Thalli temple in the Krishna district on Sunday to fulfil their religious vows. The Vuyyuru Veeramma Thalli Tirunallu, a 15-day festival, commenced on February 19 and has drawn devotees in large numbers.

Traditionally observed during the Magha Masam month, this festival spans 15 days from Shukla Paksha Ekadasi to Krushna Paksha Ekadasi. Given that Sunday coincided with a holiday, devotees seized the opportunity to visit the temple with their families and fulfil their religious obligations.

During the festival, devotees



engaged in various religious activities, including the sacrificial offerings of goats, sheep, and cocks. Special pujas were conducted in honour of the goddess Veeramma Thalli, while

women prepared 'Pongallu'—a traditional dish made from rice, milk, and jaggery—as offerings to the deity.

The Veeramma Thalli Tirunallu holds significance

not only for the locals of Vuyyuru and its vicinity but also for residents of neighbouring regions.

Many individuals travel from distant areas to their



hometowns to participate in the festivities.

The fair attracts visitors from across the globe, as well as those from nearby villages, who come to pay their respects

to the deity. The Sidibandhi festival, scheduled for the 11th day, will be held at Vuyyuru, with the concluding ceremonies taking place on the 15th day.



# NTPC set to develop India's largest green hydrogen hub

Project, estimated to require an investment of Rs 1.10 lakh crore in two phases, will come up at Pudimadaka

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a step towards bolstering the decarbonised economy, Maharatna company National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) has embarked on the development of India's largest integrated green hydrogen hub at Pudimadaka in Atchutapuram mandal, near Visakhapatnam. The initiative is being spearheaded by NTPC Green Energy Limited (NGEL), a fully owned subsidiary of NTPC.

Nearly a year after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Andhra Pradesh government during the Global Investors' Summit, the project, estimated to require an investment of Rs 1.10 lakh crore in two phases, is set to become a cornerstone of India's energy transition. The comprehensive project, aimed at fostering a world-class ecosystem for green energy technologies, is expected to have a staggering produc-



tion capacity of 1,200 tonnes of green hydrogen per day.

The foundation stone for the project was laid in 2015 but was officially shelved in 2018 due to the government's emphasis on domestic coal production, rendering the proposed coal-fired ultra mega power plant obsolete. However, with the recent signing of a land lease agreement covering 1,200 acres with the AP Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (APIIC), the hurdles related to the site have been overcome. The land, situated near NTPC Simhadri and the Asian Paints plant, was

originally allotted to NTPC for a coal-fired power plant.

According to the agreement, NGEL will establish an 'integrated green hydrogen hub' at Pudimadaka. This hub aims to create a world-class ecosystem, encompassing technologies like electrolyser and fuel cell manufacturing, ancillary industries, and startup incubation.

The hub will facilitate testing facilities, as well as the production and export of green hydrogen and its derivatives such as green ammonia and green methanol. Anticipated to be India's largest hydrogen

production hub, the project aligns with NTPC's corporate vision, emphasising green energy and green hydrocarbons to contribute significantly to India's energy transition.

The pivotal step towards the realisation of the project occurred with the exchange of the land lease deed between the Chief General Manager of NGEL, Sivakumar VV, and Vice-Chairman & Managing Director of APIIC, Pravin Kumar. The ceremony, held at Velagapudi, witnessed the presence of Chief Secretary, of Andhra Pradesh KS Jawahar Reddy, Executive Director of NTPC R Sarangapani, and other senior officials.

NTPC Group has set an ambitious target of achieving 60 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2032. Presently boasting 3.4 GW of installed renewable energy and several projects in the pipeline, NTPC remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing India's green energy lands.



## PM Modi inaugurates microbiology food testing laboratory in Vizag

The lab, located at Regional Public Health Laboratory, is part of Viksit Bharat programme

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a virtual ceremony from Rajkot, Gujarat, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated the microbiology food testing laboratory, located at the Regional Public Health Laboratory in Visakhapatnam, to the nation on Sunday. The laboratory, inaugurated as part of the Viksit Bharat programme, is equipped with advanced facilities including a microbiology lab, aimed at enhancing food safety and public health measures in the region.

During the virtual inauguration, Prime Minister Modi emphasised the ongoing initiatives under the Viksit Bharat programme. He highlighted recent developments, including the establishment of IIM in Visakhapatnam, AIIMS in Kadapa and Mangalagiri, and the Andhra Pradesh microbiology food testing laboratory. The ceremony was attended by District Collector Dr. A. Mallikharjuna, who initiated the proceedings by lighting the ceremonial lamp and activating the facility remotely.

The microbiology food testing laboratory, costing Rs 4.77 crore, boasts a state-of-the-art microbiology lab at the Regional Public Health Laboratory in Visakh. The Prime Minister commended the lab, likening it to the 'heart of the State', emphasising its pivotal role in conducting a multitude of tests for food and water samples, especially in cases of diarrhea and related health issues. The lab's quick establishment was attributed to the collaborative efforts of the State and Central governments.

The District Collector thanked the Prime Minister

and the Chief Minister for their support in establishing the microbiology lab in Visakhapatnam. He announced plans to recruit 80 staff members soon to further enhance the lab's capabilities. The establishment of the

Andhra Pradesh State Food Laboratory reflects the government's commitment to ensuring the health and well-being of the citizens.

The virtual inauguration ceremony saw the participation of several dignitaries, including

Director of IPM Purnachandra Rao, N. H. MD Ganapathy Rao, APMSIDC EE D. Achchennaidu, Food Control Officer Nanda, DMHO Dr. P. Jagadeswara Rao, along with other officials, staff and students.



DFO Ramachandra Rao briefing the media about the seizure of antelope horns and spotted deer skin.

## 20 antelope horns, spotted deer skin seized

PNS ■ NARASARAOPET

Forest officials seized 20 horns of antelope and skin of spotted deer and arrested six persons in Vinukonda.

Divisional Forest Officer Ramachandra Rao told the media on Sunday that on a tip off a team of forest officials conducted a raid at Bollapalli village and seized 20 horns of antelopes and skin of spotted deer. The poachers were exporting the horns and skins of animals to Bangalore.

## NRI Golagani joins BJP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Renowned NRI and Chairman of the Golagani Charitable Trust, Golagani Ravi Krishna, formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during a ceremony held at the party's office in Vijayawada on Sunday. Daggubati Purandeswari, the party president, warmly welcomed Ravi Krishna into the fold, adorning him with the party scarf in a symbolic gesture.

Addressing the media following the induction, Purandeswari highlighted Ravi Krishna's commendable initiatives in service-oriented programs across the state, emphasising his commitment to the welfare of the people of Vijayawada. She expressed confidence that his involvement would bolster the BJP's presence in the Vijayawada West Constituency.

Purandeswari also underscored the party's intention to leverage Ravi Krishna's expertise, particularly in communicating the developmental efforts and financial allocations made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration to the public.

Responding to queries about potential alliances with other political entities such as the TDP and JSP, Purandeswari indicated that discussions were ongoing within the party lead-



Golagani Ravi Krishna, Chairman of the Golagani Charitable Trust, presenting a bouquet to BJP State president Daggubati Purandeswari during his induction into the party in Vijayawada on Sunday.

ership. While both the TDP and JSP had announced candidates for 99 assembly seats, she noted that negotiations for the remaining 76 seats were still underway.

In the broader context of electoral preparation, Purandeswari emphasized the BJP's comprehensive engagement across all 175 Assembly Constituencies and 25 Lok Sabha segments in the state. She assured that the party was actively working towards finalising alliance structures and seat allocations shortly.

## Floating bridge inaugurated at Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to enhance tourism and attract more visitors, the Andhra Pradesh government has unveiled a new attraction in Visakhapatnam -- a floating bridge at RK Beach. The bridge, constructed through a public-private partnership at a cost of approximately Rs 1.5 crore, was inaugurated on Sunday by YSRCP Regional Coordinator Y.V. Subbareddy and State Industries Minister Gudivada Amarnath.

Addressing the gathering, Y.V. Subbareddy emphasised the government's commitment to bolstering tourism. He mentioned that Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy emphasised the city's expansive coastline spanning approximately 25 kilometers within Visakhapatnam boundaries, highlighting endeavors to grant it distinctive recognition.



Subbareddy disclosed ongoing initiatives for the development of two beaches in Visakhapatnam, crediting the increase in tourist visits over the past two-and-a-half years to the area's growing attractions. He stressed the importance of enhancing amenities at Kailasagiri, poised to become the premier attraction

of the administrative capital.

Minister Amarnath echoed Subbareddy's sentiments, elaborating on the government's multifaceted initiatives to attract international tourists. He touted Visakh Beach as a pivotal asset in the tourism sector, emphasising the efforts to showcase its allure to global audiences.

Amarnath outlined notable achievements, including Visakhapatnam's ranking as the 10th richest city in the nation, the recognition of Rushikonda Beach as a blue flag beach of international standards, and the ascent of science museum developments on Kailasagiri, slated to enrich the visitor experience.

## 'Minority welfare neglected in YSRCP rule'

PNS ■ ONGOLE

Former chairman of Legislative Council MA Shariff decried that the minority welfare was neglected during the Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed regime.

The TDP here on Sunday organized the 'Ghar Ghar Ka Nara' programme in Addanki. Addressing the gathering Shariff said that the minority welfare was put in the lurch by the YSRCP regime. Harassment and atrocities increased against the Minorities in the YSRCP rule, he alleged.

"The YSRCP leaders are trying to use the Muslim minorities as vote banks, and at the same time, they ignored their welfare. A raw deal was meted to the minorities in the budget allocation for their welfare," he flayed.

He reiterated that the TDP is committed to the welfare of Muslim minorities. He recalled that many welfare programmes were implemented for the Muslims during the TDP rule, stating that loans on 50% subsidy were extended to them.

A Noorbasha federation was set up with a corpus fund of Rs 50, he claimed. Gurukula schools were established in Urdu and English medium and scholarships were



also provided to the poor Muslim students during the TDP rule, he stated.

Shariff reminded that financial assistance of Rs 10 lakh had been provided to the poor Muslim students for foreign education, adding that through the Dulhan scheme, financial support of Rs 50,000 was provided to 38,000 people without any conditions. During the TDP regime over 300 shadhikana were constructed with modern facilities, observed.

He assured of renovation of mosques, construction of Haj houses, providing employment to the Muslim youths and making Urdu an official language, if the TDP was voted to power. MLA Yeluri Sambashiva Rao, national official spokesperson Nasir Ahmad and minority cell state president Moulana Mastan Ahmad also spoke. TDP organizing secretary Abdul Rajak, TDP Bapatla Parliamentary executive secretary Jamaluddin, Sheikh Shamsuddin.

## JEO inspects arrangements for Brahmotsavams

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

JEO Veerabrahmam on Saturday inspected the arrangements for the annual Brahmotsavam of Kalyana Venkateswara temple at Srinivasa Mangapuram scheduled from 29 February to March 8.

JEO directed garden, engineering and other departments to make coordinated efforts to ensure the success of the annual Brahmotsavam. Among others, the Deployment of an adequate number of Srivari Sevaku, live telecast by SVBC, all Dharmic projects to undertake cultural programs in front of Vahana Sevas, publicity through Prachara

Ratham to neighbourhood villages, mobile toilets, additional sanitary workers, parking lots, vigilance and police coordination, deployment of vehicles.

He advised Temple Spl Gr.DyEO Varalakshmi and CPRO Dr T Ravi to coordinate with all departments and ensure the success of the annual event.

SE (E l e c t r i c a l) Venkateswarlu, Transport GM Sesha Reddy, EEs Manoharam, Prasad, Goshala Director Dr Harnath Reddy, Garden Deputy Director Srinivasulu, Additional Health officer Dr Sunil Kumar, AEO Gopinath, AVSO Satish were also present.

## IF REVANTH WERE CM FACE

## 'Congress would not have won even 30 seats'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress would not have won even 30 seats if it had revealed that Revanth Reddy would be their Chief Minister, BRS Working President KT Rama Rao said.

He said that no one thought that the Congress would come to power even in Konda Reddy Palli, the hometown of Revanth Reddy and that Revanth is not speaking like a Chief Minister but like a dacoit of treasury pots. Thieves roam around at midnight for treasury pots but politicians don't roam around the Secretariat for them. The old habits of Revanth Reddy, who searches for treasury pots, are coming out, KTR said.

Addressing a Parliament elec-



tion preparatory meeting held at Achampet on Sunday, KTR said that farmers are looking at each other for Rythu Bandhu funds after Revanth came to power.

"Change means power cuts and drinking water scarcity. The Congress government cannot maintain Mission Bhagiratha. Congress leaders themselves did not think that they would come to power and hence they gave assurances as they liked. Congress leaders had assured before elections that they would provide schemes for everyone but now

they are saying that their schemes are for only a few. The Congress assured that it will implement the Rs 2 lakh farm loan waiver scheme for farmers, give Rs 2,500 per month to every woman and pay Rs 4,000 per month as Asara pension to old people. As per Election Commission details, there are 1.67 crore women in the state. They are waiting for the Rs 2500. There are 1.24 crore LPG connections in the state and they are waiting for the Rs 500 scheme. The Congress said that it will give 200 units of free electricity to everyone but now the Congress is saying that the scheme is only for some," he said.

KTR said that the BRS had decided to wait for the Congress

government to complete 100 days but the Congress levelled allegations as they liked in the first session of the Assembly.

He said that there is no need to think about Modi who failed to give national project status to the Palamuru-Rangareddy project.

He said that Revanth handed over irrigation projects on the Krishna River to the KRMB and the Centre. However, the CM introduced a resolution stating that there is no question of handing over irrigation projects to the KRMB in the Assembly after the BRS's Nalgonda public meeting.

He said that both the national parties, the BJP and the Congress, are 'harming' the interests of Telangana.

## Victims of 'Margadarsi' form association

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A large number of victims of the Margadarsi Chit Funds scam have come together to take on the Margadarsi Chit Funds Private Limited (MCFPL). The people who were cheated by the MCFPL formed a 'Margadarsi Chit Funds Victims Association' here on Sunday.

The association aims to provide legal assistance and related help to the victims. Advocate Srinivas, the newly elected President of the association said that they have scheduled a press meeting at Vijayawada Press Club at 11 am on February 28, Wednesday where they will explain the problems of the Margadarsi victims.

Currently, AP-CID is probing the irregularities in Margadarsi Chit Funds Private Limited (MCFPL). According to officials, MCFPL was found to be running 40 per cent chit groups of MCFPL without subscribers. The firm takes its chits in the name of ghost subscribers.

The investigation agency has also conducted raids on the premises of MCFPL in Visakhapatnam, Rajamahendravaram, Eluru, Vijayawada, Guntur, Narasaraopeta and Anantapur. It has also registered cases against its chairman Ch Ramji Rao and his daughter-in-law and managing director of the firm Sailaja Kiran.







## Shades of grey

Do political parties really mean to fulfil poll promises, or is it mere rhetoric to befool voters?

Every election season, political parties can be seen letting loose a long litany of promises — some really genuine, but mostly mere pleasing-to-the-ears rhetoric. These campaign pledges, called poll manifestos or electoral promises or even 'jumlas', are tailor-made to meet local voters' aspirations that season. However, a critical question looms: Is it really feasible for the parties to fulfil these promises? This discourse has gained fresh attention following the Chief Election Commissioner's (CEC) statement emphasising the voters' right to know if these promises can be delivered. The CEC's stance underscores the need for transparency and accountability in the electoral process, with the hope that it will prompt political actors to make promises more responsibly. At the heart of this debate lies a complex interplay of political dynamics, economic constraints, administrative capabilities and societal expectations. While political parties often design their agenda with the intention of securing electoral victory, the practicality of implementing poll promises after getting elected is subject to numerous challenges; mainly the inherent uncertainty and volatility of governance. The political discourse is ever-evolving and parties have to adjust to it, often going back on what they themselves might have vociferously advocated. Besides unforeseen events, economic fluctuations and global dynamics also make it difficult to fulfil poll promises.



What may seem feasible during an election campaign could swiftly become untenable in the face of emerging challenges. The way out? At best, the parties can just declare: "It is our intention; conditions apply." Such an honest declaration does not at least sound as if it were a done deal. Interestingly, even voters know that certain promises are undeliverable but then they do not have much choice, especially since the rival party is also tomming schemes that cannot be fulfilled. Of course there are unforeseen, serious challenges to genuinely-made pledges but the problem arises when misleading or false promises are deliberately made to capture votes. Worse, the parties know they can get away with it as there are no punitive damages yet for this practice. It is imperative for political parties to adopt a more responsible approach. Instead of succumbing to populist rhetoric, they should prioritise honesty, realism and evidence-based policymaking. Transparency also plays a crucial role in fostering accountability. Voters have the right to be informed not only about the promises made but also about the rationale behind them and the strategy for implementation. Also, robust mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation should be established to track progress and hold Governments accountable for their party's commitments. Then there is a need for greater public awareness to ensure that electoral promises are scrutinised rigorously. Citizens must actively participate in the democratic process, holding elected representatives accountable for their actions. Those deliberately making false promises must be punished through the ballot box.

### PICTALK



Women devotees offer prayers during the Attukal Pongala festival, in Thiruvananthapuram

# The aftermath of a controversial election



UMANG KOHLI

Amid concerns over rising debt and geopolitical tensions, the resilience of Pakistan's political fabric faces its sternest test yet



Pakistan has not given a fractured mandate, on paper, it may seem fractured however the call people have taken is clear. It goes without saying that if 100 independent candidates win, it's no mean achievement for a party that is backing them. The story of what happened in 1968 in Pakistan is often forgotten, in that year, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto brought down the military presidency of Gen Ayub Khan. Pakistan has seen big upheavals in the past and as things stand today another one is brewing for sure. This time against a China-Pak Army selected candidate who will be nominated at the top post, against the will of the people. Most analysts believed Nawaz Sharif was sure to become the PM however why he did not make it to the top slot has to do with how he reacted to situations post-Kargil. Sharif was thrown out in 1999 by General Musharraf, who then led Pakistan's army because he publicly ridiculed the army for apparently keeping him in the dark concerning the Kargil War. Now as they say once bitten twice shy, the Pakistani army always wanted a third person apart from Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan to be the notional head of Pakistan, and they are gunning for one. The Pakistani army used the clout of

Nawaz Sharif (whatever he had) to try and get to power someone they wanted and somehow get rid of Imran Khan. China has had a friendly relationship with the Sharif family so they are fine with someone coming up with Sharif's backing. Now the question is, will the people of Pakistan accept the humiliation of subversion of their mandate? Has the Pakistani army become so weak that it does not hold any sway over the people of Pakistan? Does the US still have control over the Pakistani Army and what they do to influence elections in Pakistan? Would a coalition Government that lacks popular support be able to sustain itself? Will there be even more civil unrest in Pakistan in the months to come? Answers to these questions hold the key to what is going to unfold in Pakistan shortly. Things in Pakistan have never been quiet from within, and this election has exposed the hollow belly of the Pakistani electoral system. In most of the constituencies, the election was rigged. Some of the election commission officers have since resigned after admitting to mass-scale rigging. It's almost incomprehensible how



THE US STILL HAS A LOT OF INTEREST IN PAKISTAN, MAYBE BECAUSE OF OLD TIES OR BECAUSE IT'S AN ISLAMIC NATION WITH A DECLARED NUCLEAR WEAPON SYSTEM. WHATEVER IT MAY BE, BUT IT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ANY OVERRIDING CONTROL OVER THINGS IN PAKISTAN ANYMORE

a US official spokesperson then has called the election reliable. The so-called results that have been thrown up show that PMLN has 79 seats, and PPP has 54 seats in a 264-seat parliament giving both of them combined a comfortable majority. I'll look like a coalition Government would come up in Pakistan would be devoid of a popular mandate which is likely to fuel unrest in the public even more in the days to come. The mandate of the people seems to be with PTI and with Imran Khan. In this coalition too the two parties joining hands have a little in common and would provide a weak Government ridden by internal friction and lobbying. Under these circumstances, the people of Pakistan are going to feel cheated. In a country that has not a single respected institution in place and has a supreme court that is by and large influenced by vested interests, civil unrest looks around the corner. If this kind of circumstance persists, the balkanisation of Pakistan is not far away, no matter how hard China tries to keep it together. The US still has a lot of interest in Pakistan, maybe because of old ties or because it's an Islamic nation with a

declared nuclear weapon system, whatever it may be but it does not seem to have any overriding control over things in Pakistan anymore. The US does have some control over the Pakistani Army however Pakistani Army seems to have lost all respect in the eyes of the general public in Pakistan. It looks like people are not fearful of the Pakistani Army anymore. It looks like the people of Pakistan would find it hard to digest that their mandate has been subverted. It's a writing on the wall that this new coalition that has taken a good fortnight to form may just fall under its pressure in due course of time. How this new coalition Government would tackle the rising debt crisis would also be interesting to see. In the past Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has made low-brow and irresponsible comments against India, hopefully, he will have matured now and will refrain from jingoism. Sharif brothers are mature politicians, however, they would be under tremendous pressure from China, the US, the Pakistani Army and the people of Pakistan. (The writer is an expert on geopolitics and international Affairs. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### WHO REPORT ON AIR POLLUTION

Sir — The World Health Organisation's report on air pollution has been released recently. According to this year 2020, 32 lakh people will have died due to air pollution. What is even more alarming is that five lakh deaths are of children under the age of five. This news was recently read that there are many causes of pollution in the world. Many people cook on kerosene and charcoal. The number of such is about 2.3 billion. Apart from this, leaves are burnt in many fields, which also causes pollution. The huge number of vehicles and the pollution caused by it is a matter known to all. Even today, many countries in South Asia depend on wood and coal.

It is necessary to increase the use of clean fuel to reduce air pollution in the country. It is necessary to increase the use of solar, stove, biogas, LPG natural gas and alcohol fuel. Apart from this, it is necessary to reduce the use of petrol and diesel vehicles and replace them with electric vehicles. The central government is alert about electric vehicles and is thinking and taking action on how their use will increase in the country. Domestic gas is also being used on a large scale in the country, so it seems that all these measures can save you from air pollution.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

### PAROLE REGULATIONS

Sir — Handing and controlling parole to convicts in Indian jails is very contentious, and often misused. Parole is a "promise" or "word of honour" given by the convicts that they will return after a specific period. In special circumstances, it can be a "corrective rehabilitation". In India, the Prison Acts of 1894 and 1900 govern parole rules though they differ slightly across states. The parole, which can be custodial lasting six hours to regular, lasting one month, is monitored by prison officers and applies after the prisoner completes at least one year in prison unless specified by the court. A CAG report had said that parole was

## Karnataka temple tax move draws ire



The Karnataka Government's contentious proposal to impose taxes on Hindu temples has ignited a firestorm of debate, drawing sharp criticism from opposition parties and various religious groups. The bill stipulates that temples with annual incomes exceeding Rs 1 crore must contribute 10% to a Common Pool Fund, while those generating between Rs 10 lakh and

Rs 1 crore should chip in five per cent. Proponents argue that the fund's proceeds will be directed towards the welfare of temple priests and the development of lesser-known C-grade temples. Despite passing through the assembly, the bill faced a decisive rejection in the council, where the opposition commands a majority. Meanwhile, a recent survey sheds light on public sentiment regarding the tax measure. It reveals that 52% of Hindus in Karnataka perceive the tax as discriminatory, while 48% deem it necessary. Furthermore, a significant majority of 62% believe that small temples should be exempt from this taxation. Although the Karnataka Government has refrained from disclosing anticipated revenue figures, experts speculate that the tax could generate up to Rs 1,000 crore annually, underscoring the financial implications and societal divisions surrounding this contentious issue.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

a "convenient" route of escape for convicts. Following a Delhi High Court verdict that had severely castigated the police for its inability to regulate the whole parole process adequately, serious offenders involved in rape-cum-murder, and those posing a threat to the country's security and those who are not Indian citizens are "strictly" barred from being granted parole by the Government. But a lot more needs to be done and there is a need to impose a foolproof method to prevent prisoners from taking advantage of certain lax provisions still existing in law.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

### SPORTS CONNECT PEOPLE

Sir — In this rapidly changing time, only a few things keep people close and give them a medium to be connected. One such medium is sports. Sports give the fans a feeling of attachment and affinity. It builds communities that feel the adrenaline rush every time their team moves up on the leaderboard and that shed tears when they are on the losing side. Be it the

nations, franchises, or clubs, they all have a legacy—a legacy that has triumphant victories and tragic defeats that keep the fans close and make them support the team even through the tough times. The Tifosi, for instance, have an undying love for Ferrari, given the glorious legacy the red machine has from the early days of Formula One. Even if the team is struggling on the leaderboard, the passion is still the same as it was during the era of sheer dominance when the likes of Michael Schumacher or Sebastian Vettel raced for "The Prancing Horse".

The reason behind this unwavering support and loyalty is the bond that fans develop with the sport, their heroes, and their triumphs. For those who don't watch sports, all this might just be a waste of time, but for lovers of the game, it is an escape from a tedious and mundane life. It connects people and can be a meaningful way of finding purpose in one's life.

Pratyush Tiwari | Ujjain

# Revamping India's intelligence network

There is a pressing need for reforms within India's intelligence framework, addressing coordination deficits and accountability lapses

The imperative for a comprehensive overhaul of India's intelligence framework becomes apparent when considering the existence of 14 intelligence agencies, each with varying and occasionally overlapping responsibilities. These agencies have come into being in response to strategic shifts and past shortcomings. In the aftermath of the 1962 conflict with China, the Directorate General of Security (DGS) was established within the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Subsequently, following the 1965 war with Pakistan, external intelligence was segregated into a distinct entity, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW), which also birthed the Special Bureau aimed at enhancing organisational effectiveness. After the 1999 Kargil conflict, the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) were instituted. However, persistent issues stem from the lack of coordination among these agencies. The absence of a Director of National Intelligence or a Coordinating Minister exacerbates this problem.



Accountability remains a concern.

The intelligence apparatus, entrenched in the colonial-era police structure, grapples with adapting to contemporary challenges. The Intelligence Bureau (IB), primarily oriented towards domestic and political affairs, encounters limitations in counterintelligence endeavours. Despite initiatives like the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), cooperation deficiencies persist. In 2001, a Group of Ministers proposed elevating the IB to the status of the premier Counter-Terrorism agency, culminating in the establishment of MAC and Subsidiary MACs for intelligence amalgamation. Externally, the R&AW, responsible for external intelligence gathering, confronts challenges such as excessive reliance on TECHINT and insufficient development of human intelligence (HUMINT).

While the establishment of the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) aimed to address technological aspects, issues like overlapping mandates and coordination gaps have arisen. Reform is imperative, commencing with the delineation of contemporary challenges, specialisations, and oversight mechanisms. Concerning oversight, India lacks effective mechanisms for its intelligence agencies. Suggestions include appointing individuals well-versed in operational modalities at a macro level or establishing a National Intelligence Board for monitoring. Apex-level management necessitates enhancement, possibly through the appointment of a full-time intelligence adviser or a Director of National Intelligence under the NSA or MHA. Coordination and tasking, particularly between the Centre and states, remain deficient, necessitating legislative attention. The Intelligence Cycle requires refinement, with a clear demarcation between collection and analy-

sis. Personnel issues. Human intelligence (HUMINT) and technical intelligence (TECHINT) pose distinct challenges. While big data analysis is nascent, considerations regarding privacy and legislative authorization for extensive data scrutiny are paramount. The dearth of skilled manpower for HUMINT is a significant concern, and bolstering military expertise within intelligence agencies is imperative. Although inspired by the ideology of the 5 Eyes, I4C, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has not been effectively operationalized in the realm of digital warfare. Effectiveness in counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency remains a pressing concern. Failures to establish the National Counter-terrorism Centre (NCTC) and inter-agency conflicts underscore the need for a robust system. Ensuring successful prosecutions following counter-terrorism arrests is pivotal. (The writer is an eminent expert-Counter Terrorism in West Asia & Middle Eastern countries, views are personal)



NISHAKANT OJHA



FIRST COLUMN

BALANCING WORK AND WELL-BEING

It's time to shift from the disciplinary mantra 'act your age' to 'act your wage'



SHAINY SHARMA

In today's cutthroat and challenging work landscape, finding the right balance between professional devotion and personal well-being can be challenging. The modern work culture often encourages its employees to go beyond their potential, leading to exploitation, anxiety and burnout. The internet, social media, Gen Z and millennials with time have gone crazy about the term 'quiet quitting' all over and now a new trend which is considered to be a 'loud quiet quitting' is buzzing everywhere- the notion of Acting Your Wage. It has emerged as a call from the fed-up workers and employees who believe it's a solution to establish boundaries and ensure that employees are neither overworked nor under-utilized. Since the beginning of the digital era (use of cell phones), Gen Z was expected to be available 24x7 in their workplace whereas the older generation worked according to their job timings. Millennials are tech-savvy and cannot stay away from their gadgets. Acting your wage is a philosophy that revolves around performing only those tasks and duties for which an employee is contracted and compensated and not for taking additional responsibilities without proper recognition or compensation. In layman's language, it means dedicating yourself to the responsibilities explicitly tied to your compensation while avoiding the trap of overextending beyond your job description. Today, younger workers have an egalitarian mindset- a penchant for social activism and expectations of two-way feedback. They work on a simple theory - what is a job worth? It is not about being complacent or neglecting work responsibilities instead, the generation believes in recognising the importance of self-care, setting boundaries and preserving energy for long-term productivity and well-being.




It is about recognising an individual's worth and ensuring that the time and effort they devote to their job align with the compensation they receive. Moreover, studies reveal that employees who practice this approach achieve a healthier work-life balance, preserve their energy levels, protect themselves from potential exploitation and most importantly, prevent burnout. Today many employees are taking the initiative to clarify their job roles with their seniors so that a clear understanding of what is expected is ensured and ambiguity is prevented. Also, employees are now practising the art of politely saying 'no' to additional tasks that fall outside their job description and instead actively seeking opportunities for advancement or higher roles that align with their skill set and career. Employers on the other hand, who tend to implement this notion will benefit as, it will enhance employee well-being, increase job satisfaction, improve productivity and most importantly strengthen the work culture. There will be a culture of transparency, fairness and respect within the organization. Organisations who are already provide clear and comprehensive job descriptions to employees, outline their roles and responsibilities, acknowledge and reward them for their contributions, and invest in training and development programmes that will offer them opportunities to grow and advance within the organisation are already away from this notion. There is no denying the fact that success in any field grows out of learning how to build skills, how to ask for help and how to build capacity in ways that don't even exist. The act of wage is a way to take care of yourself to be stress-free. Remember, one needs to normalise doing the bare minimum at work. An individual signs up for a job. If the employers are not paying extra to do extra tasks, strictly don't do them. It's time to throw the disciplinary line 'act your age' and turn it to 'act your wage'.

*(The author is a senior educator, views are personal)*

The impact of amendments to criminal codes on national policing

The implications of amendments to three criminal codes on civil liberties and the integrity of the legal process remain subject to ongoing debate and scrutiny


Parliament has passed three criminal codes, among which the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) seeks to amend the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC). There is one provision in BNSS that seeks to increase the number of days within which police custody (PC) can be sought. When someone is in police custody, it means they are held by the police in a lock-up at the station. On the other hand, judicial custody means they are held in a central jail. The investigating agency gets 24 hours to investigate if they are not able to complete the investigation within that bracket, they must get permission from the magistrate, who can grant custody of the accused for up to 60/90 days,



PRAKHAR BAJPAI

depending on the seriousness of the crime. However, within this timeframe of 60/90 days, the magistrate is restricted to granting PC for the initial 15 days from the date of arrest, beyond which only judicial custody can be granted. This 15-day limit was extensively discussed in the Anupam Kulkarni v. CBI case, where the Supreme Court ruled that an accused

cannot be held in PC beyond 15 days from the date of arrest and PC in total can be for a maximum of 15 days, which means that PC could be granted by the magistrate in parts for the first 15 days or as a whole. **Understanding the new law** According to Section 187 of the BNSS, the PC can be granted within the first 40 days (for less serious offences) or 60 days (for more serious offences) after the accused is arrested. The change implies that the prescribed 15-day period of custody can now be split into shorter periods of custody sought over 40 days for offences punishable up to 10 years or 60 days for other offences. This represents a departure from the current practice under Section 167 of the CrPC, where PC can only be obtained within the initial 15 days. Consequently, concerns have been raised regarding the Government's rationale behind this change, particularly considering the act's aim to prioritise a people-centric criminal justice system. However, further arguments necessitate the examination of two significant cases. Judgements that led to a paradox: First, in the case of *Vikas Mishra v. CBI*, where the CBI wanted more time to question *Vikas Mishra*, who was accused of corruption and conspiracy. Despite being in custody for seven days, he was hospitalised and later released on bail. The CBI argued that they couldn't interrogate him properly during this time. However, *Vikas's* lawyers cited



the court's ruling that said PC beyond 15 days from the arrest date is not allowed. Nonetheless, the court granted custody to the police and noted that every accused person must respect the investigation and court proceedings and went on to mention that these ways of hindering the pursuit of justice would not be tolerated.

Second, in the case of *Senthil Balaji v. The State*, the Supreme Court decided that the maximum 15 days PC period can be split into shorter periods over the entire investigation, which can last either 60 or 90 days as against the general rule of granting PC in first 15 days, it also questioned its judgement of *Anupam Kulkarni* and further, said that

this interpretation needs to be reviewed by a larger bench. By analysing the two judgements passed last year we can conclude that there is a growing inclination towards favouring the investigating agency. Despite the accused attempting to avoid initial PC in the first case due to medical reasons, it's essential to recognise that the accused might exploit the 15-day bar by taking the excuse of loopholes on grounds of a medical emergency. However, the second case sets a precedent keeping the investigation process at the heart of the criminal justice system which poses a potential series of inconsistencies. Therefore, Section 187 of the BNSS aims to definitively resolve the existing confusion and prevent future inconsistencies regarding the timeline within which PC can be sought and sets the limit of 40/60 days. It seeks to find a middle path where the civil liberties of the accused are not exploited as the maximum number of days for which the PC can be granted is still 15 days which now can be granted in parts in 40/60 days and also favours investigating agencies by granting a reasonable time for custodial interrogation, which is crucial for uncovering the truth as denying the investigating agency the opportunity for further interrogation gives an advantage to the accused to disrupted the legal process.

*(The writer is a law student; views expressed are personal)*

Indian education system: The quest for perfection

The Indian education system stands at a crossroads, poised between recognition and realisation of its inherent potential





JS RAJPUT

Looking back from the transition point to the third millennium, it could indeed be interesting—and revealing—as to what was the most encouraging achievement in the pivotal sector of education! The most mentioned of the responses to the query from seasoned academics and scholars, as well as the policymakers who had contributed to policy formulation and implementation for three-four decades, referred to the change in social responses from various strata of society. The most serious impediment was ignorance of the value of education in the lives of the individual and the family. One wonders whether anything more could be expected from a society seriously emaciated for centuries, and subjected to live their lives in abject misery! Social structures that practised exclusion, seriously flawed assumptions on the role of women and its relationship to female literacy, and the excruciating hold of the clergy in deprecating the education of girls were indeed serious handicaps before all those who were assigned to implement the constitutional directive of providing free and compulsory education to all children till they achieve fourteen years of age! The widely prevalent practice of early marriage, child labour, compulsions to earn daily bread, and the need for extra hands in farms and fields, were also prominent factors that severely impeded the process of enrolment in schools. It may be tough for the millennials to visualise a situation that for decades together, girls' education in India suffered for want of toilets for girls in schools. This is one area that remained neglected all along. After the Prime Minister of India spoke from the ramparts of the Red Fort about sanitation practices, and the need for immediate reforms, things have

“

OUR EDUCATION INITIATIVES AND EFFORTS, IT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED, DRIFTED MORE TOWARDS THE ACQUISITION OF EDUCATION FOR MATERIAL AND PHYSICAL GAINS

changed, and this deserves appreciation. However, considerable alertness and appreciation of the need are still necessary. Why do I say this? What one learns from personal interactions just cannot always be extricated from data! In 2016, one visited several institutions as a member of the TSR Subramaniam Committee on Education policy. In one of the colleges with an enrollment of around two thousand, a mention was made of the neglect of sanitation, the Director had this to say: Oh, it is too dirty and unhygienic for me to inspect! I mention this for two reasons; first, the systems of education paid little attention to such a significant impediment. Second; even after the universally acknowledged and appreciated movement for sanitation, and its great success, there is much more to be achieved on this front! We are much better off at this juncture in educational achievements, particularly in the context of girls' participation in education and subsequently in every sector of knowledge, skills, services, defence and the like. What was the most ignored aspect of Indian education during the second half of the 20th century? Some academics and scholars—adherents of negativity included—would like to criticise all that has been done and achieved during this period. Those who are, ideologically unconstrained and capable of taking an objective analytical view express concern about certain aspects that are essential ingredients total the personality development of any individual. This is usually articulated in

every policy and programme, but current education practices get ignored in schools and even certain well-reputed institutions. Moral and ethical aspects of education, education in human values, and similar expressions are regular parts of every education initiative. We also have the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, who could say “My life is my message”! How many of our present-day leaders—political leaders—could say that with inner conviction and confidence? There are still the old guards and young ones who took Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Rajagopalachari, Karpuri Thakur, LK Advani, Narendra Modi, and the like as their role models. A committed work culture, a sound value system, and a pursuit of higher and larger goals in life could only be inculcated in educational institutions and that remains a big challenge before the Indian education system. Our advantage is that we are familiar with how it could be achieved. Indian education has achieved sufficient recognition and success; within and outside the country. India and its ancient education systems aimed at comprehensive personality development, the comprehension of ‘Ekam Sat Viprah Baudha Vadanti’, ‘Sarv bhut Hite Ratah’, ‘Sarve Bhavantu Sukhina’, and much more on similar lines. We were privileged that MK Gandhi gave us a practical model of education that focused on enhancing the economic aspect but did not neglect this totality, and wanted the best to be drawn out of out of head, hand and heart. Sri Aurobindo; and the mother; dwelled in higher echelons of human advancement, apart from what is usually aimed at imparting education. Our education initiatives and efforts, it must be acknowledged; drifted more towards the acquisition of education for material and physical gains. Education, said the Mother; is not to prepare learners to succeed in life and society but ‘to increase his perfectibility’! Addressing the students of the Ashram Schools she said: “Do not aim for success. Our aim is perfection. Remember you are on the hold of a new world, participating in its worth and instrumental in its creation. There is nothing more important than the transformation. There is no interest more worthwhile.” The Mother goes on to delineate it further for our comprehension: “To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities, and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and truer...” Could anything more need be said on how our schools and institutions could move ahead in pursuit of excellence once they absorb the golden words and the strength of the philosophy behind them?

*(The author works in education, social cohesion and religious amity, views are personal)*



MONEY MATTERS

## 'India's steel exports at 18-month high'

India's monthly steel exports hit a 18-month high to 1.1 million tonne in January 2024 on increased demand from the European Union and supportive global prices, SteelMint said. Besides, competitive domestic prices of steel contributed to rise in export, the research firm said in its latest report. The outbound shipment of steel in January 2023 was 0.67 million tonne, as per SteelMint data. On reasons behind the surge in exports, SteelMint said, "good restocking demand from the European Union (EU) contributed 67 per cent of the 1.11 MT (export) in January. It was highest in last 18 months." While the price of hot rolled coil (HRC) in India's trade segment was at Rs 54,300/a tonne, the global rate was USD 710 per tonne (about Rs 58,000). This factor also contributed to the demand for Indian steel in the global markets. Overall, Indian steel exports may remain largely range-bound or fall slightly in the near term.



## CEO Clubs India to host flagship summit from March 1-3

CEO Clubs India will host its annual flagship summit from March 1 to 3 with participation of chief executives of more than 150 companies. The summit 'Go Beyond Retreat 2024' to be held in the city will have Star Hospitals MD Gopichand Mannam, Nangia Andersen India Chairman Rakesh Nangia and Medplus Health Services Founder & CEO Madhukar Gangadi. The summit will discuss the ever-changing needs of today's visionary leaders and include interactive workshops and gain insights into navigating the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. CEO Clubs India National President, Kishore Kothapalli said, "We are excited to continue the tradition of bringing together bright minds from across the country to explore new ideas, forge meaningful connections and shape the future".



## LIC Housing Finance hopes to earn Rs 5,000 cr profit

LIC Housing Finance, the mortgage arm of insurance behemoth LIC, is expecting a net profit of Rs 5,000 crore in the current financial year on the back of robust loan demand and expansion in non-core business. The non-core business includes Loan Against Property (LAP) and affordable housing finance, LIC Housing Finance managing director and CEO Tribhuwan Adhikari told PTI in an interaction. During 2022-23, the biggest housing finance company earned a net profit of Rs 2,891 crore. "Affordable housing segment remained strong in tier-2 and tier-3 markets. We remained focused on this segment, as it gives an opportunity to millions of aspiring Indians to own their home with a moderate budget," he said. In addition to business growth, he said, "our endeavour has been to improve service standards through ongoing digitalisation".



### WTO MINISTERIAL MEETING

# India seeks permanent solution to food security

Will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact besides pressing for finding a permanent solution to public stock holding of grains for food security and protection of the interests of fishermen at the WTO ministerial meeting beginning Tuesday.

The Indian delegation is led by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The four-day 13th ministerial conference (MC13) will start on February 26 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Trade ministers of 164 member countries of the World



Trade Organisation (WTO) are meeting against the backdrop of the uncertain global economic situation due to the Red Sea crisis, the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The key issue of India's interests at the meeting relates to finding a permanent solution for its minimum support price (MSP) issue for food security, agricultural reforms,

fisheries subsidies, e-commerce moratorium on import duties, dispute settlement, and WTO reforms.

### Food security issues

The public stock-holding (PSH) programme is a policy tool under which the government procures crops like rice and wheat from farmers at MSP, and stores and distributes foodgrains to the poor.

India stresses the need for PSH for its large, vulnerable population and wants a permanent solution from the MC13. Food procurement, stockholding, and distribution are crucial to India's food security strategy.



431 infra projects hit by cost overrun of Rs 4.80 lakh cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 431 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or above, were hit by cost overrun of more than Rs 4.80 lakh crore in January 2024, an official report stated.

According to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,821 projects, 431 reported cost overrun and 780 projects were delayed.

Total original cost of implementation of the 1,821 projects was Rs 26,09,679.38 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 30,90,135.99 crore.

## Billionaires, cricketers, film stars invited to Ambani scion's pre-wedding festivities



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's top billionaires, including Gautam Adani and Sunil Bharti Mittal, mega stars from film industry such as Amitabh Bachchan and Shahrukh Khan and cricketing icons from Sachin Tendulkar to M S Dhoni are among those invited for pre-wedding celebrations of Mukesh Ambani's youngest son, Anant early next month.

Ahead of the wedding ceremony in July, guests from around the world have been invited to three-day pre-wedding festivities beginning March 1, at Gujarat's Jamnagar, which houses Ambani's mega oil refineries.

Anant Ambani, the youngest of the three children Mukesh Ambani and Nita Ambani have, is set to marry Radhika Merchant - the younger daughter of

Viren Merchant, CEO of Encore Healthcare, and entrepreneur Shaila Merchant.

With Jamnagar not having five-star hotels, ultra-luxury tents housing best of facilities, including tiled bathrooms are being erected for the guests.

The guest list includes international business leaders like Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen, Walt Disney CEO Bob Iger, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, Adnoc CEO Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, and EL Rothschild chair Lynn Forester de Rothschild, sources said.

Indian business magnates invited include Gautam Adani and family, Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran, Aditya Birla Group Chairperson Kumar Mangalam Birla.

### MARKETS TO FOCUS ON GLOBAL TRENDS

## May face volatility amid derivatives expiry: Analysts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With no major domestic market-moving event scheduled this week, stock market investors would largely focus on global trends and foreign fund movement, and may face volatility amid monthly derivatives expiry, analysts said.

"We expect volatility to remain high due to the scheduled expiry of February month derivatives contracts. Besides, participants should keep a close watch on the performance of the global indices, especially the US for cues," Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research at Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Last week, BSE Sensex rose 716.16 points or 1 per cent to



close at 73,142.8 points and inched closer to its record high level of 73,427.5.

"Markets remained volatile in the passing week but managed to end with a gain of nearly a per cent. After the initial rise, mixed global cues combined with profit taking in

select heavyweights capped the momentum.

"Consequently, the benchmark indices, Nifty and Sensex, continued to oscillate in a narrow range till the end and finally settled at 22,212.70 and 73,142.80 respectively," Mishra said.

### IMPACT OF RS 2,000 NOTES WITHDRAWAL

## Currency-in-circulation growth dips to 3.7%

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The growth in currency in circulation decelerated to 3.7 per cent for the week ended February 9 from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the impact of the decision of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to withdraw Rs 2,000 banknotes.

Currency-in-circulation (CiC) refers to notes and coins in circulation, while currency with the public comprises notes and coins in circulation minus cash with banks.

According to the RBI, commercial banks have reported double-digit growth in deposits in

January, which too can be attributed to withdrawal of Rs 2,000 currency notes.

The growth of Reserve Money (RM), as per the RBI data, decelerated to 5.8 per cent as on February 9, 2024 from 11.2 per cent a year ago (8.8 per cent adjusted for the first-round impact of change in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)). Components of RM include CiC, banks' deposits in RBI and other deposits with the central bank.

The growth in CiC, the largest component of RM, decelerated to 3.7 per cent from 8.2 per cent a year ago, reflecting the withdrawal of Rs 2,000 banknotes, according to the RBI.



Number of M&A deals in India falls 10% to 793 in 2023: PwC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The number of merger and acquisition (M&A) deals during 2023 dropped by 10 per cent on an annual basis to 793, said a PwC India report on Sunday.

However, the total disclosed deal value for M&A declined much steeper at 38 per cent during the year, according to the report titled 'Deals at a glance'.

The report further observed that PE (Private Equity) investments totalled USD 36 billion, marking a substantial 36 per cent drop from 2022.

Despite this decline, the average investment size per deal increased to USD 46 million from USD 42 million in 2022, reflecting a potential shift towards larger opportunities.

While early-stage investments were 53 per cent less compared to that in 2022, the report said, these along with growth-stage investments continued to make up the major share, constituting around 73 per cent of fundings in 2023.

## IOC, GAIL, ONGC fined for third quarter

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned oil and gas giants including IndianOil, ONGC and GAIL (India) have been slapped fines for the third straight quarter for failing to meet listing norm requirements of having the requisite number of directors on their board.

Stock exchanges have fined oil refining and fuel marketing giant Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), explorers Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) and Oil India Ltd (OIL), gas utility GAIL, and refiners Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL) a cumulative Rs 32.5 lakh, stock exchange filings showed.

In separate filings, the companies detailed the fines imposed by the BSE and NSE for either not having the requisite number of independent directors or the mandated women director in the third

quarter ended December 31, 2023, but were quick to point out that appointment of directors was done by the government and they had no role in it.

The companies had faced fines for the same reason in the previous two quarters as well.

The six PSUs in separate filings said they have been slapped with a fine of Rs 5,42,800 each for the third quarter. While ONGC and its subsidiaries HPCL and MRPL, GAIL and OIL faced fines for not having the required number of independent directors on their board, IOC for not having a woman independent director on its board.

Listing norms require companies to have independent directors in the same proportion as executive or functional directors. They are also required to have at least one woman director on the board.

For the second quarter, IOC, ONGC, OIL, GAIL, Bharat Petroleum Corporation.



## Exports now into Africa, Central Asia & Europe

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

At a time when global trade is facing geo-political uncertainties, India's exports of goods like automobiles and gold jewellery have ventured into uncharted territories of Central Asia, Africa and Latin America, according to an analysis by the commerce ministry.

The analysis has shown that India has penetrated into what are termed as "absolutely new markets" in regions such as Africa, Central Asia, Latin America and North America during April-December 2023. The "absolutely new markets" refer to areas where India did see any export during April-December 2022, but healthy growth of certain principal



commodities like motor vehicles, two- and three-wheelers, petroleum products, sugar, gold and other precious jewellery were recorded in April-December 2023.

Exports of these commodities to the absolutely new markets during April-December 2023 stood at USD 234 million as against nil shipments during

the same period of 2022.

It added that these commodities captured a greater number of markets in the Central Asia, Africa, and European regions.

"A comprehensive examination of country-wise exports underscores a notable diversification of markets for India's merchandise exports, characterised by the exploration of

new export destinations, in spite of strong global headwinds with subdued performance globally," an official said.

The official added that after evaluating the market diversification of the country's merchandise exports across major sectors at the principal commodity level, comparing the periods from April-December 2022-23 to April-December 2023-24, significant advancements in market diversification emerged in the current fiscal.

These diversified markets are termed as 'absolutely new', 'new', and 'promising'.

"Together, exports to these markets capture 5 per cent of India's total exports of 42 principal commodities to the

world. These commodities span across 16 important sectors of India's export basket," the official added.

In the new markets, where India's exports share of goods like ceramics and allied products, aluminium, products of aluminium, two- and three-wheelers, products of iron and steel, electric machinery and equipments was meagre or nil has jumped to USD 2.17 billion during April-December 2023.

These items have captured a greater number of markets in the America, Central Asian, and African regions.

The analysis showed that the export of two- and three-wheelers has been headed to 31 new markets/countries with a total exported value of USD 110 million in the April.

## Monthly household consumer spending more than doubled during 2012-2023

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The per capita monthly household expenditure more than doubled in 2022-23 as compared to 2011-12, according to the latest study of National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

NSSO, under Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, conducted Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) during August 2022 to July 2023, an official statement said on Saturday.

The survey aims at generating estimates of household Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) and its distribution



separately for the rural and urban sectors of the country, for states and Union Territories, and for different socio-economic groups.

As per the survey, the average MPCE at current prices

(without imputation) more than doubled to Rs 6,459 in urban areas in 2022-23 from Rs 2,630 in 2011-12.

Similarly in rural areas, it jumped to Rs 3,773 from Rs 1,430 at current prices.





## OPPENHEIMER MAKES A HUGE WIN AT THE SAG 2024

The popular biopic *Oppenheimer* by Christopher Nolan has dominated the Screen Actors Guild awards this year. *Barbie* and *Killers of the Flower Moon* were beaten by the cast of the biographical epic for best ensemble. Male actor in a leading part went to Cillian Murphy; Paul Giamatti and Jeffrey Wright were also in contention. "This is very, very special to me because it comes from you guys," he declared to the Shrine Auditorium crowd in Los Angeles. For his portrayal of Lewis Strauss in the movie, Robert Downey Jr. won the award for male actor in a supporting role.

on 2001, the actor received a Sag award for his role on *Ally McBeal*. Lily Gladstone defeated Emma Stone and Margot Robbie to win the award for female performer in a leading role in *Killers of the Flower Moon*. She began, "This has been a hard year for all of us," before bringing up the actors' strike of 2023. She continued, "We bring empathy to a world that sorely needs it." Star of *The Holdovers* Da'Vine Joy Randolph, who took home multiple accolades this season, including a Golden Globe and a Bafta, was voted best female actor in a supporting role. "Your life can change in a day and it is not a question of if but of when, keep going," she said performers who are still waiting for their big break. She also referred to the film's director, Alexander Payne, as "truly every actor's dream."

## Priyanka Chopra 'proud to join' the team of TO KILL A TIGER

As a global celebrity, Priyanka Chopra has been using her platform to promote important causes while also captivating audiences around the world with her artistic abilities. According to Deadline, Priyanka has now become an executive producer on the Oscar-nominated documentary *To Kill A Tiger*. The Nisha Pahuja movie centres on a father's quest for justice following the sexual abuse of his 13-year-old daughter by three of their family members. Additionally, the source said that Netflix will release the movie. Executive producers Dev Patel and Mindy Kaling have also joined. Sharing this on social media, Priyanka mentioned that she was moved by this film when she first saw it in Toronto in 2022. She shared, "I'm so proud to join the incredible team of the Academy Award-nominated documentary *To Kill A Tiger*, and to announce that Netflix has acquired the global distribution rights to this powerful feature directed by Nisha Pahuja. When I first watched this film in 2022, I was immediately captivated by its poignant narrative, depicting a father's valiant struggle within the judicial system to secure justice for his daughter. This project serves as a testament to the boundless love and unyielding determination of a devoted father for his cherished daughter." A nomination for Best Documentary Feature at the Academy Awards has been extended to *To Kill A Tiger*. The movie has won 24 prizes at different film festivals worldwide.



## 'I feel I cannot bear the guilt,' says Kareena as she missed Jeh's 1st concert

Kareena Kapoor is an actor who has succeeded in striking a balance between her personal and professional lives. However, Kareena acknowledged that sometimes this requires making compromises, either at work or at home. Kareena recently talked about her "mom guilt" and revealed that she had to miss her younger son Jeh's debut concert. "I missed my younger one Jeh's first-ever concert today since I was filming a promo beforehand. Saif was rehearsing for his film, which he will begin releasing on Netflix the next week. He attended Taimur's school funfair before heading to Jeh's show. I recently gave the kids a call to see how they were doing; they had been really busy. Though it's a never-ending struggle, I adore it." Additionally, Kareena revealed that Taimur, her older son, has begun to comprehend that both of his parents work, and she feels that Taimur's exposure to a working mother will instill in him a greater sense of respect for

women. "I know I will be there when he performs next year," she said, admitting that she felt a great deal of guilt for missing Jeh's debut performance. At this age, it is more for me. That's my fault; he's only three. It's as if I have to be present to see his delight since I can never be sure if he will remember it. You must therefore speak to yourself and persuade yourself that there is a place where I feel I cannot bear the guilt of not going to be there for a full day, either at specific periods or all the time." She continued by saying that she and Saif Ali Khan attempt to find a balance between their time spent at home with the children and their need for work. "I cannot function without my job or my role as a working mother. Taimur is aware of that. I believe that he is growing up in a good environment, where both his father and mother work and alternate who will likely be at home. It will provide him with a well-rounded upbringing and teach him to appreciate women much more."

## 'WONKA 2 is definitely something we're thinking about'

When *Wonka* was released at the box office last year, Timothee Chalamet starred in it and fared well. It went on to become one of Timothee's highest-grossing films ever. Paul King, who provided some insight for *Wonka 2* following the popularity of the original movie, directed the picture. The idea of Chalamet playing Willy Wonka, a character famous by Johnny

Depp and the late Gene Wilder, was welcomed with scepticism. Hugh Grant, Rowan Atkinson, Olivia Colman, Calah Lane, Keegan-Michael Key, Tom Davis, and other actors supported Timothee in the film *Wonka*. Being a musical and having been released around Christmas may have provided it an advantage since families watch this fantasy movie together and spend quality time with their loved ones. Paul King, the filmmaker of *Wonka*, discussed the prospect of a *Wonka 2* film. "That's definitely something we're thinking about," he stated. Additionally, the director made hints about brainstorming concepts related to oompa loompas. In addition, Paul King said, "We can wait for a beat. If we don't think of a story, this is a movie that works on its own. If we conceive of anything that we believe can be exciting, Oompa Loompas feel like there can be more than one oompa loompas. Naturally, some ideas are circulating, but because we don't yet have a tale, we'll have to wait and see."



FUN

### ARCHIE



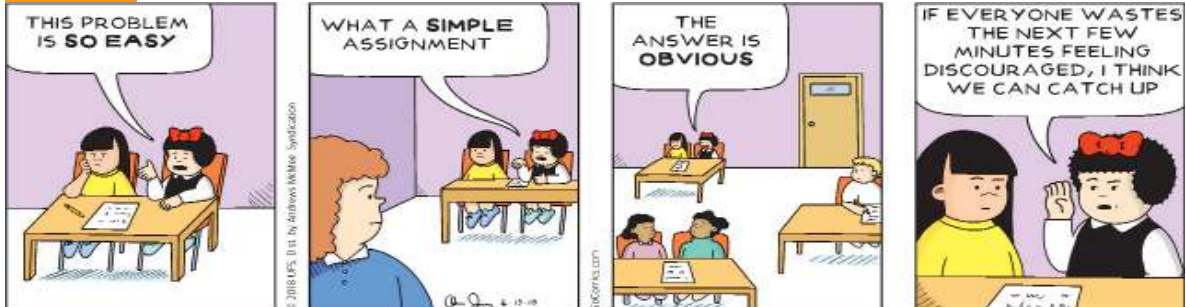
### CALVIN AND HOBBS



### GARFIELD



### NANCY



### GINGER MEGGS



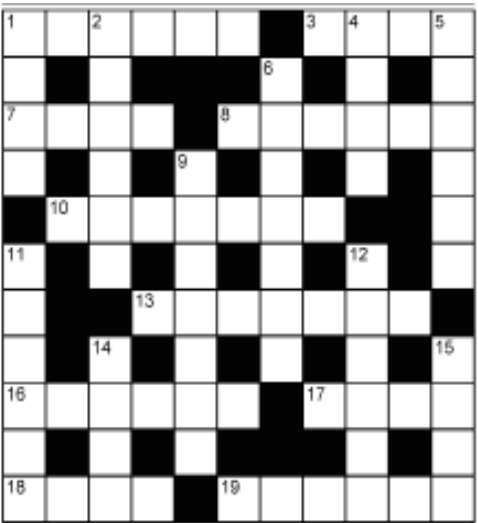
### REALITY CHECK



### SPEED BUMP



### CROSSWORD



#### ACROSS

- 1 An archer fires these
- 3 Seize
- 7 The body's covering
- 8 Wanting food
- 10 Rich
- 13 Not straight
- 16 Best
- 17 The world's most eaten grain
- 18 Utters
- 19 A fire-breathing monster

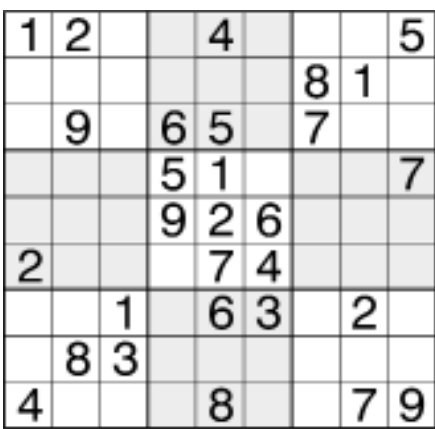
#### DOWN

- 1 Too
- 2 Spoiled
- 4 Scraps of cloth
- 5 Purchasing

- 6 A soft thing to sit on or put on a couch
- 9 A type of shop that sells flowers
- 11 High, steep rock-faces
- 12 Needlework
- 14 Jealousy
- 15 A blood vessel



### SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
2	5	3	7	1	9	6	4	8
7	8	1	3	6	4	2	9	5
9	6	4	8	5	2	7	1	3
8	2	6	4	7	3	9	5	1
1	3	9	5	2	8	4	7	6
4	7	5	1	9	6	8	3	2
6	1	2	9	3	7	5	8	4
3	4	7	6	8	5	1	2	9
5	9	8	2	4	1	3	6	7

#### 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.





Actor **Mukul Chadda**, who is currently enjoying the international acclaim that his upcoming film *Fairy Folk* has been receiving, gets candid with *The Pioneer*, sharing his feelings on the same, sharing the big screen space with his wife, **Rasika Dugal**, and more.

## ‘FAIRY FOLK’ sheds light on multiple issues, without sermonising on anything’

TEJAL SINHA

The joy of being an actor is inhabiting different characters and learning new things with each project, believes actor Mukul Chadda. There's always something in us, that wishes to inhabit different souls in one lifetime and learn new things all the time. And so, the entire journey of being an actor, he says, has been one of self-discovery and constant learning. He is not someone who plans his life ahead; he always hopes to take it on, one exciting step at a time.

After receiving much acclaim, appreciation, and recognition on the international front at several film festivals, his upcoming film *Fairy Folk* is all set to hit theaters on March 1.

The *Ek Main Aur Ekk Tu* actor feels fortunate to travel with the crew to the Sydney Film Festival and the Chicago International Film Festival. Well, “Watching it in a darkened hall collectively with strangers from a different culture and country was wonderful. With every

laugh, every held breath, and every sigh, I was going through the emotions of the audience even before speaking to them after the screenings. And of course, the feedback after the film was over was overwhelming. The best part for me was that so many people had so many varied reactions to the film—everyone liked a different aspect of it because it spoke to so many different kinds of people. I can't wait for audiences in India to see it.”

*Fairy Folk* is the story of a couple living in Mumbai. When a magical creature enters their world, it upturns their lives and relationships in different ways. This film is a juxtaposition of magical realism with a relationship drama, a film that is both funny and tragic at the same time. His character is a poker player who sees things as a puzzle to be solved and is very obsessive about everything he gets involved with. And make others also follow through on his plans in the manner he has thought out best!

And something that was more than interesting to know was that the film also stars his darling wife, Rasika Dugal, in the lead role, for the first time on the big screen. Mukul was no less than ecstatic about sharing the screen with his wife.

“She is a wonderful actor and someone whom I trust and respect a lot,” gleefully shares the star. That degree of trust and respect is very important while working with someone, and he feels lucky the couple got to do this rather difficult project together.

“I've learned a lot from Rasika over the years. Just watching her prepare for her projects has been a learning experience in itself. Or from the discussions we tend to have with each other about our respective projects. This project was different because, by the very nature of the improvisational shooting style, we couldn't discuss what our characters were going through or what we were planning for the next day. Karan would often give each of us notes on how to surprise the other actor on set the next day, and obviously, we couldn't share that with each other. So surprisingly, I had fewer discussions with her on this project that we worked on together than on projects in which we weren't working together.”

The project highlights a major thing that has been of much concern these days—bonds and

relationships. The film beautifully shines a light on the fragility of relationships, on how a small change of events can expose cracks in a relationship and dramatically impact it. “What I love about Karan's storytelling style is that he never makes the film about any one issue; it's a simple, sometimes funny, sometimes dramatic story about the lives of a couple. But along the way, it sheds light on relationships, on love, on desire, on gender—on so many issues, without sermonising on anything.”

Attention, love, and kindness are things that relationships lack these days. And this, he says, has been well demonstrated in the film, as to how a little catalyst can dramatically change the way a relationship goes forward. And how fragile things can be, with just a little nudge. Likewise, those external events can also bring two people so much closer than they were earlier.

This film was shot in an improvised way; there were no written dialogues whatsoever, even though the basic structure of the storyline was known in advance. So, for example, “We knew roughly what has to happen in a scene, but not how it was going to come about. When trying to achieve this, actors mustn't pre-plan anything and simply go with the flow. Even if another actor says or does something unexpected in a scene, your job is to accept it, and react as the character. And they, in turn, react to what you just did. In fact, some magical and beautiful moments came out of this process. Since we didn't discuss or pre-plan things, it was not really possible in this process to have a disagreement with another actor. And like I said, if something unexpected came your way in the take, you accepted it fully and went with the flow.”

Here comes an interesting and exclusive revelation: “Most of the film is shot in an apartment. Rasika and I took a lot of things from our own house to populate that apartment to give it a lived-in feel, and also make it feel like our own home, which really helped us.”

Meanwhile, on the work front, his upcoming film, *Sunflower 2*, is releasing very soon! Then there is also an action comedy film called *Dhoom Dhaam* with Yami Gautam and Pratik Gandhi; a romantic comedy called *Ishq Jhamela* with Arjun Rampal; and an Amazon series called *Big Girls Don't Cry* with Pooja Bhatt and Raima Sen that should all release this year. So, of course, there is an interesting year ahead for Mukul, and we too look forward to it!

“I've learned a lot from Rasika over the years. Just watching her prepare for her projects has been a learning experience in itself.”

## Harmonious melange of Rasika Shekar's love for folk music

SHIKHA DUGGAL

Rasika Shekar, a singer, flutist, and music composer was praised by Ustad Ghulam Ali Khan recently. She first appeared as a playback singer in movies like *Kill Dil* and *2 States*, as well as singing with Shankar Mahadevan in the Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy composition *Dekh Indian Circus*. However, her performance as a featured flutist on Ehsaan and Loy's produced hit *Man Patang* at MTV Coke Studio season 2 marked a turning point for her. Now she has recently collaborated on a record with American jazz players who have won awards!

The folk performer elaborates in an exclusive chat with us, saying, “It's been more than a dream. This journey has been filled with amazing encounters that have influenced both my musical style and me. As I explore and compose my own music, the varied experiences and training have cultivated a viewpoint and taste in music that are all coming together. I still enjoy practicing and listening to Carnatic music the best since it has such a strong foundation. Being a classically trained flutist and vocalist who has experimented with different genres has given me a distinct yet well-rounded perspective and exposed me to a wide variety of sounds.”

She recently appeared in the first-ever Indian folk music documentary series on JioCinema called *Equals*, which showcases episodes of a folk musician and a young, urbane producer working together. Rasika worked with the most experienced and renowned folk musician Prahlad Tipanya on the series! She was one of the series' featured solo female music producers. She performed as a multi-instrumentalist, producer, composer, and bandleader. “I was more aware of my love for music in my final year of chemical engineering school than ever before. I so found myself debating whether to give it a go and acquire more knowledge before deciding to pursue a career in engineering. I continued to become more and more in love with the various aspects that music has to offer as I made the leap. I wanted to investigate it further since I was so engrossed. Nonetheless, I am incredibly appreciative of my engineering degree. It has equipped me with particular abilities like problem-solving, arithmetic, and analytical thinking, which are useful in the music industry in a special way,” the singer added.

Ustad Ghulam Ali has taught her a great deal about phrasing and improvisation in music. In addition to his musical expertise, she was greatly inspired by his self-control, modesty, and commitment to music! Conversely, “In cinematic projects, you're filling in to realise someone else's vision for that song. It is a combination of the music

director's and director's requirements for that specific track. I believe the strategy needs to be well thought out since you have to strike a balance between adding your own flair and what the song and concept call for. The excitement of playback singing lies in the ability to transform your voice into many personas.”

For her, each and every live performance with Shankar Mahadevan has been a blessing and an education in and of itself for Rasika. From musicality to ways of thinking, creativity to discipline, perseverance to on-stage presence, humility, and so much more, she has seen and learned so much. Being on stage alongside renowned performers offered her a glimpse into some small moments and how to respond to various situations. She has performed and made music in a variety of settings, which has given her the opportunity to try out new techniques.

She promised herself early on in her musical journey that she would experience every aspect of it and immerse herself in each new musical realm that drew her in. There's a more focused approach now. Although the term “genre” is broad, there are a few sounds and techniques that really appeal to and delight her. Most importantly, she hangs on to the idea that if something emotionally impacts her, it doesn't matter what genre it is. She thinks it's critical to be aware of and sensitive to the context.

There is a shared vision when there is teamwork. When it's music she wrote, the meaning changes! As a result, the balance can move freely. “I learned a lot from one specific performance experience that I will never forget: performing in Spain. An audience that had never heard Indian music before attended the concert. I had no idea what to anticipate. Throughout the performance, I was continually taken aback, and it taught me a lot about the nature of live performances. Each audience is unique, with a pulse and taste that originate from a deeper place that is influenced by its own social dynamics, history, and culture. One of the wonderful things about performing live is that audiences may surprise you in the most exquisite ways.” But there is one thing that she discovered that unites audiences all around the world: sincere

music and expressive lyrics have a profound effect on listeners that is difficult to put into words. Whatever the language or genre, that's what makes music so beautiful!

“Even now, I find the instrument's simplicity to be fascinating. It seems to be the closest to the voice. Playing it makes me feel a very rewarding kind of connection. Every flute has its own personality, which is another fascinating aspect. It's kind of like making friends. Gaining an understanding of its subtleties and relationship takes time. It's just myself and a particular bamboo flute when I am playing alone. I can lose myself in simply examining the hues and tones of that particular flute and using that particular character to convey my musical ideas. It's an instrument that, on the outside, appeals to a great deal of people on a very basic level. Despite being primarily an Indian instrument, it can be used in any genre,” the composer leaves us with a thought-provoking statement.



Rasika Shekar, known for her fusion of folk music and passion, gets candid with *The Pioneer* about her journey, collaborating with renowned musicians including Prahlad Tipanya, Shankar-Ehsaan-Loy, and more.



## Navigating the healing journey post-contoura surgery

Contoura vision, a revolutionary advancement in vision correction surgery, has transformed the lives of millions worldwide, offering unparalleled precision and accuracy in treating refractive errors. However, like any surgical procedure, proper recovery is crucial to achieving optimal results and ensuring long-term eye health. Here are some invaluable tips and insights to navigate the recovery process after contoura surgery.

**1. Follow post-operative instructions diligently:** Your doctor will provide detailed postoperative instructions tailored to your specific needs. It's imperative to adhere to these instructions meticulously. They may include using prescribed eye drops, avoiding strenuous activities, wearing eye protection at night, and attending follow-up appointments. Compliance with these guidelines is vital for a smooth recovery and optimal visual outcomes.

**2. Rest and relaxation:** In the initial days following contoura surgery, prioritize rest and relaxation to facilitate healing. Avoid activities that strain the eyes, such as reading, watching screens for extended periods, or engaging in vigorous exercise. Adequate sleep is essential for the healing process, so aim for at least 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night.

**3. Protect your eyes:** Shield your eyes from potential irritants and contaminants, especially in the first few weeks post-surgery. Wear protective eyewear, such as sunglasses, to safeguard against bright sunlight, dust, wind, and other environmental factors. Avoid rubbing or touching your eyes, as this can increase the risk of infection and interfere with the healing process.

**4. Stay hydrated and maintain a healthy diet:** Proper hydration and nutrition are crucial for overall well-being and optimal healing post-surgery. Drink plenty of water to stay hydrated, as it promotes tissue regeneration and aids in flushing out toxins from the body. Additionally, consume a balanced diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and

antioxidants to support ocular health and expedite the recovery process.

**5. Avoid smoking and alcohol:** Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can impair the body's ability to heal effectively and increase the risk of complications after surgery. If you're a smoker, consider quitting or at least abstaining from smoking during the recovery period. Similarly, limit alcohol intake to promote faster healing and minimize the risk of postoperative complications.

**6. Be patient and manage expectations:** While contoura surgery offers remarkable results, it's essential to understand that the full benefits may take time to manifest. Vision improvement may vary from person to person, with some individuals experiencing immediate clarity, while others may require several weeks for optimal outcomes. Be patient, and trust the healing process, but also communicate any concerns or unusual symptoms promptly to your ophthalmologist.

**7. Engage in light activities:** As you progress through the recovery process, gradually reintroduce light activities into your daily routine. However, continue to avoid activities that exert excessive strain on the eyes or increase the risk of injury. Consult with your ophthalmologist before resuming activities such as driving or exercising to ensure it's safe to do so.

**8. Attend follow-up appointments:** Regular follow-up appointments with your ophthalmologist are essential for monitoring your progress and addressing any concerns or complications promptly. These appointments allow your surgeon to assess your healing, adjust medications if necessary, and ensure that your vision is progressing as expected. Do not skip or delay follow-up visits, as they are crucial for the success of your surgery.

In conclusion, navigating the recovery process after surgery requires patience, diligence, and proactive care. By following these tips and insights, you can optimize your healing, minimize the risk of complications, and enjoy the life-changing benefits of improved vision. Remember, your doctor is your partner in this journey, so don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or concerns along the way. With proper care and attention, you'll soon experience the full potential of your contoura vision.

(The author, Dr. Ch Annapoorna, is a Senior Refractive Surgeon, at the Maxivision Group of Eye Hospitals.)



# ASHWIN, JUREL, KULDEEP SHINE

## INDIA NEED 192 RUNS TO WIN 4TH TEST AGAINST ENGLAND

PTI ■ RANCHI

Dhruv Jurel's defensive chef-doeuvre found a perfect match in the destructive symphony of spin by fifer-man Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep Yadav as India seized decisive control of the fourth Test against England at the end of a dramatic third day here on Sunday.

India walked off at the stumps, having chiselled off 40 runs from the 192-run target without losing a wicket.

Rohit Sharma (24 batting) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (16 batting) would be confident of the team mustering the remaining 152 runs without much theatre.

However, it was Jurel who started India's resistive movement with a defiant 90 that came in 149 balls and 211 minutes. It carried the hosts to 307 in their first innings from the overnight 219 for seven.

In their second essay, England just did not have any answers to the questions posed by Ashwin (5/51), his 35th five-wicket haul in Tests, and Kuldeep Yadav (4/22), getting bowled out for a meagre 145.

Opener Zak Crawley (60) was the lone post of fight. It would have been worse for



England without that Crawley fifty before his innings was halted by Kuldeep.

Ravindra Jadeja bagged a solitary wicket but it was the key wicket of Jonny Bairstow.

In fact, Crawley was the only English batter to go past 30 as they lost their last seven wickets for just 35 runs with Ashwin and Jadeja weaving their magic.

Introduced late, the left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep struck in his third over when he cleaned up Crawley with a gem of a delivery that skidded through, unsettling

the middle-stump. Crawley was looking in an ominous mood and tore into the Indian attack against the run of play to stretch their overall lead past 150 as Rohit

persisted with Ashwin and Jadeja in the second session. But Kuldeep breathed fire into the attack as he got drift and was at his deceptive best. Having survived through an

umpire's call, England skipper Ben Stokes was castled by Kuldeep with the ball staying low.

Bairstow looked in firm control in his 42-ball 30 (3x4) but fell in the first ball after tea when Jadeja exploited the cracks on the pitch to turn it away and the batter drove it straight to short cover.

Kuldeep then dismissed Tom Hartley and Ollie Robinson in four balls, before Ashwin raced to his fifth wicket as stumper Dhruv Jurel took a brilliant reflex catch to oust James Anderson.

In the process, Ashwin also became the highest wicket-taker at home for India. He now has 354 wickets from 59 Tests at home, overtaking Anil Kumble's tally of 350 from 63 matches.

'Jurel' in the crown

But Jurel's innings might just have ended India's search for a wicketkeeper batter in Tests in the absence of recuperating Rishabh Pant.

The 23-year-old from Agra was not only terrific with his glovesmanship but exhibited oodles of maturity during that determined fifty as India mounted an incredible fightback, trimming England's first-innings lead to a mere 46 runs.

After reaching his maiden fifty in 96 balls, the Rajasthan

Royals' wicketkeeper-batsman shifted gears, taking on English spinners Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley.

Jurel hurried for a single off Hartley to bring up his fifty in an entertaining 40-run stand off just 75 balls for the ninth wicket with Akash Deep (9).

But Hartley denied him a hundred with a quicker delivery that stayed low.

Young England off-spinner Bashir completed his maiden Test five-wicket haul, trapping Akash to finish with figures of 5 for 119 in only his second Test.

Jurel and Kuldeep's 76-run partnership for the eighth wicket also rescued India from a precarious position when they were reduced to 177 for seven on the second day.

Under overcast conditions in the morning session, the overnight duo of Jurel and Kuldeep faced a 134-run deficit.

Kuldeep showcased superb application on a pitch with variable bounce, playing 131 balls with immaculate defence and effective strike rotation.

Kuldeep's determined innings ended when an Anderson delivery that stayed low took a bottom edge and disturbed the timber.



## Irfan lauds Akash for a memorable debut

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Sunday praised Akash Deep for making an immediate impact on his Test debut, with the right-arm seamer producing a three-wicket burst on the first day morning of the ongoing fourth Test against England in Ranchi.

Pathan said that for a fast bowler to make his debut in India is very difficult, but the way Akash bowled and picked up his three wickets, he showed promise of a bright future ahead of him.

"As a batter you want your debut to happen in India but as a fast bowler you dream to have your debut in England, Australia, South Africa or New Zealand," Pathan told PTI on the sidelines of the New Delhi Marathon on Sunday.

"The way he bowled in the first session of the match and to pick up three

wickets is commendable. We can only hope to see Akash's career graph to go up from here," he added.

The former India player also praised opening batter Yashasvi Jaiswal for becoming only the fifth from the country to have scored 600 or more runs in a Test series.

"Yashasvi Jaiswal is a very special cricketer, he has very bright future and he will make it big," the former cricketer said.

Pathan, who was at the marathon as chief guest, said India had the potential of becoming a sporting nation.

"To participate in such events is really special. I have always believed that India can become a sporting nation. Twenty thousand people participated here today and everyone was smiling. The people want to be fit and want to participate in such activities, it is always good to see this," he expressed.

## Australia beats New Zealand

AP ■ AUCKLAND

Australia beat New Zealand by 27 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis system in the heavily rain-affected third T20 international Sunday to complete a 3-0 sweep the series and to harden its favoritism for the World Cup later this year.

New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner won the toss in his 100th T20 international and sent Australia in, mindful the rain might dictate terms later in the match. It did.

Australia's was interrupted three times by rain breaks and finally terminated after 10.4 overs when it was 118-4. New Zealand was set 126 to win in 10 overs under the Duckworth-Lewis system, which seemed a relatively charitable target.

But New Zealand botched the run chase for the second time in three days at Eden Park, unable to conquer Australia's world class attack.

Under the revised rules for the 10-over innings, Australia was allowed five bowlers who could bowl two overs each with a three-over power play.

The young left-armer Spencer Johnson took 1-10 from his two overs, showing why he made \$1.4 million in the IPL auction earlier this year.

Nathan Ellis conceded only 11 from his two overs, Mitchell Starc only 15 and Adam Zampa took 1-20.

Ellis bowled four dot balls to New Zealand's biggest hitter, Glenn Phillips, in the fifth over and at the midpoint of its innings New Zealand was 51-2, needing 75 from the last 30 balls.

Australia's bowlers continued to bowl a tight line and length to frustrate the Black Caps



batters and after Ellis bowled the ninth over for the cost of only 8 runs, New Zealand needed 43 off the last over to win.

The honor, or duty, of bowling the last over went to Matt Short who already had contributed for Australia, making 27 off 11 ball, batting at No. 3.

The first ball of the over went for six but the next three balls

were singles, the fifth ball went for two and the last ball for a boundary as New Zealand fell hopelessly short.

"I think I feel most comfortable when I'm playing shots," Short said. "It was a bit of a strange game because of the rain and being off and on."

"The aggressive way is the way we want to play our T20." Credit also goes to wicketkeeper Matthew Wade

who took over the captaincy from Mitch Marsh and led Australia with great tactical insight in tricky conditions.

"Our bowlers were unbelievable today the way they came out and executed," Wade said. "It's as clinical a bowling performance as I've seen from an Australian unit and for Matt Short to come out and bat the way he did is exciting for the future."

"We've got depth in our squad and everyone's enjoying their cricket."

Australia should have been massively disadvantaged by the fact its innings was abruptly ended after only 10 overs when it had been playing for 20. But it already was in a powerful position.

Thanks to Short and to Travis Head, who made 33 from 30 balls, and Glenn Maxwell who made 20 off 9 after being dropped first ball, Australia already was 67-2 after its six-over power play.

New Zealand couldn't match the clinical aggression of the Australian batters.

Glenn Phillips and Mark Chapman faced most of the last five overs and simply couldn't find a way to score consistent boundaries against the outstanding Australian attack.

Australia has demonstrated the ability to win in all circumstances in this series, including its thrilling final ball victory in the first match, before an emphatic 72-run win in the second game.

"They're obviously a quality side," Santner said. "Their big three quicks and obviously the power they possess, I guess they showed us (how to play) throughout the series."

"The first one was a close one and I guess we got outplayed the last two."



## England spinner Leach to undergo knee surgery

PTI ■ LONDON

Left-arm spinner Jack Leach is set to undergo a knee surgery on Tuesday after being ruled out of the England's ongoing five-Test tour of India.

Leach, who came into the India series as England's most experienced spinner, took part in only the opening Test at Hyderabad which his side won by 28 runs.

The 32-year-old spinner suffered an injury on the field which caused severe swelling, forcing him to leave the tour after missing the second Test and subsequently returning home.

"I'm going to have an operation to get the rest of the swelling out because it's not budging," Leach was quoted as saying by the BBC.

The report added that the knee injury trouble is the latest for Leach who suffers

from Crohn's disease, having also missed last year's Ashes in England due to a stress fracture in his back. On the tour of New Zealand five years ago in 2019, Leach had also contracted sepsis.

"It was quite an unfortunate one. It was the second ball of the first innings in the field so that whole game I was playing with this knee problem. I obviously knocked it a few times throughout that game and it has just created a long period of recovery," he said.

"I need to get the operation done and then hopefully I can get back to playing cricket. I'd love to have a run of playing cricket and getting into a bit of a rhythm again and hopefully that can happen again once I've got this sorted."

After the conclusion of the India tour, England's next assignment will be the first home Test at Lord's from July 10.

## ICC suspends Hasaranga for two matches, Gurbaz fined match fees

PTI ■ DUBAI

The ICC has suspended Sri Lanka captain Wanindu Hasaranga for two matches and docked a fine of 15 per cent on the match fee of Afghanistan wicketkeeper-batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz for breaching its Code of Conduct during the third T20I in Dambulla.

The global governing body said in a release that Hasaranga has been banned after the spin bowling all-rounder accumulated a total of five demerit points within a 24-month period, which includes his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct.

"Sri Lanka's T20I skipper and second-ranked T20I bowler on the ICC Men's Player Rankings, Wanindu Hasaranga, has been presented with a two-match suspension after his total demerit

points reached five within a 24-month period following his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct, for which he received a 50 per cent fine and three demerit points," the ICC said in a statement.

The incident involving Hasaranga took place towards the end of the third and final T20I on Wednesday when he approached the on-field umpire Lyndon Hannibal to criticise a decision regarding a full toss delivery not being adjudged a no-ball.

Hasaranga was thus found guilty of breaching the article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel. The article relates to "personal abuse of a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire or Match Referee during an International Match".

With Hasaranga accumulating five demerit points, it converts to



two suspension points, the ICC said. "This means he will either get a ban for one Test match or two ODIs or T20Is, whichever comes first, for the player or player support personnel.

Consequently, Hasaranga will be suspended from participating in Sri Lanka's first two T20Is against Bangladesh next month," the ICC said.

### Gurbaz penalised

Afghanistan batter Gurbaz too was penalised for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct in the same match for having violated the article 2.4 of the code, which concerns "disobeying an Umpire's instruction during an International Match".

This has resulted in one demerit point being added to Gurbaz's disciplinary record, which marks his second such offence in a 24-

month period and the player accumulating two demerit points.

"The sanction was imposed on Rahmanullah for altering the grip of his bat on the field despite repeated warnings against doing so," the ICC said.

The ICC added that both the players have admitted to the offences and have accepted the sanction proposed by Chris Broad from the elite panel of match referees.

"The charges were brought forth by on-field umpires Lyndon Hannibal and Raveendra Pimalasiri, third umpire Ruchira Palliyaguruge, and fourth umpire Ramnare Martinez," the ICC said.

Sri Lanka won the series 2-1 with Afghanistan sealing a narrow three-run win in the final T20I.

Hasaranga was named the Player of the Series for his all-round show.



# ‘There are plans to create a sequel for Chaari 111’



**SHIKHA DUGGAL**

Filmmaker TG Keerthi Kumar, made his film debut with Malli Modalaindi, directed by Sumanth Yarlagadda. Currently, he is directing Vennela Kishore's *Chaari 111*, set for release on March 1st. The filmmaker got down for a quick conversation as the movie's release date drew near and shared some intriguing details about the movie with the media.

The director claimed that prior to beginning his profession, he had never had a directorial idea. "I took a course in visual communication before beginning my job as an editor, and I edited corporate films and TV ads for almost ten years. After that, I worked on *M a l l i Modalaindi*, my first film."

He first presented the concept for *Chaari 111* to Vennela Kishore, who played a comic in the movie. "Later, I shared the script with him," the director states. "Despite not having the script narration, he reviewed the script and gave the project his OK."

Filmmaker TG Keerthi Kumar, who is all set with the release of his upcoming film *Chaari 111*, speaks of his formative days, inspiration behind the film, and more.

He had faith in me right away." *Pink Panther* and *Johnny English's* core themes served as inspiration for this movie. I was really fond of those espionage comedies, which inspired me to write this script. Casting is crucial for a movie like *Chaari 111*, and I was fortunate to have Vennela Kishore and Murali Sharma sign on." He highlights, "This is a character-driven movie; the conflict and villain will emerge later."

It's an action comedy spy movie. "As an example, *Johnny English* is a spy comedy, whereas James Bond is an action spy. My movie fits into the second group. I had Vennela Kishore in mind when I created this script. If Kishore hadn't given the script his approval, I wouldn't have made this movie."

"In our film, Kishore's character irritates his boss to no end," the director says. "And, I chose Murali Sharma for the role because I needed an actor with a serious appearance. The antagonist in our movie dons a mask for a reason. Although there wasn't a deliberate attempt to conceal the antagonist, the plot does have an intriguing element. For commercial reasons, we therefore chose to maintain the suspense."

He hopes to collaborate with a famous hero in the future. He feels that he needs to establish himself before he can work with a famous hero on an action movie. That he made *Chaari 111* makes him pleased! "There is potential to include more heroes in the film. I have to say that there are plans to create a sequel for *Chaari 111*. This universe has a lot of possibilities for spy comedies."

## VN Aditya receives honorary doctorate from George Washington University of Peace

Renowned filmmaker VN Aditya has made a name for himself in Tollywood with his family-friendly comedies and endearing love tales like *Nenunna* and *Manasantha Nuvve*. VN Aditya, who has worked in the film industry for almost ten years, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the George Washington University of Peace in America. He received this esteemed award during the International Peace Conference in Bangalore, where the George Washington University of Peace honoured notable figures for their accomplishments across a range of disciplines. VN Aditya received recognition in the film industry.

Notable attendees at the event were National SC & ST Commission Member Dinesh Gururji, Secretary-General Dr. Srinivas Eluri, Director of the George Washington University of Peace Neelamani, and NITI Aayog IES Advisor Shivappa. Director VN Aditya dedicated this honour to his mother, who had always hoped he would succeed in school rather than movies, as a gesture of thanking her for this opportunity. He expressed his gratitude and delight at earning a doctorate in cinema, a subject he loves dearly, adding that it was both a personal accomplishment and a realisation of his mother's dreams.

He expressed gratitude to George Washington University of Peace in the United States for awarding him an honorary doctorate. The film industry has responded with congratulatory messages for his achievement.





## ALL EYES ON ANJALI'S MILESTONE FILM *GEETHANJALI MALLI VACHINDI*

The upcoming horror entertainer *Geethanjali Malli Vachindhi*, starring Anjali in the titular role, marks the sequel to the 2014 low-budget blockbuster *Geethanjali*.

The film is being produced by Kona Venkat under the banners of Kona Film Corporation and MVV Cinemas, with Siva Turlapati directing. The film is slated for release on March 22. In anticipation, the movie's teaser was recently released, with Director Buchi Babu, Bobby, Gopichand Malineni, and hero Sree Vishnu gracing the teaser launch event as chief guests.

Hero Sree Vishnu speaking at the event said, "I have been collaborating with Kona Venkat since last year. I am very excited about our upcoming film. He places a strong emphasis on the story, without rushing. I hope this movie achieves great success. I extend my best wishes to the entire film team and hope the director earns a good reputation. I eagerly await making the audience laugh and scaring them in theaters on March 22, ensuring a successful box office run. Anjali's accomplishment of acting in fifty films is no small feat. It's a matter of pride for a Telugu girl to have achieved such success. I wish her continued success, with another hundred or 150 films. I also have high hopes for Nandu and Bhanu to become top writers. With *Om Bheem Bush* also releasing on March 22, I wish all films great box office success."

For all the obvious reasons, the film has been very special for actress Anjali. *Geethanjali* was her first lead role, and *Geethanjali Malli Vachindhi* marks her 50th film, a significant milestone in her career.

This sequel, she says, promises even more laughs and scares double this time, making for a delightful theater experience. "I am thrilled to reach the 50-movie milestone. I foresee a bright future for Director Siva and am grateful to everyone involved in the film, including Srinivasa Reddy, Rajesh, Ali, Shakalaka Shankar, Avinash, and Rahul. The entire team has put in tremendous effort. Sidhu's visuals are stunning, and Praveen Lakkaraju's music complements the film beautifully. Nandu and Bhanu's writing stands out.

Kona Garu played a crucial role in bringing this project to life, even a decade later. Although it took time to perfect the story, we managed to complete the shooting swiftly. I appreciate Directors Bobby and Gopichand, as well as Sree Vishnu, for their support, especially with his film also releasing. I hope both our films achieve great success." Recently, the makers had shared that the teaser would be unveiled at a graveyard, but was later changed.

Buchi Babu Sana speaking at the event said, "Kona Venkat was talking about this event and mentioned that the venue is a graveyard. I got scared. After that, he didn't pick up the phone. Then, he left a voice message saying the venue had been changed. If Kona Venkat's name is associated with a film, it elevates the project to another level. The dialogues he writes are something we take home with us. They are very logical. Ten years ago, we laughed and were frightened by *Geethanjali*. Now, they are coming back. All the best to the film team."

## Niharika Konidela debuts on Aha with *CHEF MANTRA SEASON 3*

The much-awaited grand launch of *Chef Mantra Season 3* is set to premiere on March 3 on Aha, promising viewers a night filled with laughter, fun, and captivating conversations.

After two immensely successful seasons, Niharika Konidela takes the center stage this time, introducing a fresh new format filled with more fun, games, and engaging tasks. With Niharika at the helm, audiences can expect a whirlwind of entertainment as she brings her trademark charm and wit to the screen.

Prepare to be star-struck as *Chef Mantra season 3* features an electrifying lineup of celebrities from various spheres of the entertainment industry. Each episode promises to be a star-studded affair, with special guests adding their own unique flair to the show, ensuring a delightful viewing experience for all.

With a total of 8 episodes lined up, fans are in for a treat as Niharika Konidela and her guests take them on a rollercoaster ride of emotions, laughter, and unforgettable moments. From heartwarming stories to hilarious anecdotes, *Chef Mantra Season 3* promises to be a journey like no other.

*Chef Mantra Season 3* is sponsored by Hatsun Curd, Freedom Oil, Value Zone HyperMarket and Easy Kitchen. With their unwavering support, this season promises to reach new heights of culinary excellence and entertainment.





## I'm likely to canvass for Janasena, says Varun Tej

Actor Varun Tej and Manushi Chhillar starrer *Operation Valentine* is all set to hit big screens on March 1. The movie is being promoted widely and this is the actor's first film in which he plays a fighter pilot.

Recently married Varun Tej, while promoting this Telugu-Hindi bilingual film, shared that he went through a simulator training to get this role correct in the project. He even has interacted with many Indian Air Force officials, who indeed helped him perfect his character in the movie.

Interestingly, he also spoke about his 'babai' Pawan Kalyan and his party while also promoting the film. His remarks have captured the attention of internet users, particularly with the AP elections quickly approaching. "I'm likely to canvass for Janasena because I believe in his (Pawan Kalyan's) ideology and he could bring the real change in the political grammar," he said, adding, "I am not saying this because Pawan Kalyan garu is my Baabai, but because I solely like his ideology."

In addition, he gave an update on his next movie, *Matka*. He explained that the film is still going forward and that a new producer had joined the project in response to rumours that it had been shelved. He added that 35 percent of the movie had already been filmed.