



**QUOTE OF THE DAY**  
  
*The leader (Chief Minister Revanth Reddy) who is not even three feet tall is saying that he will bury the BRS 100 meters deep. However, many big leaders have failed before KCR. Revanth became the TPCC president by giving Rs 50 crore to the then Telangana Congress in-charge Manickam Tagore and now he has become the Chief Minister under the management quota*  
 - KTR, BRS working president



**Modi govt only doing 'politics of symbolism'**



**CURATING B-TOWN WARDROBES**



**Janhvi Kapoor to reportedly star alongside Suriya in Karna**



**DON'T MISS...**

**'Good news' for TSRTC staff...**  
 Minister for Transport Ponnamp Prabhakar said that the pending problems of TSRTC workers will be resolved soon and the government will give good news to the RTC workers on January 31. On Sunday, the minister handed over 45 compassionate appointments in Karimnagar and Khammam region at Karimnagar-2 depot. Ponnamp Prabhakar said, "In view of increased passengers of the Mahalakshmi scheme implementation, we are going to increase the number of buses and employees, and will run new routes. Steps are being..."  
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**Writing by hand better than...**  
 Students learn more and remember better when taking handwritten notes than using a keyboard as brain connectivity patterns were found to be far more elaborate while writing than typing on a keyboard, a new research has found. Researchers said the findings suggested that the precisely controlled hand movements when writing with a pen helped obtain visual and movement information that contributed extensively to the brain's connectivity patterns, known to be crucial...  
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**Red Sea trade route woes may...**  
 Longer disruptions at the crucial Red Sea trade route may hurt manufacturing lines of some sectors like electronics, automobiles, chemicals, consumer goods and machinery, economic think tank GTRI said on Sunday. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said companies relying on just-in-time manufacturing processes can be particularly vulnerable as they maintain low inventory levels and depend on the timely arrival of components and finished products. Few industries...  
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**India lose to Netherlands...**  
 India lost 2-7 to the Netherlands in the final to finish runners-up at the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup here. Jyoti Chhatra (20th minute) and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (23rd) scored for India in the summit clash on Saturday. Janneke van de Venne (2nd, 14th), Bente van der Veldt (4th, 8th) and Lana Kalse (11th, 27th) struck a brace each for the Netherlands, while Sosha Berninga (13th) was the other goal-getter. For their exemplary performance in the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup...  
 -SPORTS

**ASSEMBLY SESSION IN FEB**

# Caste census Bill in Budget session

**K VENKATESHWARLU ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The Telangana Assembly's budget session is likely to begin in the second week of February. The government is planning to introduce the BC Caste Census Bill in the budget session. The Adviser to the Telangana government on matters related to Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), Backward Classes (BCs) and minorities Shabbir Ali revealed. Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is paying special attention to conducting a caste census in Telangana. As promised in the Congress manifesto, the CM is committed to conducting the caste census soon. Revanth has entrusted BC Welfare Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar with the responsibility of drafting the Caste Census Bill. The Chief Minister has instructed officials to study the procedure in Bihar and other states which have already launched a caste census. Officials were directed to adopt



**Revanth has entrusted BC Welfare Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar with the responsibility of drafting the Caste Census Bill. The Chief Minister has instructed officials to study the procedure in Bihar and other states which have already launched a caste census.**

the best possible procedures for the census after studying the methods that were followed to conduct the caste census in other states. The CM wanted to conduct the caste census to extend benefits to all social groups. The Congress has already announced the conduct of a caste census as its national agenda before the election to help weaker sections. The Bihar government conducted a two-phase caste census survey four months ago. It has already been announced that the census results indicate that 63 per

cent of the population in the state comprised Backward Classes (BCs). The Karnataka government conducted a caste census named Socio-Economic and Education Survey last year. The Andhra Pradesh government also has started the caste census process. The British Government conducted a caste census as part of its population census in 1931. The governments of Independent India are still considering the 1931 census data as standard. No caste census has been carried out after India attained freedom.

# BRS govt removed VROs & VRAs to hide its misdeeds

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The BRS government removed VROs and VRAs thinking that they would expose the government's misdeeds if allowed to continue in their posts, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said. He said that the Congress government intends to strengthen the revenue system from the village level to the state level. Addressing a gathering after releasing the Telangana Deputy Collectors Association (TDCA)



and Telangana Tahsildars Association (TGTA) calendar and diary at the Ministers' Quarters on Sunday, he said that the BRS government destroyed the revenue system. Earlier, there were VROs or VRAs in all villages.  
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# Will improve quality of education in Telangana

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 The Telangana Government is actively taking steps to enhance the reach and quality of education in the state, Irrigation Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said. This involves a substantial increase in budgetary allocations to upgrade infrastructure and simultaneously create new facilities. Addressing the old boys' reunion of Huzurnagar Government High School on Sunday, Uttam emphasised that schools are not mere physical structures, but are intertwined with one's emotions and childhood memories. Schools serve as breeding grounds where seeds develop into plants, ultimately growing into trees. The time spent in schools remains etched in our memories, shaping who we become in future,

and leaving a lasting impact on our lives. This includes memories of school buildings, classrooms, playgrounds and most importantly, our teachers, he said. Congratulating the organisers for successfully organising the old boys' reunion, he said that such gatherings offer a unique opportunity for everyone to come together and reminisce about the best moments of their childhood spent in school.  
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**Addressing the old boys' reunion of Huzurnagar Government High School on Sunday, Uttam emphasised that schools are not mere physical structures, but are intertwined with one's emotions and childhood memories.**  
 Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said on Sunday that a committee headed by Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar would be formed to review the country's anti-defection law. He made the announcement after the 84th All India Presiding Officers' Conference here. The Tenth Schedule of the Constitution provides for the prevention of defection of the elected and nominated members from their political party and contains stringent provisions for curbing the menace of switching over of legislators. Birla said Narwekar will head the committee that will be formed to review the anti-defection law. Earlier this month, Narwekar gave his verdict on cross-petitions filed by Shiv Sena factions seeking disqualification of each other's MLAs, under the anti-defection law, following a split in the party in 2022.  
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# Bought farmland as per rules, says Somesh Kumar



**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Former Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar clarified that he had purchased agricultural land in the Yacharam mandal of Rangareddy district in 2018 beginning as per government regulations. He was responding to allegations published in some newspapers under the headline 'Somesh Bhu Danda'. He said that he had bought the agricultural land in Kothapalli village six years ago after selling the house built on the residential land allotted to him by the government in Prashasan Nagar. He clarified that he had obtained permission from the government regarding the purchase of the plot and had followed all the rules and regulations of the government. He said that the government had also given permission through a letter and had allowed him to purchase the land. Somesh said in a statement that he and his wife have been serving in high-ranking government posts for a long time.

# Nitish Kumar back in NDA Takes oath as Bihar CM for record 9th time

**PNS ■ PATNA**  
 JD(U) president Nitish Kumar on Sunday took oath as Chief Minister of Bihar for a record ninth time after a dramatic volte-face, ditching the Mahagathbandhan and the opposition bloc INDIA and forming a new government with the BJP, which he had dumped less than 18 months ago. Kumar was sworn in by Bihar Governor Rajendra Arlekar at Raj Bhavan in the presence of senior leaders including BJP



national president J P Nadda, hours after he resigned from the post, saying "things were not working well" for him in the Grand Alliance and the opposition bloc.  
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# Pleas against KTR, Harish and 22 MLAs

■ Defeated candidates file cases in HC

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 Candidates defeated in the Assembly elections have filed cases in the HC against 24 elected MLAs including former Ministers KT Rama Rao and T. Harish Rao challenging their elections. Their opponents have filed 30 petitions in the High Court from 24 Assembly constituencies, it is learnt.



KTR's opponent, KK Mahender Reddy filed a complaint alleging that KTR failed to show his son Himanshu Rao as his dependent in his affidavit. He also submitted the sale deed of a 32-acre plot in the name of KTR's son Himanshu Rao in court.

filed a petition against the election of BRS MLA Padi Koushik Reddy from Huzurabad. The Congress candidate in Jubilee Hills constituency, Mohd. Azharuddin filed a petition against the victor, MLA Maganti Gopinath of the BRS. Congress candidate Bandi Ramesh also filed a petition against the winning BRS candidate Madhavaram Krishna Rao in Kukatapally. Candidates from Gadwal, Asifabad, Patancheru and Kothagudem and other constituencies have filed petitions against their opponents who won the Assembly elections.



# Take action against former BRS ministers

● KTR dares CM Revanth

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
 BRS Working President KT Rama Rao dared Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to take action against former BRS Ministers after conducting a probe if there was corruption during the BRS government's rule. Addressing a BRS meeting at Sircilla on Sunday, KTR said that they will stall the Congress government's moves with their 39 MLAs. He said the BRS had lost only power but not its fighting spirit and that nothing would happen even if one or two leaders quit the BRS. KTR asked Congress leaders to explain whether a car will not need servicing after continuous use for 24 years. He said that the defeat in the last Assembly elections was only a minor speedbreaker and that the BRS would come back to power again. He made it clear that he would not give up the Sircilla constituency as it had given him political birth. Stating that the BRS had lost the elections by a slight margin in 14 Assembly constituencies, KTR said that the difference between the vote percentages of the BRS and the Congress was just 1.8 per cent. "The Congress leader (Revanth Reddy) who is not even three feet in height is saying that he will bury the BRS 100 meters deep, however, bigger leaders could not harm KCR. Revanth became the TPCC President by paying Rs 50 crore to the then Telangana Congress in-charge Manickam Tagore and now he has become Chief Minister in the management quota," he said. KTR appealed to BRS leaders to compare the performance of former MP B. Vinod Kumar and current MP, Bandi Sanjay Kumar.  
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# Ram temple can withstand once-in-2,500-year quake

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
 The Ayodhya Ram temple, which has been drawing devotees in huge numbers, is designed to withstand the biggest earthquake that occurs once in 2,500 years. The CSIR-Central Building Research Institute (CSIR-CBRI) - Roorkee conducted a series of scientific studies of the Ayodhya site, including geophysical characterisation, geotechnical analysis, foundation design vetting, and 3D structural analysis and design. "The scientific study was done to ensure the structural safety of the temple for the Maximum Considered Earthquake, equivalent to a 2,500-year return period," Debudutta Ghosh, a senior scientist at CSIR-CBRI, said. Ghosh and Manojit Samanta -- coordinators of the Centre of Excellence for Conservation of



Heritage Structures at CSIR-CBRI -- led the teams in reviewing the foundation design and monitoring, conducting 3D structural analysis and design of the Ram mandir. The pair was guided by CSIR-CBRI Director Pradeep Kumar Ramancharla and his predecessor N Gopalakrishnan. Ghosh said the geophysical characterisation process involved a Multi-Channel Analysis of Surface Waves (MASW) to estimate primary wave velocity, along with electrical resistance tomography to identify anomalies, water saturation zones and water tables. These findings served as crucial inputs for a site-specific response for underground investigations

and estimation of seismic design parameters, he said. The CSIR-CBRI also vetted soil investigation schemes, foundation design parameters, excavation schemes and recommendations for foundation and structure monitoring. Ghosh said the structural design was recommended after simulating more than 50 computer models and analysing those under different loading conditions for its optimal performance, architectural appeal and safety. The entire superstructure has been constructed using Bansi Paharpur sandstone, embodying a dry jointed structure with no steel reinforcement, designed for a lifespan of 1,000 years, he said. The superstructure material -- Bansi Paharpur sandstone -- has been tested at the Centre to evaluate the engineering properties that was used as input for structural analysis. Specialised brick with compressive strength of more than 20 MPa (mega pascals), or approximately 2,900 pounds per square inch (psi), at 28 days of curing under standard conditions, has been used in the structures, Ghosh said.

**"The scientific study was done to ensure the structural safety of the temple for the Maximum Considered Earthquake, equivalent to a 2,500-year return period," Debudutta Ghosh, a senior scientist at CSIR-CBRI, said.**



# 'Good news' for TSRTC staff on January 31: Transport Min

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Minister for Transport Ponnampal Prabhakar said that the pending problems of TSRTC workers will be resolved soon and the government will give good news to the RTC workers on January 31. On Sunday, the minister handed over 45 compassionate appointments in Karimnagar and Khammam region at Karimnagar-2 depot.

Ponnampal Prabhakar said, "In view of increased passengers of the Mahalakshmi scheme implementation, we are going to increase the number of buses and employees, and will run new routes. Steps are being taken to strengthen the RTC despite financial difficulties."



Meanwhile, TSRTC Managing Director VC Sajjanar said that around 12 crore women have travelled in buses free of cost in the past 45 days after the launch of the Mahalakshmi scheme. He attended the 215th Louis Braille birth anniversary on

Sunday, which was organised by the Blind Employees Association.

Sajjanar said that a few of the issues came to our notice, which are, after the Mahalakshmi scheme was launched, women are sitting in person with disability (PwD) seats. In all, 1,325 diesel and 1,050 electric buses will be made available in a phased manner. In addition to these, the corporation is planning to purchase more new buses. After this launch, the traffic would be easier.

The Mahalakshmi Scheme was launched on December 9. According to the RTC officials, daily around 27 lakh women are travelling in the buses.

## Burmese refugee stabbed to death

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A Burmese refugee was stabbed to death by a crap dealer along with his friend within the Balapur police station limits on Sunday.

Mohd Ibrahim, (25), who is registered as a refugee with the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was on way home at Wadi-e-Salaheen, Pahadishareef, when the accused Mohd Asif stopped him and demanded Rs 2,000. However, the Ibrahim refused to pay which led to temporary conflict, during which the accused stabbed Ibrahim to death and ran away.

Speaking to the Pioneer, Balapur police Inspector said, "At 3:30 pm on Sunday, the accused Mohd Asif stabbed Ibrahim to death when the latter refused to pay him Rs 2,000. The locals reported the murder to us. We immediately reached the spot.

## City witnesses highest average flat size in 2023 at 2,300 sq ft

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A report by Anarock group revealed that Hyderabad witnessed highest average flat size of 2,300 square feet (Sq. Ft.) in 2023.

The city topped the list of seven major cities, including National Capital Region (NCR) with 1,890 sq ft; Mumbai Metropolitan Region saw least average flat size at 794 sq ft. Whereas, Kolkata witnessed a 2% yearly decline from 1,150 sq ft in 2022 to 1,124 sq ft in 2023. However, over a 5-year period, average flat sizes have risen by 12% in the city. Average flat size in the city stood at 1,000 sq ft in 2019.

In Bengaluru, the average flat size increased by 26% in the year - from 1,175 sq ft in 2022 to 1,484 sq ft in 2023. On a five-yearly basis, India's Silicon Valley saw



a 16% jump in average flat sizes, from 1,280 sq ft in 2019. Average flat sizes in Pune saw a 11% yearly increase to 1,086 sq ft in 2023 from 980 sq ft back in 2022. In last five years, Hyderabad saw a 19% jump in average flat sizes. In 2019, it stood at 910 sq ft. Chennai saw a 5% yearly jump in average flat sizes - from 1,200 sq ft in 2022 to 1,260 sq ft in 2023, and a 15% 5-yearly rise. The average flat size stood at 1,100 sq ft in 2019.

homes increased significantly in 2023. Anarock data indicates that more than one lakh units (or approx. 23%) of the total new launches in 2023 were in the luxury category. The demand for bigger-size homes was kick-started by the pandemic, but there are no signs of it waning three years later. Led by an enduring 'new normal' in home-buyer preferences, this demand seems eminently sustainable," said Anuj Puri, Chairman of Anarock.

## 6,250 participate in Inorbit Durgam Cheruvu Run

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Inorbit Durgam Cheruvu Run (IDCR) 2024 was organised on Sunday in the presence of Dr Vineeth G, DCP, Cyberabad Police, Shilpavalli, DCP, Cyberabad Police and Sneha Shabarish, Zonal Commissioner, Serilingampally. The event brought 6,250 participants together, transcending boundaries and fostering an environment of inclusivity and camaraderie.

The run was flagged off from Inorbit Mall, Hyderabad to Durgam Cheruvu during the early morning hours on Sunday. The unique feature of the run was the People with a disability holding the finishing tape to encourage the timed participants and the winners.

The scenic route of IDCR 2024 provided participants with a journey through Cyberabad's picturesque landscapes, including the Durgam



Cheruvu Cable Bridge and the tranquil Durgam Cheruvu lake, before culminating at the Mindspace Business Parks. The route encapsulated the essence of exploration, accomplishment and community spirit.

Notably, the event witnessed the active participation of 100+ individuals from persons with disabilities (PwDs) and the LGBTQ+ community. IDCR 2024 raised Rs 60 lakh as a

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donation with Nirman as an NGO partner. These funds will be used for the economic empowerment of PwDs, LGBTQ+, and women through skilling and technology enablement.

The triumphant winners of the IDCR 2024, showcased remarkable prowess and dedication in their respective categories. Vishnu Vittal Rao emerged as the Half Marathon

champion among males, demonstrating exceptional endurance and skill. Uma Maripally claimed the Half Marathon victory among females, embodying the spirit of perseverance and athleticism. In the 10 km category, Sahil emerges as the fastest male, his determination and speed setting a remarkable standard. Likewise, Badho seized the title of the fastest female in the 10 km category, showcasing unparalleled speed and agility.

Certified by the Association of International Marathon and Distance Races (AIMS), IDCR 2024 upheld the highest standards of excellence in distance running, setting a benchmark for future endeavours. Safety remained paramount throughout IDCR 2024, with comprehensive provisions for medical assistance, hydration stations and four life support ambulances ensuring the well-being of all participants.

## Two including Bodhan CI held for helping ex-MLA's son flee

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Circle Inspector of Bodhan police station, Prem Kumar, along with another person were arrested by the Punjagutta police for allegedly helping Rahil alias Sohail, son of Bodhan former MLA Aamir Shakil escape to Dubai.

In the early hours of December 24, Sohail had rammed his car into a police barricade in an inebriated condition. He was shifted to Panjagutta police station from where his escape was allegedly facilitated by Durga Rao, Station House Officer (SHO), Punjagutta and a home guard. Someone else was named as accused in the case instead of Sohail. After the incident came to light, a detailed investigation was conducted.

## 2 nabbed for insurance fraud worth Rs 1.88 L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime unit of the Hyderabad Police on Sunday arrested two persons involved in insurance fraud worth Rs 1,88,599.

The accused were identified as Bellary Pavan Kumar (27), a native of Tamil Nadu and Soudri Basavaraj (27), a native of Andhra Pradesh. They contacted the victims on the pretext of providing insurance through Chola MS Insurance General Insurance Co. Ltd and collected money from the customers to transfer the money into the bank accounts provided by them.

Kumar and Basavaraj operated a fake customer care centre and gathered the information of insured persons associated with Cholamandalam MS General Insurance company.

## Two arrested for cyber fraud involving Rs 60L

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Cybercrime unit of the Hyderabad Police on Sunday arrested two persons involved in an investment fraud worth Rs 60,00,000.

The accused were identified as Neshnor Sirish Kumar (38), a native of Andhra Pradesh; he provided bank details of the victims to Chinese fraudsters. The victim from Lower Tank Bund stated that Cyber fraudsters contacted her through WhatsApp and telegram applications and cheated her by assigning tasks to give rating and advertising to products online.

Kumar colluded with Cyber fraudsters and cheated the innocent people by assigning tasks to rating and advertising products online to get commission. Initially the cyber fraudsters used to give smaller amount as commission to make them believe. Then,



they insisted the victims to invest huge amounts and stopped responding to them. The accused provided bank accounts to the cyber fraudsters to cheat innocent people.

The accused committed fraud about Rs 1.5 crore in one account on one day which was seized from them and for which many cases were registered all over India. Sireesh used to visit China and operate with Chinese nationals.

Kumar was arrested under Sections 66(C), (D) IT Act and 419,420 of the Indian Penal Code.

## Man commits suicide at NIMS hospital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A man died after falling from the Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS) building at Panjagutta on Sunday.

According to the police, the deceased identified as Buchaiah had come to the hospital for treatment and after undergoing medical tests came to know that he was suffering from some life-threatening disease.

He went into depression and police suspect he might have committed suicide by jumping from the hospital building. The body was shifted to Gandhi Hospital mortuary for post-mortem. A case has been registered.

## SUPPORTING THALASSEMIA PATIENTS NGO aims to gather one lakh units of blood in 5yrs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Healthy Life My Birth Right Society, an NGO, organised a blood donation camp for the Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Society at Dr Zaheer Marg, Habsiguda, Hyderabad on Sunday and aimed to support the Thalassemia patients by addressing the shortage of blood donors. Approximately 500 units of blood were gathered from 250 donors in the camp on Sunday.

The organisation was founded by Rama Sashtrey Somanchi, Jagannadha Sastry Somanchi, Prakash Shastry Somanchi, Sravan Prakash Varanasi, Ram Akella and Srinivasulu Appala. It is dedicated to promoting a healthier and more sustainable way of life. Its mission is to



address key areas of well-being by conducting surveys and raising awareness about food, water, environment, physical health and mental health. In addition to organising blood donation camps, they plan to distribute books and clothes to blind children, orphanages and old-age

homes in future. Rama Sashtrey Somanchi expressed their commitment to gather one lakh units of blood for the needy in the next five years. In collaboration with the Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society, Healthy Life My Birth Right Society aims to meet the blood

shortage for Thalassemia patients.

The society is dedicated to support the Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society by regularly organising blood donation camps, approximately every 4-5 months. Their efforts aim to meet the critical need for blood donors and contribute to the well-being of Thalassemia patients.

The camp was attended by special guests, including Pavani Kasulla, Junior Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate, Korutla, Jagtial district, Jakkula Anantharam Lakshmi, Principal, Junior Civil Judge-cum-Judicial Magistrate of First Class Khammam Bheem Asifabad and Ratnavalli Kottapalli, Vice-President of Thalassemia Sickle Cell Society.

## Autonagar residents protest chemical pollution by TSIIC, IALA

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The residents of Autonagar in Hayatnagar staged a protest against Telangana State Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TSIIC) and Industrial Area Local Authority (IALA) for generating chemical pollution which is harmful to the environment on Sunday.

The Harina Vanasthali National Park is now marred by a 15-acre chemical lake due to an illegal pipeline laid by the TSIIC and the IALA two years ago. This man-made ecological disaster has led to the demise of 5,000 trees, over 500 blackbucks and cheetal deer, the disappearance of numerous bird species and groundwater pollution affecting 10 nearby colonies and 25,000+ residents facing respiratory risks due to toxic chemicals.

Despite ongoing protests and efforts to raise awareness, the negligence of authorities has exacerbated the crisis. The chemical lake, formed due to the release of industrial effluents mixed with chemicals from various units in the Autonagar area, has proven to be a severe threat to the ecosys-



tem and public health.

The recent construction of a sewage treatment plant by TSIIC, seemingly as a resolution, has fallen short of expectations. The STP, built in August 2023, is only processing 20 per cent of the chemical water, while the remaining pollutants continue to be diverted into the forest.

In response to the escalating crisis, a meeting was held on December 18, 2022, involving representatives from affected colonies, founders of Dha3R NGO, and officials from PCB, TSIIC, GHMC, and the Forest

Department. The outcome of the meeting resulted in GHMC and PCB issuing a notice to TSIIC for the construction of a 100KLD sewage treatment plant (STP) within the next three months.

Unfortunately, the STP has proven ineffective, and the problem persists. The STP is not able to remove chemicals from water. An effluent treatment plant (ETP) would have been a correct solution.

Vinay Vangala, a social activist said, "We have been facing this issue for over two years. Despite venting our envi-

ronmental issues to the officials concerned, they are not taking any action to curb this issue."

The community has come together for a protest rally in a collective effort to address the Autonagar chemical smell issue. Also, notable environmental NGOs such as Hyderabad Cycling Revolution, Visva Sustainable Foundation, Dhruvansh Foundation, Techieride, V WOLF Foundation, Animal Warriors Conservation Society and local colony associations have joined this critical mission showcasing their dedication to the cause.



## DCA raids unlicensed drug store, seize stock worth Rs 1.2 lakh

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Drugs Control Administration officials raided a medical shop at Jangammet, Falaknema on Sunday which was running illegally without a drug licence and seized huge stocks of medicines worth Rs 1.20 lakh. K Achutha Reddy was running the medical shop illegally.

During the raid, DCA officers detected unauthorised medicine stocks for sale. In all, 40 varieties of medicines including antibiotics, anti-diabetic drugs, anti-fungal drugs, anti-hypertensive drugs, pain killers and anti-ulcer drugs were found stocked for sale at the premises.

Hyderabad DCA Assistant Director T Rajamouli, Charminar drugs inspector B Lakshmi, Malakpet drug

inspector G Anil and Mehdiapatnam drug inspector K Anvesh carried out the raid.

In another raid at the premises of a quack D Srinivas, who was running a clinic at Kothapet village in Medak district claiming himself to be a rural medical practitioner, 41 varieties of medicines including antibiotics, steroids, analgesics, anti ulcer drugs and antihypertensives worth Rs 70,000 were seized during the raid. Siddipet assistant director Dr J Raju and Medak drug inspector Raja Reddy have carried out the raid.

DCA Director General VB Kamalasan Reddy said that stocking of drugs for sale without a drug licence is punishable under Drugs and Cosmetics Act with an imprisonment up to five years.

**Businessman loses Rs 1 cr in a fake trade investment site**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
A 47-year-old Hyderabad resident Naresh (name changed) has lost Rs 1.01 crore in a fake trade investment site, after he invested the money. He realised that they were cheating on him, when they asked for 10 per cent tax. Then, he filed a complaint on Sunday with Cyberabad police.  
He joined using a link from WhatsApp group "Kuroto Capital Fund" on the suggestion of three unknown people. He downloaded and logged in a website "Kuroto capital.com, which seems to be an investing trading platform like other brokers. They told him that the platform is for only institutional market trading which will allow him to buy IPO stocks without any limit and stocks which are having upper circuits.  
Believing that platform, he had invested Rs 1,01,00,000 to accounts given by them. The fake website shows all the transactions, share details as it's really happening. After a few transactions he tried to withdraw the amount. But the site was showing that Naresh should pay 10 per cent tax to them to withdraw the amount. He got doubts on Saturday about the site and searched in Google about the Kuroto Capital. Then Naresh realised that he was cheated by them. The fraudsters are still asking him that he must pay the tax amount in five days, or they will freeze the account and the amount will not be given. After receiving the complaint, police registered a case under c 420 IPC and Sec 66-D of IT Act 2000-2008.

**'Clarify to people difference between BRS' and Cong rule'**

**PNS ■ MEDAK**  
Former Minister and BRS senior leader T Harish Rao on Sunday appealed to the party leaders to explain to people the difference between the BRS rule and the Congress rule.  
While addressing the Medak district BRS meeting, Harish Rao alleged that the Congress had made false promises during the Assembly election campaigning.  
Revant Reddy got the Chief Minister's post "given in charity by KCR," he said. "Power comes with great responsibility," he said and added that Revant Reddy brought "disgrace" to the Chief Minister's



Former Minister T Harish Rao speaking at a meeting in Medak on Sunday

**BRS leaders feel like a fish out of water: Kodandaram**

**PNS ■ HUZURABAD**  
With the loss of power, the BRS leaders have apparently felt like a fish out of the water. They are not able to live without power. If they feel that none else but them alone should rule the state, the people will not tolerate them, warns Telangana Jana Samiti (TJS) president Kodandaram.  
But what is important is to run the State administration along the democratic lines. The belief among the politicians that they can manipulate politics with money power can no longer succeed, he felt.  
He was delivering lecture at a workshop titled "Democratic rule and role of those who have taken part in movement for the Telangana" held here on Sunday under the aegis of PV-Huzurabad District sadhana samiti.  
The BRS government divided districts further into smaller districts ignoring the identity of the districts. But the pre-



sent regime is keen on appointing a commission soon to divide the districts into smaller ones as per the wishes of the people. He also suggested that the officials take into consideration the geographical identity while delimiting the Assembly constituencies.  
Former Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao, prior to introducing economic reforms at the national level, was also instrumental to bring diesel engine to the Telangana region for the first time. He also learnt computer and learned to type in Telugu at the age of 80 years and used to typewrite his own books. PV was always at the forefront to move forward with the modern times.

implement them even eight months after coming to power. The electoral prospects of the Congress in Lok Sabha elections were not bright.  
He expressed confidence that the people would elect the BRS candidate in the local body elections whenever they are held. The Congress leaders were spreading a false narrative. The Congress leaders were growing impatient because they could not fulfil the promises given to the people.  
Had the BRS regime foisted false cases against Congress leaders, more than 50 per cent of them would have been behind the bars now, he said.

**None can finish off BRS: Kadiam**

**PNS ■ STATION GHANPUR**  
Bharat Rashtia Samithi MLA Kadiam Srihari has made it clear that none can finish off the BRS. He was reacting to the reports that the split in the BRS was inevitable because of infighting in the party.  
Speaking at a media conference, Srihari said that the Congress has a single point agenda of criticising the BRS day in and day out without concentrating on development agenda during the past 50 days.



He saw no perceptible change in the behaviour of Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy even after ascending the throne as the Chief Minister. He advised Revant Reddy to conduct himself gracefully. The person who can bury the BRS is yet to take birth, he pointed. He recalled how gracefully KT Rama Rao had conducted himself when he attended Davos summit to mobilise investments. It is not proper to abuse former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao.  
Currently, the people are vexed with the Congress government, he said. The people have been repenting for defeating the BRS party, he said predicting the BRS victory whenever elections are held in Telangana.

**OU to organise sound and light show**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
A sound and light show will commence on Monday at 6 pm at Arts College, Osmania University, under the auspices of the Central Department of Culture and Tourism.  
The history of Osmania University Arts College from 1917 till now is explained with the help of technology. The archeology department presented the story of the university's history, while the voice-over related to the history was given by famous film actor Sai Kumar.

The show can be viewed free of charge. This is a great opportunity for students to learn about the history of the university. Telangana Tourism Minister Jupalli Krishna Rao, Hyderabad In-Charge Minister Ponnamb Prabhakar and Secunderabad MLA Padma Rao will participate in the inaugural ceremony.



**Narayana calls for 'TS model of alliance' at national level**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
CPI national secretary K Narayana suggested that the Congress party follow the "Telangana Congress alliance model" at the national level. He asked the Congress party to move forward while taking the small and big political parties along with it. Then only it is possible to counter Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he felt.  
While speaking to the media here on Sunday, Narayana said that good results came as the Congress fought the Assembly elections in alliance with the CPI and other political parties. Besides people's organisations. He advised the Congress leaders to adopt the same formula across the nation.  
Narayana said, "We have identified the constituencies in which the CPI intends to field its candidates in the Lok Sabha elections. They are Warangal, Nalgonda, Bhongir, Khammam and Peddapalli." He appealed to the Congress government to help the victims in the previous BRS government.

**CM's decision to do caste census good for BCs, says Krishnaiah**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
Rajya Sabha member R Krishnaiah said that Chief Minister Revant Reddy's decision to conduct a caste census, build own buildings for BC gurukuls, increase scholarships, grant a BC study circle to every parliamentary constituency, pay scholarships and fees in the green channel without arrears, are appreciable decisions. He attended a meeting of 22 BC organisations held on Sunday at BC Bhavan, Masab Tank.  
Krishnaiah called upon opposition parties to unite in Parliament and increase pressure on the Central government to not privatise the public sector organisations such as Railways, LIC, BHEL, BDL, banking and defence companies.  
He said, "Social, economic and political details are collect-



ed along with the population of each caste for the caste survey. As per the survey, it is possible to allocate a budget to the caste corporations and federations and take measures for their economic development."  
"The Central government is not agreeing to conduct caste census and committing anti-BC activities. BC leaders in the BJP should pressurise on this major issue. It is condemnable that the BJP government at the Centre is opposing the inclusion of 34 columns in the census table," he said.

**Dilip Pandey AAP Telangana In-charge**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
The AAP on Sunday announced the appointment of Dilip Pandey, MLA and Chief Whip in Delhi Assembly, as AAP's Telangana in-charge.  
Telangana AAP in-charge convener Diddi Sudhakar issued a statement in this regard on Sunday.  
The statement said that Dilip Pandey participated in the Anna Hazare movement. Dilip worked as an Aam Aadmi Party screening committee member in January 2014. Dilip Pandey was appointed as party secretary for political activities in the national capital. He took charge as convener of the party Delhi unit in July 2014. Under his co-venership, AAP won 67 out of 70 seats in the 2015 Delhi Assembly elections.  
Dilip Pandey tendered his



resignation in April 2017 after AAP failed to secure a majority in the 2017 MCD elections. From 2014 till now, he worked as the spokesperson of Aam Aadmi Party.  
The statement said that Dilip Pandey participated in the Anna Hazare movement. Dilip worked as an Aam Aadmi Party screening committee member in January 2014. Dilip Pandey was appointed as party secretary for political activities in the national capital.

**Officials taking steps to ensure plastic-free Medaram Jatara**

**PNS ■ BHUPALAPALLI**  
The Forest Department officials have collected 775 kg of plastic waste in Gattamma, Medaram, Narlapur, Voorattam, Laknavaram and other tourist places in just one day.  
Hundreds of tons of plastic waste is likely to be generated at Medaram during the Sammakka-Saralamma festival.  
The gathering of the plastic waste left behind by the pilgrims has become a Herculean task. The State government has decided to ensure the celebration of the biggest tribal fair in the country free from plastic. Support from other temples



and cooperation of the devotees thronging the Medaram is essential to ensure that there is no plastic waste in Medaram during the festival.  
The Forest Department suggests that the pilgrims visiting the Medaram festival bring their cloth or jute bags, use only steel glasses and utensils instead of the plastic ones, using the leaf plates and cups, pottery products, paper bags, bamboo baskets.  
The State government should encourage women's groups to manufacture cloth bags, paper glasses, and pottery products and procure them from the women's groups and sell them to the devotees at low price or distribute it free of cost, it is felt.  
According to Ankit, project officer of the ITDA at YeturuNagar, strenuous efforts are underway to ban the use of plastics at Medaram. Cloth bags, manufactured by tribal women, would be distributed among the people.

**BJP keeps changing stance towards Cong, BRS**

**SNCN ACHARYULU ■ HYDERABAD**  
The BJP in a strange stance, keeps changing its political targets in Telangana politics. Before Telangana Assembly elections the BJP's target was the Congress. After the Assembly elections when Congress came to power, the BJP has shifted its political target to the BRS from the Congress. The BJP is making all its efforts to have a grip over Telangana politics. When Bandi Sanjay Kumar was Telangana BJP president, its main target was the then ruling BRS.  
But when in the Karnataka Assembly elections the BJP was defeated, its graph in Telangana too came down and the graph of the Congress all of a sudden increased. Before Karnataka Assembly elections the political picture in Telangana was BRS verses BJP. But after the Karnataka Assembly elections, it was changed to BRS verses Congress. It was a known fact that at national level the Congress is the main political rival of the BJP. When in Telangana Assembly elections

it turned as BRS verses Congress, the BJP suddenly shifted its focus towards the Congress. The BJP and the BRS have stopped criticising each other and both were targeted the Congress.  
In this process the central investigation agencies have given a break to the investigation on BRS MLC K Kavitha, the daughter of KCR, in the Delhi liquor scam. The poaching of MLAs case investigation also went into dark. The BRS and the BJP tried to prevent the Congress from coming to power in Telangana. But both failed and the Congress came to power.  
Under these circumstances, the BJP once again changed its political target in Telangana and shifted its focus towards the BRS. After the Assembly elections were over the central investigation agencies have become active again and the Enforcement Department (ED) after long time again issued notice to BRS MLC Kavitha in the Delhi liquor scam. At the same time the BJP prevented the BRS from winning one MLC seat in the Assembly quota, which has 39

MLAs strength.  
Now the BJP has targeted the BRS to occupy its place. The targets of the Congress and the BJP in Telangana was weakening the BRS. In this process, the BJP is not bothering if Congress gets benefits at present. The BJP's target is next Assembly elections. BJP wants by that time to make the BRS disappear from the minds of Telangana people and to make next Assembly elections as Congress verses BJP. Is it possible for the BJP to occupy the BRS place in Telangana which is in a strong position despite of its defeat in the ASNCN ACHARYULU  
Hyderabad, January 28: The BJP in a strange stance, changing it's political targets in the Telangana politics. Before Telangana assembly elections the BJP's target was the Congress. After the Telangana assembly elections when Congress came to power the BJP has shifted it's political target to BRS from Congress. The BJP is making all it's efforts to have a grip over Telangana politics. When Bandi Sanjay Kumar was Telangana BJP president

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**Three years of TS- Kazak relations celebrated**

**PNS ■ HYDERABAD**  
The Honorary Consul General of Kazakhstan, Dr Nawab Mir Nasir Ali Khan on Sunday celebrated three years of Telangana-Kazakhstan relations.  
"The Consulate has entered into various agreements between Astana and T hub and Visa free visit for Indian citizens to Kazakhstan. The

Consulate is striving to strengthen the bonding between the people of Telangana and Kazakhstan by starting a direct flight to Kazakhstan from Hyderabad, besides many other initiatives in the pipeline," Khan said.  
The event was organised at ITC Kohenuur and was attended by Ravi Gupta, Telangana Director General of Police

(DGP); Orhan Yalman Okan, Consulate General of the Republic of Turkey; Aarif Alnuai, Consul General of UAE in Hyderabad; Madhu Yashki Goud, Secretary and Spokesperson, AICC; Allu Arvind, film producer; Jonnalagadda Snehaja, Regional Passport Officer, Telangana, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA); among others.

INDIA CORNER

Viksit Bharat possible through Viksit Jharkhand: Guv

Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan on Sunday said the vision of Viksit Bharat could be realised through Viksit Jharkhand. The governor made these remarks at the University Industry Government (UIG) Summit-2024 here.



Higher reaches of Himachal likely to witness heavy snowfall

Higher reaches of Himachal Pradesh are likely to witness heavy snowfall and rainfall from January 30 till February 3, according to the local meteorological department.



Sand artist praises sculptor Arun Yogiraj for Ram Lalla's idol

Renowned sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik has praised sculptor Arun Yogiraj, saying Ram Lalla's idol crafted by him was heart touching and that it would inspire millions of people.



Rule of Lord Ram inspired our Constitution makers: PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday asserted that the rule of Lord Ram was a source of inspiration for the Constitution makers, noting his, Sita's and Lakshman's pictures adorned the pages of the Constitution.



In the first Mann Ki Baat broadcast of this year, Modi said the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya brought people across the country together, making visible the collective strength of the country.

In the first Mann Ki Baat broadcast of this year, Modi said the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya brought people across the country together, making visible the collective strength of the country.

collective strength of the country was visible which also forms the basis of our pledge of a developed India," the prime minister said.

ers to register themselves so that they could exercise their franchise and lauded the growing participation of people in voting at a time when many countries in the world are seeing a downward trend.

elections in 1951-52, and the percentage has been going up while the number of electorate has surged to 96 cr, over three times the US population, he said.

"That slip will help one in knowing one's illness, treatment, what medicines one has been taking, for how long the treatment has been going on, what things one is allergic to," he said.

He said, "I am happy to share that the Ministry of AYUSH has categorised the data and terminology related to Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani medicine, with the help of the World Health Organisation as well.

"I am very happy that the system of Padma awards has transformed completely in the last decade. Now it has become people's Padma," he said.

Disruptions, disturbances menace to democracy: Dhankhar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Sunday said debates in legislative bodies have been reduced to quarrels and likened disruptions and disturbances in legislatures to the COVID menace for democracy.



Addressing the valedictory session of the 84th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, he said presiding officers of legislative bodies should invoke their authority to ensure decorum.

"It is no secret that disturbances and disruptions are planned, at whose behest placards are printed and slogans coined. Political weaponry is counterproductive and had no place in our system," he said.

and nurturing of the first-time legislators.

"The presiding officers are guardians of the democratic pillars," he said.

"Be receptive to the other's point of view. Debates are the cornerstone of democracy. They have been reduced to quarrels and it is a painful scenario," Dhankhar said.

leaders committed to upholding them.

"As presiding officers, we bear the responsibility of being guardians of democratic pillars," he said. The presiding officers' duties include ensuring that the legislative process is meaningful, accountable, effective, and transparent, giving voice to the people, Dhankhar said.

Legislature is the most impactful platform for reflection of all shades of opinions. "People from all states of the country come, they bring to the table various points of view. There is a need to be receptive to the other point of view," he said.

He said the scenario at present is that debates have been reduced to quarrels and called it disgusting and painful for the public.

"Look at the people outside. They elect us, they have expectations from us. They want their aspiration to be realised through us. And look at how painful it is for them, the spectacle when someone engages in disruptions. And then it's all the more painful as they take pride in disruption," he said.

The erosion of public faith in representative bodies and representatives is "cancerous" for the society, he said.

The presiding officers should engage in stock-taking and invoke authority to ensure decorum. They must do corrective therapy to stop degeneration, he said.

"This is disturbing and calls for an introspection to find a way out," Dhankhar said, adding that it is essential for the presiding officers of both houses of a legislature to work in tandem.

Dhankhar said a strong democracy thrives not just on sound principles but also on

No reserved posts can be de-reserved

Education Ministry clarifies on draft UGC guidelines

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Sunday clarified that no reserved posts can be de-reserved after draft guidelines by the University Grants Commission (UGC) proposed that any vacancy reserved for SC, ST and OBC candidates can be declared unreserved if enough candidates from these categories are not available.



The 'Guidelines for Implementation of the Reservation Policy of the Government of India in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) are in the public domain for feedback from stakeholders.

the issues of Dalits, backward classes and tribals.

The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) also staged a protest against it and burnt an effigy of UGC Chairman M Jagadeesh Kumar.

Kumar also clarified that there has been no de-reservation of reserved category positions in Central Educational Institutions (CEI) in the past and there is going to be no such de-reservation.

"Reservation in Central Educational Institutions is provided for all posts in direct recruitment in Teacher's cadre as per the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in

Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019.

"After enactment of this Act, no reserved post is to be de-reserved. Ministry of Education has given directives to all the CEIs to fill up the vacancies strictly as per the 2019 ACT," the Ministry of Education wrote on X. The UGC chairman also posted: "This is to clarify that there has been no de-reservation of reserved category positions in Central Educational Institutions in the past and there is going to be no such de-reservation."

"It is important for all HEIs to ensure that all backlog positions in the reserved category are filled up through concerted efforts."

UPLIFTING DALITS, BACKWARDS AND TRIBALS

Modi govt only doing 'politics of symbolism'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Sunday alleged that there is a "conspiracy" to end reservation given to SCs, STs and OBCs for posts in higher education institutions, and claimed that the Modi government is only doing "politics of symbolism" with regard to Dalits, backward classes and tribals.



(UGC) has issued draft guidelines for de-reserving vacancies meant for the scheduled castes (SC), the scheduled tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) candidates for posts in higher education institutes

(HEIs) and open them up for the general category if enough reserved candidates are not available.

Ramesh demanded that such a proposal should be withdrawn immediately.

In his post in Hindi, Ramesh said, "A few years ago, RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh) chief Mohan Bhagwat had talked about reviewing reservations. Now, there is a conspiracy to end the reservation given to SCs, STs and OBCs in higher education institutes."

"This proposal of the UGC is in line with the intentions of Mohan Bhagwat and is clearly unjust to Dalits, tribals and backward people," he said.

Recently, when Karpoori Thakur was given the Bharat Ratna, Rahul Gandhi had said that the country needs "real justice" and not "politics of symbolism", Ramesh noted.

Former Bihar chief minister and socialist leader Thakur was awarded the Bharat Ratna posthumously. The Modi government is only doing "politics of symbolism" when it comes to Dalits, backward classes and tribals, Ramesh claimed.

"Their real intention is once again revealed through this proposal of the UGC," Ramesh said. He added that "our fight is against this injustice and the continuous attacks on Baba Saheb's Constitution".

This proposal to end reservation in colleges and universities is "completely unacceptable" and should be withdrawn immediately, Ramesh said.

The 'Guidelines for Implementation of the Reservation Policy of the Government of India in Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)' are in the public domain for feedback from stakeholders. The guidelines have been receiving backlash from several quarters. The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) has announced a protest against it.

Hatred, violence spreading across country: Rahul

PNS ■ SILIGURI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday accused the BJP government at the Centre of spreading hatred and violence across the country and working for big corporations by overlooking the interests of the poor and the youth.



Gandhi, who was addressing the 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' in Siliguri in North Bengal, said, "The Union government has made a mockery of the youths who wanted to join the armed forces by introducing the Agniveer scheme, a short-term recruitment scheme for the armed forces."

"Hatred and violence are being spread across the country. It will serve no purpose. Instead of spreading hatred, we have to work towards spreading love and justice for our youths. The Union government is working only for

big corporations and not for the poor and the youth," he said.

Expressing gratitude for the reception he has received in West Bengal, Gandhi said, "Bengal holds a special place. It had led the ideological fight during the Independence struggle. It is the duty of the Bengal and the Bengalis to show the way to fight against hatred and bind the nation together in present circumstances."

"If you don't rise to the occasion, people will never forgive you," he said.

ENRICHING BRAIN CONNECTIONS

Writing by hand better than typing on keyboard

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Students learn more and remember better when taking handwritten notes than using a keyboard as brain connectivity patterns were found to be far more elaborate while writing than typing on a keyboard, a new research has found.



Researchers said the findings suggested that the precisely controlled hand movements when writing with a pen helped obtain visual and movement information that contributed extensively to the brain's connectivity patterns, known to be crucial for memory formation and learning. "There is some evidence that students learn more and remember better when taking handwritten lecture notes, while using a com-

puter with a keyboard may be more practical when writing a long text or essay," said Audrey van der Meer, a brain researcher at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and co-author of the study published in the journal Frontiers in Psychology.

For the study, the researchers recorded the electrical activity of the brains of 36 university

students, who were repeatedly prompted to either write or type a word that appeared on a screen. When writing, they used a digital pen to write in cursive directly on a touchscreen. When typing they used a single finger to press keys on a keyboard. The researchers found that the connectivity between different brain regions increased when participants

wrote by hand, but not when they typed. On the contrary, the researchers found that repeating the simple movement of hitting a key with the same finger was less stimulating for the brain. "This also explains why children who have learned to write and read on a tablet, can have difficulty differentiating between letters that are mirror images of each other, such as 'b' and 'd'. They literally haven't felt with their bodies what it feels like to produce those letters," said van der Meer.

Even though the study participants used digital pens for handwriting, the researchers said the results are expected to be the same when using a real pen on paper.

"We have shown that the differences in brain activity are

related to the careful forming of the letters when writing by hand while making more use of the senses," explained van der Meer. The findings demonstrated the need to give students an opportunity to use pens, rather than having them type during class, they said.

Guidelines to ensure that students receive at least a minimum of handwriting instruction could be an adequate step, they said.

However, the team also cautioned that it was important to keep up with continuously developing technological advances, which they said included an awareness of which way of writing - handwriting or typing - was advantageous under what kind of circumstances.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

# Stree shakti

The rise and rise of women power in India across sectors calls for celebrating women and womanhood

In recent years, India has witnessed a remarkable and inspiring phenomenon — the meteoric rise of women across varied fields. From business, medicine, politics and education to science and technology, Indian women are breaking barriers, shattering stereotypes and taking giant strides in traditionally male-dominated fields. This surge of empowerment is aptly celebrated as 'Stree Shakti', highlighting the strength, resilience and capability of the nation's female force. One of the most noticeable trends in recent times is the increasing presence of women in leadership roles and entrepreneurship. Women-led businesses are flourishing, contributing not only to the nation's economic growth but also challenging the conventional gender roles. From tech startups to traditional enterprises, women entrepreneurs are carving a niche, proving that gender is not a hindrance to success. In the fields of science and technology, women are making groundbreaking contributions, redefining the landscape of innovation. India has seen a rise in the number of women scientists, engineers and innovators who are actively involved in cutting-edge research and technological advancements. Their achievements not only propel India's progress in these domains but also inspire the next generation of women to pursue careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). It is indeed a matter of pride that many women contributed to the successful Chandrayaan-3, which speaks volumes about their determination. Moreover, the healthcare sector in India has been witnessing a significant transformation, thanks to the rise of women in medicine. Women doctors, researchers and healthcare professionals are at the forefront of medical breakthroughs and advancements. Their contributions extend beyond traditional healthcare roles, influencing healthcare policies, research and the overall well-being of society. In the realm of education, women are excelling as educators, administrators and researchers. Female scholars are contributing to diverse fields of study, bringing fresh perspectives and insights to academia. While celebrating the rise of 'Stree Shakti', it's essential to acknowledge the challenges that women continue to face in their professional journeys. Gender bias, stereotypes and systemic hurdles persist, but the resilience and determination of women in India are breaking down these barriers. Organisations, both public and private, are recognising the importance of gender diversity and actively working towards creating more inclusive work environments. The Prime Minister's clarion call for 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' is indeed a laudable step but the real challenge is to change people's mindset. Rising women power in India is not only about today's achievements but also about paving the way for future generations. The celebration of 'Stree Shakti' is a celebration of diversity, equality and the collective strength of a nation on the path of progress.



Artists who participated in the 75th Republic Day parade perform at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in Delhi

## PICTALK



Artists who participated in the 75th Republic Day parade perform at the Rashtrapati Bhavan, in Delhi

# Virtual reality and AI will transform real estate market

Artificial Intelligence and data analytics are empowering real estate professionals with actionable insights and predictive analytics

The integration of technology into the real estate sector is ushering in a new era of innovation and efficiency. As digital transformation accelerates, emerging technologies are poised to reshape the property landscape, offering unprecedented opportunities for stakeholders across the industry. Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies are revolutionising the property viewing experience. By offering immersive virtual tours and interactive floor plans, these technologies enable prospective buyers and tenants to explore properties remotely, thereby expanding market reach and enhancing customer engagement. In 2024, VR and AR applications will become increasingly sophisticated, offering personalised experiences.



mitigate fraud risks and streamline the conveyancing process. In the coming years, the adoption of blockchain and smart contracts will become more widespread, enabling seamless, secure, and cost-effective real estate transactions. **AI and Data Analytics** Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics are empowering real estate professionals with actionable insights and predictive analytics. By analyzing market trends, identifying investment opportunities, and optimizing property management processes, AI-driven solutions are enhancing decision-making capabilities and driving operational excellence. As AI algorithms become more advanced and data analytics tools more sophisticated, the integration of these technologies will continue to

redefine the real estate industry's competitive landscape. In conclusion, the fusion of technology and real estate in 2024 is not merely a trend but a seismic shift that promises to redefine the very essence of property transactions and experiences. This transformative journey unfolds across multiple dimensions, each offering a unique blend of innovation, efficiency, and opportunity. At the forefront, Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are revolutionizing property exploration, transcending the limitations of physical distance and enabling prospective buyers and tenants to embark on immersive journeys through properties from the comfort of their homes. The evolution of these technologies in 2024 is set to introduce personalized experiences that resonate with individual preferences, thereby amplifying market reach and fostering deeper connections between properties and potential occupants. Parallely, the emergence of Blockchain technology and smart contracts is ushering in an era of unprecedented security, transparency,

and efficiency in property transactions. These innovations are not only mitigating fraud risks but also reimagining the conveyancing process, paving the way for seamless, secure, and cost-effective transactions that resonate with the demands of the modern era. Furthermore, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data analytics is empowering real estate professionals with a treasure trove of actionable insights and predictive capabilities. These advancements are not only enhancing operational excellence but also shaping a future where data-driven strategies and insights drive growth, innovation, and success. Beyond the technological innovations, the real essence lies in the transformative impact these advancements are poised to create. In essence, as we venture further into 2024 and beyond, the confluence of technology and real estate is paving the way for a new era characterised by innovation, efficiency, and opportunity. (The writer is an industry expert; views expressed are personal)



SANJEEV SRIVASTVA

# Charting a path for Hindu-Muslim unity



PRAFULL GORADIA

The historic consecration of Ram temple in Ayodhya signifies not just a momentous event but a call for reconciliation

Every battle must end, so must every dispute. Killings are more easily forgotten than the destruction of buildings. But when a residence of the divine is destroyed, it is unforgettable. For a Hindu, a mandir is a residence of God. The reason is that an elevated human soul either meets the divine or obtains a glimpse of Him as Ramakrishna Paramahansa did. This is very different from a synagogue, church or mosque, all of which are merely prayer halls. Their respective faiths and adherents do not consider them to be residences of the divine. January 22, 2024 is now behind us. It has been an epoch-making day, led by the man who made it possible. The Prime Minister's consecration of Shri Ram Lalla at Ayodhya marked the return of Lord Rama to his abode on earth after 500 years of not only waiting, but ceaseless struggle and sacrifices. Ever since Mughal invader Babar's henchman Mir Baiqi destroyed the original temple at Ayodhya in 1528 AD, Hindus never gave up the struggle to reclaim the birthplace of Rama. The history of battles waged by the Hindu faithful is a long one, but December 6, 1992 was the day when the edifice known as Babri Masjid was sent to the dust. But, as our Prime Minister has said, now is perhaps the time for reconciliation. The Somnath Temple at Prabhaspatan near Veraval (Gujarat) was destroyed by the Turkic marauder Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026 A.D. Even after a thousand years later, the devilish crime has not faded from Hindu memory. Thereafter, of course, several thousand temples have been demolished or desecrated. By European traditions and their politics, the dispute over these desecrations and loss caused should have been settled before New Delhi agreed to part with the share of pre-1947 India's assets to Pakistan at the time of Partition. Unfortunately, nothing was done. Instead, more temples were destroyed even in the Kashmir Valley, where India ruled.



Three-quarters of a century have since passed. Surely, it is beyond time that the issue should be settled and a reconciliation and a reconciliation achieved, if the two communities are expected to coexist cordially in the same country. The question is: what is the gesture required to bring about such a reconciliation? Very broadly, the desecrated temples can be divided into two categories. Until the period of the Lodi Sultanate, which began from 1451 onwards, and the spread of its rule over certain regions of northern India, Islamic invaders intruding into the country were not accompanied or followed by their architects. The pre-Lodi Muslim sultans therefore, converted temples into mosques readily by smashing the edifice along with the moortis (idols) inside the sanctum sanctorum, and replacing them with mehrabs (a niche in a mosque, which indicates the qibla, the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca) to face Mecca and a minbar (pulpit) of steps, whereupon the imam stands every Friday to deliver his khutba (Islamic sermon). Many temples were broken down and converted into such mosques. A prominent example of such a conversion



THERE WOULD BE ABOUT 200 TO 300 SUCH CONVERTED AND RE-CONVERTIBLE EDIFICES. THEY COULD BE RETURNED TO HINDU INSTITUTIONS, WHILE THE THOUSANDS OF RECYCLED ONES COULD BE LEFT ALONE

is the Dhai Din kajhopra, which stands at about a full-fledged distance from the popular Ajmer Sharif dargah. The odd name signifies that this particular conversion was effected within sixty hours of the desecration of the original Hindu place of worship, because ShahbuddinGhori was in a hurry to pray on his return journey via Ajmer. His slave QutbuddinAibak obediently had the conversion executed within two and a half days for his master and badshah to pray when he returned. The erstwhile temple had actually been a complex of three temples, which were promptly combined and converted into a mosque-like edifice. It is therefore, even now, in a condition to be reconverted into a temple, almost equally quickly. There would be about 200 to 300 such converted and re-convertible edifices. They could be returned to Hindu institutions, while the thousands of recycled ones could be left alone, as a gesture for the process of reconciliation. These were the temples that were broken down almost to the plinth level and reconstructed with the debris being utilized in such reconstruction. The reconstruction using the same debris was done in Islamic style. These

are present in the country by the thousands, with 3,000 of them having been catalogued after being identified either with documentary evidence and/or epigraphs. These latter structures could be left alone with an apology for having reduced them to such a state, along with an undertaking that such criminal acts shall not be repeated. An undertaking must also be given that the restored temples handed over to Hindu institutions and bodies will be given away irrevocably, and no claim on them whatsoever shall ever be made in the future. Other issues too, will inevitably come up. As part of the process of reconciliation, issues such as the uniform civil code-which are part of the Constitution of India, but as a Directive Principle-should be dealt with suitably. So also should the issue of the outdated and debilitating waqf, called a "dead hand" by a former chancellor A.A.A. Fyzee. The intention must be to not keep pending any ongoing irritant between the two communities. Let peace and goodwill prevail. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE CYCLE OF LIFE

Sir — Birthday, a joyous bell, tolls yearly, awakening us to life's transient journey, as articulated by Kannada litterateur Rayasam Bheemasena Rao, aka 'Beechi'. Each celebration veils the inexorable march from newness to oldness, a reminder of aging. The initial birthday elates parents, but with time, the sheen fades. Aging, though golden at times, heralds the onset of the end. Birth mirrors morning's welcome, while death echoes evening's farewell—a cyclical journey from vitality to fatigue in life's fleeting passage. Demise carries inherent sadness, its intensity shaped by one's connection to the departed. The passing of those deemed anti-national or anti-social elicits little collective grief; their demise isn't labeled as such by society. While family may mourn, society often finds relief. Birth heralds joy, death, sorrow—yet in troubled families, each birth may sow discord, each death easing societal burdens. Happiness at birth prevails, sorrow in death is the norm, not the exception. K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

### SHETTAR'S 'GHAR WAPSI'

Sir — Opportunism and greed have overruled all values in politics. Days before the Karnataka assembly elections in May 2023, former Karnataka Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar had joined the Congress miffed over being denied a ticket. Unfortunately, though the party comfortably romped home, Shettar lost in his bastion. But despite the defeat, he was made a member of the state legislative council. Now, after nine months in Congress, Shettar is back in the BJP. Political circles are agog with reasons for Shettar's "ghar wapsi" but one cannot overlook the fact that he is the same person who had declared that he would never return to the BJP in his lifetime. There is no doubt that Shettar, being a powerful member of the influential Lingayat community in Karnataka, has contributed to the rise of BJP in the state.

### Dietary controversy



The move that has ignited widespread criticism, the Maharashtra government has decided to mark the food preferences of students on their identity cards, distinguishing between vegetarians and non-vegetarians. The contentious decision aims to streamline the distribution of specific food items, namely bananas for vegetarians and eggs for non-vegetarians, under the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti scheme. The state's school education department had previously announced the inclusion of additional items in midday meals to enhance nutritional value, introducing bananas for vegetarians and eggs for non-vegetarians. A recent department circular recommends using visible red or green dots on students' ID cards to signify their dietary preferences, causing widespread criticism from educators who deem it unnecessary. Critics argue that the classification, indicating egg consumption consent, may not consider occasional exceptions, especially in diverse cultural backgrounds. Religious sentiments, particularly concerns about offending vegetarians, further complicate the implementation. The circular's practicality is also questioned, as objections highlight potential issues with this rigid system. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

The BJP is wary of the fact that his deserting the party could have resulted in some of its candidates losing the elections in the Kittur Karnataka region. With the all-important general elections a few months away, the BJP wants to leave nothing to chance. Shettar may also have struck a deal. That being said, the party would have sent a great message to all turncoat politicians had it declined to welcome Shettar back. Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

### WOMEN POWER AT KARTAVYA PATH

Sir — The 75th Republic Day celebration turns more glorious with the maximum participation of Women this time in the Republic Day parade. For the first time in history, a women tri-service contingent marches down the Kartavya Path, showcasing the Women's Power of New India. The 100 women artists heralded the parade invocation with their musical band. Later Monika Lakara commended

her team. CISF contingent is also led by Kashyap Monika, Megha Nayak commended Ambika Patil commended the ITBP marching band, Jaya Sharma commended the SSB band, and so on. Watching Indian women march proudly along the Kartavya Path on the 75th Republic Day is profoundly touching. Their gallantry embodies the fulfillment of their responsibility to the nation. The delightful spirit of Nari Shakti, evident in their jubilant participation, fills every Indian with a sense of triumphant pride. This inclusive celebration signals to the world our commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Witnessing women leading development in a new India transforms every celebration into a true jubilation, an honor to behold. Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

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## FIRST COLUMN

### TEACHERS ARE THE PIVOT OF EDUCATION

A satisfied teacher can contribute a lot to the well-being of pupils



SAKSHI SETHI

The culture of work ethic rests on delayed gratification, hyper-competitiveness and the perpetual need to outperform what machines can do. The outcome is often disappointment and life dissatisfaction. Living in a so-called modern-day technological world, a workplace environment today has a direct impact on job satisfaction. Of course, money, work-life balance and diversity play a crucial part, but being fulfilled and happy at your job is a hard feeling to beat. A favourable work environment can boost morale, motivation, teamwork, performance and production whilst a poor work environment can contribute to high levels of stress, anxiety and burnout. It is a well-established reality that organizations in the world today can no longer survive without focusing on their employees.

If they have to be at a competitive edge, they have to invest in their human resources and place them on top priority. Studies have even found that more than half of job seekers would reject a job offer if they found that the company to which they are looking forward had a bad workplace culture as it can negatively impact their mental and physical well-being and above all their career growth. The Indian Education System for instance is facing a continuing concern in terms of recruiting and retaining its quality teachers.

It is widely acknowledged that teachers have a pivotal role in the development of an inclusive education system for it is believed that the teacher is the most vital single factor of influence in the system of education. Colleges and universities are becoming increasingly accountable for teaching outcomes to meet rigorous accred-



itation standards. It is the teacher who matters most as far as the quality of education is concerned. A well-adjusted and satisfied teacher can contribute a lot to the well-being of his/her pupils. It is in the interests of educational institutions and the systems to ensure that levels of job satisfaction are held high so that the main focus of educational institutions, is not hindered. Job satisfaction in any field of work depends a lot on how conducive the work environment is.

Poor working conditions, low levels of pay, no scope for career advancements and lack of recognition will definitely result in increased rates of absenteeism, poor productivity, frustration and even high turnover rates resulting in a decline in target achievement and finally its closure. Employee turnover affects the productivity of the company.

An employee may serve in an organization for a long time provided that he/she is contented with his/her work. The behavior of an employee also depends on their satisfaction. When a worker is satisfied and contented, he tends to behave well for it has been often said, "A Happy Employee Is a Productive Employee." Remember, job satisfaction is like a high-wire balancing act, with multiple factors constantly in play. There is nothing more discouraging in the workplace than being insecure about the job. Human resources are the most important resources in any organisation and in order to ensure that an organisation can compete with other firms, retaining efficient and experienced employees is the first and foremost step.

(The writer is an educator; views are personal)

## Historical factors at play in Israel-Palestine conflict



SUKHDEV SINGH

This conflict finds its roots in history that spans over a century when the Zionist movement, advocating for the establishment of a Jewish homeland, gained momentum

The past 114 day-long Israel-Palestine war has an immediate as well as a long historical context: the immediate context of the war is the Hamas attack killing 1200 and taking 120 Israeli civilians as hostages on October 7 last year; while its long history begins with the proposal to establish the Jewish homeland, Israel, in this region after their dispersion from European countries. During the first world-war, the proposal gets impetus and the 'conflict' becomes intense with the British promising Jews to help them set up the Jewish homeland in Palestine after the collapse of Ottoman Empire for their influence on the US to support the post-war policies of the Britain. The conception and claim of homeland by the Jews dispersed from Europe on the same swaths of land where a mix of Muslim, Jew, and Christian population is already in place holding their identity as Arabs or Palestinians generates a 'conflict' of Jewish-Israeli nationalism pitted against the Palestinian-Arab nationalism. The 'conflict' gains intensity at the revelation of the three self-contradictory agreements made by the British authorities during this time for their own imperialist interests treating the region as 'terra nullius' or 'booty of the war': these agreements are famous as the 'Hussain-McMahon Correspondence' (1915-1916), the 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' (1916) and the 'Balfour Declaration' (1917).

The 'Hussain-McMahon Correspondence' promised Arabs the independence of Palestine in exchange for their support for the British against the Ottoman (Uthman) Empire in the First World War, yet, on the other hand, in contradiction the 'Balfour Declaration', promised the Jews their 'homeland' in the Palestine. But after the war, using 'Sykes-Picot Agreement' between the British and the French, the British took Palestine region under their 'Authority' securing a safe access to India through the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf but deepening the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

The Palestine region remained under the British Authority until 1948 and between 1917- 1948, emigration of Jews in Palestine and the Israel-Palestine conflict swelled in parallel. In 1930, the Arabs launched a revolt against the British colonial rule in Palestine and its policy of Jewish resettlement here, which resulted in a plan to partition Palestine into the Jewish and Arab states leaving Jerusalem under international administration. The Jewish leaders accepted but the Arab states and the Palestinians rejected the proposal.

On the other hand, during the Second World War, the Jewish Holocaust campaign in Germany and some other European countries left the Jews homeless. In August 1945, by the American President, Truman's appeal to the British Prime Minister, Attlee, to settle 100,000 Nazi Holocaust victims in Palestine, America also joined the powers that would determine the future of Palestine, though neither America nor Britain offered them refuge in America or Britain. The Arabs sympathized with the displaced Jews, but opposed the creation of Israel on the Palestinian territories. America and Britain continued to orient their policy on Palestine to their convenience.

Tired of the Second World War and directly dealing with the civil war in



DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST CAMPAIGN IN GERMANY AND SOME OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES LEFT THE JEWS HOMELESS

Palestine, the British government ended its Authority over Palestine at midnight on 14 May, 1948 leaving the Jewish-Arab factions fighting each other during the civil war. On the same day the Jewish leadership in Palestine announced the establishment of the State of Israel. The birth of Israel from a violent war caused the displacement of approximately 700,000 Palestinian-Arabs. It is called by the Jews the 'War of Independence' but by the Palestinians as the 'Nakba' meaning 'destruction and desolation'. Since then Palestine has been a land of 'conflicts', 'battles' and third party 'peace agreements'. The current 'Israel-Palestine war' building on more than 100 years of conflict and internecine battles for their 'homelands' in the same geographical territories is guided by the right-wing nationalism on both sides, with the external third party players consistently present to fulfil their (neo)colonial interests. In the 2023-24 Israel-Palestine war, Israel and Hamas or Palestine are the parties directly in conflict, and much of the discussion about the war is usually focused on 'who of the immediate players in the war is more culpable' and 'who of the two has a stronger claim for its 'homeland' in the same region, while the role of third parties in the war remains elusive. One breed of third party players is of those coerced into war and circumscribed by their regional geographical, cultural and historical existence; they are affected by what happens in the region. But there is another breed of third

party extra-regional powers in the war whose presence is guided by their geo-political and economic interests; they act as catalysts to turn the 'conflict' into a 'war' and choose between 'right' and 'left' to their convenience. To understand the multifaceted politics of the Israeli-Palestine war, it is also important to describe the role of these catalyst forces at work behind the war. By vetoing the UN proposal for 'immediate ceasefire' America and Britain have helped the war to inflame and by sanctioning the sale of weapons and ammunition twice, America has fuelled the war and encouraged the right-wing Israeli government passion for displacement of Palestinian population. In the name of eliminating Hamas and their bases, the indiscriminate heavy bombardment by Israel, with the unflinching support and encouragement by the US, has led to the mass destruction of ordinary Palestinian civilians. Israel's current war against Hamas is in reality a war against Palestinians. The Israel-Palestine war of 2023-24 is the worst not only because the majority of the dead are civilians but also because it is being fought like a genocide. The right-wing Israeli government, led by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, wants complete Israeli control in Palestine and does not recognize any role for the Palestinian Authority. Two Israeli ministers of the Israeli government have revealed their ideology by their advice to the Palestinians to leave for the country that permits them.

The American support has reinforced such an ideology. Facing challenges from within and without, pressure from the countries of West Asia and fear of Israel becoming more intransigent, America has reviewed its policy in Palestine. The US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has met with the leaders of Turkey, Qatar and Jordan on his fourth diplomatic tour of West Asia to drum up support for the US post-war plan of 'two states' and reconstruction of Gaza. In a press conference he has said that the Palestinians should not be pressured to leave Gaza.

But the US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller's comments on a lawsuit in the International Court of Justice by South Africa against Israel for committing 'genocide' contradict its 'peace proposal' and exposes its position on displacement. On the one hand, America's support for a 'two-state solution' and criticism of Israel's claim for Jewish state on the whole region, but on the other hand, billions of dollars annual US aid to Israel for years and sale of arms during the war and veto of UN proposal for 'immediate ceasefire' exposes its ambivalent policy on Gaza and cleverness as of Britain during the First World War. After all, Israel is using the US aid and weapons to occupy Palestinian territories and disperse the Palestinian population.

(The writer is retired professor Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar and member, Governing Council, INTECH; views are personal)

## Unsung heroes in Padma awards list to boost heritage preservation

Among the latest Padma Shri awardees, 34 were ordinary citizens, including tribals and those working for tribal welfare

The Padma Awards, the prestigious civilian honours in India, are announced annually on the eve of Republic Day. These awards aim to acknowledge achievements across various fields where a component of public service is evident. The history of the Padma Awards dates back to 1954 when the Government of India established two civilian awards— Bharat Ratna and Padma Vibhushan. The latter initially had three classes: Pehela Varg, Dusra Varg, and Tisra Varg. They were later renamed Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri through a Presidential Notification issued on January 8, 1955. Even though the Padma award has been bestowed on various



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

celebrated people since 1954, it was only from 2014 onwards that it started focusing on the common man. Till then, it was a distant dream for a commoner to aim for the award. Even when we recognise a scientist working in the lab for their note-worthy contributions, we often forget the thousands of real scientists who work on the field utilising the knowledge they gathered through the ages from their forefathers. There are great farmers who are developing new plant vari-

eties and cultivation packages. There are great tribal healers who can cure diseases even without the least knowledge of modern science. There are great conservation biologists who know how to conserve nature without any understanding of ecology. There are excellent climatologists who can predict weather simply by looking at the changes happening in nature. There are exemplary people working in astronomy, metallurgy, engineering and other fields. These people work selflessly for the benefit of society without realising even the significance of their work for society. Behind every architectural marvel, lance or artistic work, there is the craftsmanship of our skilled labour force. Unfortunately, people recog-



nise only the finished product, not the hand that made it happen. There are thousands of such people who live amongst us without seeking any attention. They may not hold a PhD degree or a professional degree, but their knowledge and scientific skills are more than those of a trained scientist.

In the recent list of 110 Padma Shri awardees, it was announced that 34 were such ordinary people, of whom more than one-third are tribals or those who have worked for tribal welfare. The prominent unsung heroes include Parbat Baruah, fondly known as 'Hathi ki Pari,' a female elephant trainer from Goalparahas, Assam. Defying

deep-rooted stereotypes, Baruah has devoted four decades to addressing human-elephant conflicts. Her scientific methodology has supported three state governments in effectively managing and capturing troublesome tuskers, illustrating the effectiveness of challenging conventional norms. The farming community is doing yeoman service for the nation and humanity. It's appreciable that many farmers found a place on this year's Padma list. Sathyanarayana Beleri, the rice farmer from Kasaragod, conserves 650 traditional rice varieties on his farm without any sophisticated infrastructure, which even ICAR institutions don't do. Other farmers who were recognised include Sarbeswar

Basumatary, the tribal farmer from Chirang, Assam; K Chellammal, an Organic farmer from Andaman; Yanung Jamoh Lego from Arunachal Pradesh and Sanjay Anant Patil of Goa. Many people who work in nature conservation, folk arts and craftsmanship have also been recognised. The knowledge these exceptional people garnered was passed down through generations orally and is not documented properly. The knowledge is shared only among the close family members. In most cases, the second generation shifts away from the traditional workforce, moving toward more lucrative urban jobs. In the long run, if there are no takers for this traditional knowledge, it will become

extinct, as happened to the Indian Knowledge system. Modi government's initiative to recognise such people is a futuristic vision to preserve the remnants of still-prevailing Indian knowledge. This will revive interest in their community to carry forward the great work their forefathers have been doing. Recognition through a coveted award like Padma Shri will also provide them respect from other members of the society. The government has fostered a sense of self-confidence and admiration for one's work by making the Padma award accessible to the common man.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, views are personal)

**MONEY MATTERS**

## Rana Talwar, first Indian to head a global bank, dies at 76

Veteran banker Rana Talwar, who was the first Indian to head a global bank — Standard Chartered Plc, died at the age of 76 years. Talwar, son-in-law of DLF Group chairman emeritus K P Singh, breathed his last on Saturday, sources said. He is survived by his wife Renuka and son Rahul. Besides DLF, he served on the boards of various companies including Asahi India Glass Limited and Great Eastern Energy Corporation Limited. The company regrets to inform about the sad demise of Talwar, a non-executive director, on Saturday, January 27, 2024, which was intimated to the company by the family members, DLF said in a regulatory filing. Born in 1948, Talwar started his career as a banker in India with Citi Bank after passing out of the prestigious St Stephens College, Delhi. During his stint at Citi Bank, Gurvirendra Singh Talwar also known as Rana Talwar, was responsible for building the US-based bank's retail businesses across Asia Pacific and the Middle East.



## PNB raises profit guidance to Rs 7,000 crore

Enthusiased by a stellar performance in the third quarter, state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) has raised its profit guidance to Rs 7,000-7,500 crore for the current financial year. Earlier, the second largest lender had set a profit estimate of Rs 6,000 crore for the ongoing fiscal. With a 253 per cent jump in the net profit in the third quarter, the bottom line of the bank in the three-quarters of FY24 crossed Rs 5,230 crore. The bank has revised the earlier profit target of Rs 6,000 crore to Rs 7,000-7,500 crore for the current financial year, PNB MD and CEO Atul Kumar Goel said. Going by revised guidance, the fourth quarter profit would be upwards of Rs 2,000 crore as well. In the third quarter ended December 2023, the bank earned a profit of Rs 2,223 crore, registering an over 253 per cent jump over the same quarter a year ago. Addressing shareholders last year, Goel had said FY24 would be "a golden year" for Punjab National Bank due to its multi-pronged strategy and steady focus.



## Macrotech Developers to launch 11 projects

Looking to tap rising housing demand, realty firm Macrotech Developers will launch 11 projects in Mumbai, Pune and Bengaluru this quarter with an estimated revenue potential of Rs 6,260 crore. Mumbai-based Macrotech Developers is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. It has a major presence in Mumbai Metropolitan Region and Pune. The company markets its properties under the Lodha brand. In an investor presentation, the company said it has a strong launch pipeline in the fourth quarter of 2023-24. "Well placed to meet full-year pre-sales guidance with the launches planned in Q4," it said. Macrotech Developers said the company will launch a 4.4 million square feet area during the January-March quarter, of which 1 million square feet would be in Bengaluru and 0.8 million square feet in Pune. The remaining area will be in Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR).



# Centre, industry & experts to discuss trade regime

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Top central government officials, industry leaders and international experts will gather here on January 30 to deliberate on India's export control systems for sensitive goods and technologies and global best practices in the sector, an official said. The official said that the 'National Conference on Strategic Trade Controls' seeks to showcase India's prowess in export control systems, facilitate a dialogue between government authorities and industry leaders on the sector, and address emerging risks associated with the export of sensitive goods and technologies. There are specific laws and regulations with regard to strategic trade or export controls. These help manage the flow of dual-use goods, services and technologies across national borders. These regulations primarily focus on controlling the export



associated with the export of sensitive technologies; increasing awareness and understanding of export controls; gathering feedback from the industry and learning best practices of other countries; and fostering international collaboration and showcase enforcement efforts, the official said. The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs is organizing the conference. "It is the first such national-level conference of its kind which will focus on India's strategic trade control (SCOMET/export control) system and International best practices, for the export of dual-use goods and technologies," the official added. The primary objectives of strategic trade or export controls are to prevent the proliferation of WMD and their delivery systems, as well as the uncontrolled transfer of conventional arms / military items.

of SCOMET items in order to balance the country's commercial and security considerations. Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET) items are dual-use goods. Dual Use implies the usage of these goods and technologies in military applications or its use in nuclear, chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD), along with their civilian or industrial applications. The conference would focus on issues like showcasing India's export control system; preventing the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems by strengthening the export control system; and facilitating dialogue between the government authorities and industry stakeholders. Besides, it aims at assessing and mitigating emerging risks

## IRB Infrastructure Trust wins Rs 1,720 cr arbitration award

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Yedeshi Aurangabad Tollway Ltd (YATL), a special purpose vehicle of IRB Infrastructure Trust, has won an arbitration award of Rs 1,720 crore for a highway project, a statement said on Sunday. The YATL had initiated arbitration proceedings against the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) after the authority disputed the company's claim for the extension of the concession period by 870 days and compensation of Rs 1,751 crore, the statement said. IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd is the sponsor of IRB Infrastructure Trust. IRB was the EPC contractor for YATL and continues to be the project manager for YATL. The arbitration was based on the compensation payable to the IRB towards time and cost overrun suffered during the construction period on account of delays attributable to the NHAI and certain Force Majeure events, it added.

## India's gas demand to rise 6% in 2024: IEA

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
India's natural gas demand is expected to rise by 6 per cent in 2024 with a rise in consumption in fertiliser units, power generation and industrial sectors, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). Following the 7 per cent year-on-year decline observed in 2022, India's primary gas supply rose by 5 per cent in 2023, with growth primarily driven by the petrochemical, power generation, refinery and industrial sectors. "Natural gas demand in India is expected to increase by 6 per cent in 2024, mainly supported by higher gas use in industry (including in the fertiliser sector) and stronger gas burn in the power sector amid the development of its national pipeline grid and city gas infrastructure," IEA said. Gas Market Report released last week. India's natural gas demand has risen to 64 billion cubic meters in 2023. Liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports rose by 7 per cent on



the year to 29 billion cubic meters last year, with import dependency at 44 per cent of the nation's natural gas consumption. Domestic production was up 6 per cent on the year to 35 billion cubic meters on the back of a rise in output from Reliance Industries' KG-D6 block. "We expect India to increase its LNG imports in 2024 by 7 per cent, fuelled by demand from the power and fertiliser sectors, as the country plans to

stop importing urea by 2025," IEA said. Natural gas extracted from below surface and seabeds is used to make fertiliser, generate electricity, convert into CNG to run automobiles, piped to households for cooking purposes and used as fuel and feedstock in industries. India's domestic production is insufficient to meet demand and so the fuel is imported as LNG in cryogenic ships.

## Educators call for govt monitoring of AI development, use cases

**PNS ■ MUMBAI**  
As Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming education, around 87.85 per cent of educators interviewed believe that the development and application of AI technologies should be monitored and regulated by the government, a report said on Sunday. "Over 87.85 per cent (educators) agree that the development and application of AI technologies should be monitored and regulated by the government, reflecting concerns about risks and ethical implications," TeamLease Edtech's report - Revolutionizing Classrooms: The Impact of Generative AI on the Future of Education, has revealed. This strong consensus indicated a widespread recognition of the potential risks and ethical considerations associated with AI, noted the report. Most educators believe that government oversight is necessary to ensure that AI technologies are developed and used responsibly, ethically, and in ways that benefit society as a whole, it added. This TeamLease Edtech's report - Revolutionizing Classrooms: The Impact of



Generative AI on the Future of Education, is based on a survey of 6,313 educators, ranging from primary school and high school teachers, college professors and education professionals, across the country. The report found that 61.60 per cent of the respondents are already using AI tools for teaching preparation and engagement and 63.61 per cent of educators believed that AI is crucial in preparing students for an AI-dominated future. "This report underscores the fact that AI is no more just an emerging technology but a reality that is already reshaping classrooms across India. In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the integration of technology has become a transformative force, reshaping traditional teaching methodologies, and opening new avenues for innovative approaches," TeamLease Edtech founder and CEO Shantanu Roj said.

## FPIs take out Rs 24,700 cr from equities on rising US bond yields

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have dumped Indian equities worth Rs 24,700 crore so far this month, owing to surging bond yield in the US. On the other hand, they are bullish on the debt market and infused Rs 17,120 crore in the debt market during the period under review, data with the depositories showed. According to the data, Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have pulled out Rs 24,734 crore from Indian equities this month (till January 25). Before this, FPIs made a net



investment of Rs 66,134 crore in the entire December and Rs 9,000 crore in November. "The rising bond yields in the US is a matter of concern, and this has triggered the recent bout of selling in the cash market," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said.

"The rally in global stock markets was triggered by the Fed pivot which saw the 10-year bond yield falling from 5 per cent to around 3.8 per cent. "Now the 10-year bond is back at 4.18 per cent, which indicates that the Fed rate cut will come only in H2 of 2024," he added. FPIs started the new year with a cautious approach opting to book profits in the Indian equity markets as they touched all-time high levels. Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further

cues, before taking investment decisions with respect to investing in emerging markets like India, Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director-Manager Research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said. On a bullish stance in the debt markets, experts said that the announcement by JP Morgan Chase & Co. in September last year that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024 influenced the inflow in the country's bond markets in the past few months.

## Markets to focus on budget, US Fed policy in eventful week: Analysts

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Interim budget, the US Federal policy decision, and quarterly earnings will be the major drivers for stock markets which may also see some consolidation this week, say analysts. Besides, investors would also focus on the trading activity of foreign investors and global trends for further cues. From the macroeconomic front, the PMI (Purchasing Managers' Index) data for the manufacturing sector is scheduled to be announced on Thursday. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the interim budget for 2024-25 on February 1 (Thursday). The Federal Open Market Committee meeting will be held on January 30 and 31. "Market is likely to consolidate further ahead of the US Fed interest rate decision where the Fed is expected to maintain status quo and give some hint with regards to rate cut timeline. Apart from this, BoE (Bank of England) monetary policy is also due coupled with a few key economic data releases which might keep markets volatile.

# Red Sea trade route woes may hurt manufacturing

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
Longer disruptions at the crucial Red Sea trade route may hurt manufacturing lines of some sectors like electronics, automobiles, chemicals, consumer goods and machinery, economic think tank GTRI said on Sunday. The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said companies relying on just-in-time manufacturing processes can be particularly vulnerable as they maintain low inventory levels and depend on the timely arrival of components and finished products. Few industries where production will be impacted due to disruptions in global value chains include electronics, automotive, machinery,

chemicals, pharmaceuticals, plastics, textiles, and consumer goods, it added. Components and finished products are often shipped through the Suez Canal to reach different markets, and disruptions can lead to delays in manufacturing and increased costs, it said. Due to the attacks by Houthis rebels on commercial ships, the movement of goods from the Red Sea, the world's busiest shipping route, has disrupted the global supply chains as vessels have to take long routes for exports and imports. The immediate ripple effects are seen in increased freight costs, mandatory war risk insurance, and significant delays due to rerouting. "The adverse impact will



multiply if the disruption continues beyond a few more weeks as it will impact not only trade but local productions of many industries, which rely on just-in-time procurement/import of inputs through the global value chains spanning both Europe and Asia," GTRI co-founder Ajay Srivastava said. He said that average container spot rates have more than doubled since early December 2023. Basmati rice exporters face freight costs soaring to USD 2,000 per 20-tonne container for destinations around the Red Sea, marking a 233 per

## 'India leading top 25 countries in defence export'

**PNS ■ NAGPUR**  
India is becoming self-reliant in defence production, and for the first time, leading the top 25 countries in defence exports, Union minister Ajay Bhatt said on Sunday. The Minister of State for Defence was speaking at the Advantage Vidarbha programme in Nagpur. He said the government has issued four lists of 4,666 defence components whose import is banned, resulting in huge savings.

## Budget: Auto firms seek continued push to green mobility, infra development

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
The government needs to continue with favourable policies to promote green mobility while also focussing on infrastructure development at a robust pace in the upcoming Budget, according to some leading firms in the automobile space. The Union government is all set to present the interim budget on February 1. "We expect capex on infrastructural projects to continue, aiding the automotive sector. The policy



push for green mobility should remain a key focus for the government, encouraging faster adoption of electric vehicles," Mercedes-Benz India MD and CEO Santosh Iyer said.

The luxury car industry has a significant value contribution to the GDP and the segment aspires for a rationalised duty structure and GST on priority, he added. Overall, we expect consistency in various policies and no surprises in the upcoming budget," Iyer stated. Luxury vehicles currently attract the top GST slab of 28 per cent with an additional cess of 20 per cent on sedans and 22 per cent on SUVs, taking the total tax incidence to up to 50 per cent.

## 431 infra projects showed cost overrun of Rs 4.82L cr in Dec

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**  
As many as 431 infrastructure projects, each entailing an investment of Rs 150 crore or more, were hit by cost overrun of more than Rs 4.82 lakh crore in December 2023, an official report stated. According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which monitors infrastructure projects worth Rs 150 crore and above, out of 1,820 projects, 431 reported cost overrun and 848 projects were delayed. "Total original cost of implementation of the 1,820 projects was Rs 25,87,066.08 crore and their anticipated completion cost is likely to be Rs 30,69,595.88 crore, which reflects overall cost overruns of Rs 4,82,529.80 crore (18.65 per cent of original cost),"

the ministry's latest report for December 2023 said. According to the report, the expenditure incurred on these projects till December 2023 is Rs 16,26,813.80 crore, which is 53 per cent of the anticipated cost of the projects. However, it stated that the number of delayed projects decreased to 638, if delay is calculated on the basis of the latest schedule of completion. Further, it said that for 298 projects neither the year of commissioning nor the tentative gestation period has been reported. Out of the 848 delayed projects, 202 have overall delays in the range of 1-12 months, 200 have been delayed for 13-24 months, 323 projects for 25-60 months, and 123 projects have been delayed for more than 60 months.



## Celebrating harmony beyond borders with music

TANISHA SAXENA

Renowned composer and Beatles bassist James Paul McCartney once remarked, "Music is like a psychiatrist. You can tell your guitar things you can't tell people. And it will come back with things people can't tell you!"

Years later, Pattie, a supergroup from Tel Aviv, Israel, echoes similar sentiments as they sit down with The Pioneer right before their performance in Delhi's Premium Jazz Club, The Piano Man. "Music acts as a global conduit, intricately connecting individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. It serves as a unifying force, transcending geographical and societal distinctions to create a collective resonance, fostering a shared emotional and experiential narrative," says Avner Tueg.

In the 1960s, psychedelic music became a major component of the counterculture movement. Inspired by the hallucinogenic experiences brought about by drugs such as LSD, musicians attempted to convert these altered states of awareness into melodic compositions. To create a unique sound, bands like The Beatles, The Doors, and Jefferson Airplane combined unusual structures, experimental noises, and hallucinogenic lyrics.

Characterised by intricate instrumentals, non-traditional song structures, and the use of novel recording techniques, psychedelic music evolved throughout the years. The late '60s saw the rise of psychedelic rock, blending rock and blues with mind-expanding elements. In the '70s, progressive rock carried psychedelic influences, while the '80s brought a resurgence with neo-psychedelia. Genres like shoegaze in the '90s and contemporary psych-rock continue to draw inspiration from their psychedelic roots, ensuring their enduring influence on music.

Gal Shnaider and Nadav Melman assert, "Psychedelic music has undergone significant evolution, influenced by spiritual encounters. A decade ago, its novelty initially jarred my ears, diverging from mainstream pop. Yet, this sonic departure led me on an enriching journey. The aesthetic essence of our psychedelic music lies in the spontaneity of its creation, where understanding precedes uncertain techni-



A supergroup from Tel Aviv in Israel, Pattie, gets candid with The Pioneer and discusses their music in this exclusive chat.

cality. Our aim is to craft a relatable journey for the audience, counteracting the prevailing brevity of contemporary songs."

Modern music moves quickly, as evidenced by the short song lengths and quick changes in style. The music scene has changed as a result of the industry's adoption of streaming services, which offer algorithm-driven playlists and instant access to a vast repertoire. People are accustomed to instant satisfaction, so musicians tend to shorten their pieces so that the listener is quickly enthralled. Because of the instantaneous nature of digital platforms such as Spotify, listeners have created a cul-

ture in which they make snap decisions about a song's destiny. The usual build-up and extended instrumental breaks have been replaced in this fast-paced musical environment by succinct frameworks that emphasize immediate engagement over in-depth musical research.

Echoing similar thoughts, Avner Tueg explains, "In today's fast-paced music scene, songs are brief with quick choruses. However, our compositions, though not 20-minute epics, still defy brevity. Visual elements in our clips aid in immersion, guiding listeners into a contemplative space and combating the impatience fostered by

instant song-skipping habits."

Over the years, they have created masterpieces, including *Talk About Love*, *Love Me Tender*, and *I Only Want to Be with You*, among others. The result ranges from a magnetic pop sound to a hypnotic, psychedelic experience.

When asked about their inspiration in psychedelic music, they respond, "Certainly, The Beatles and Pink Floyd have undeniably influenced our musical style, though we don't strictly adhere to mainstream pop. Our music is deeply rooted in the cultural landscape of Israel, drawing inspiration from the rich musical her-

itage of the region. Additionally, we find artistic inspiration in the works of renowned musicians like Jeff Buckley."

Bands embarking on a global journey face a demanding yet rewarding path as they prepare to grace stages around the world. Beyond mastering their musical prowess, these dedicated artists must meticulously refine various facets of their performance. From perfecting stage presence to fine-tuning sound dynamics, every detail requires careful consideration. Navigating the challenges of different venues, cultures, and audiences demands adaptability and resilience. Hours of

rehearsal, strategic planning, and honing interpersonal dynamics within the group are essential steps. This arduous process, though, cultivates a sense of unity and expertise that transforms a band into a finely tuned live spectacle. As they transcend geographical boundaries, these musicians carry with them not just a melody but a harmonious fusion of passion, diligence, and a shared commitment to delivering an unforgettable experience on the global stage.

"Reflecting on a performance in Chennai, our first before an Indian audience highlighted the importance of adapting to diverse crowds. Unlike the challenging and cynical Israeli audience, the intimacy of the Chennai crowd required adjustments in song order and introductions. Each performance becomes a learning experience, emphasizing the paramount connection with the audience," adds Avner Tueg.

They further accentuate, "In Israel, our concerted efforts to forge a culturally diverse musical landscape have borne fruit. A couple of years ago, our collaboration with a Yemeni singer manifested a fusion of musical elements inspired by Indian culture. Regularly immersing ourselves in the rich soundscape of Coke Studio, with its captivating introduction featuring sitar and tabla, has significantly influenced our musical direction."

So, what is the creative process of Pattie? "Enduring as a collective for a substantial duration, our camaraderie bears a resemblance to a romantic relationship, albeit in the context of brotherhood. Crafting song lyrics demands a keen observation of our surroundings. In our earlier years, themes of love and friendship were predominant, typical of one's 20s. Presently, we endeavor to infuse a layer of self-understanding and spirituality into our compositions, delving into the realms of inner reflection. The lyrical journey varies with each composition. Occasionally, what may seem like nonsensical musings during the creative process turned out to yield remarkable results. Ultimately, the reception from our audience plays a pivotal role. Their ability to resonate with the song and relate it to their own experiences adds a dynamic layer to our artistic endeavors," the trio concludes.

## CURATING B-TOWN WARDROBES

PNS| HYDERABAD

Amandeep Kaur has managed to carve a niche for herself in the fashion world with her acute perspective on aesthetics. She is a firm believer in analysing the unique personalities of the stars before delving into curating their wardrobes. Currently, she is the go-to stylist for the Kaushal Brothers - Vicky and Sunny Kaushal. She has previously also styled other celebrities like Sonam Kapoor, Taapsee Pannu, Alia Bhatt, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, and Radhika Madan. In a candid conversation, the talented stylist talks about her big break into Bollywood styling, her dream about styling for a big Hindi feature film, and all the challenges that make this ride both a boon and a bane.

"It didn't happen to me overnight. I styled a variety of celebrities while I worked as a stylist for publications, including A-list actors, TV actors, small-time stars, and novices. I ended up dressing Priyanka Chopra, Alia Bhatt, and Sonam Kapoor. The experience of dealing with performers of different temperaments and styles was enhanced by each shot," she shared. Her association with Vicky has been cordial and lengthy. She now considers him

and his family to be her family. His whole faith in her is incredibly helpful, and it for sure makes her job simpler. They create styles that aim to strike a balance between the two characters. As you may have seen, his promotional attire for *Sardar Udham* was earthy chic, while that for *Uri: The Surgical Strike* was army-inspired and gruff.

When asked if she had also styled Taapsee, Yami Gautam, and Radhika Madan, and if they also collaborated on their looks, she explained, "I sometimes feel like a 'fashion psychologist' since, as a stylist, I strive to closely examine each person's personality. When styling someone, I prefer to check through their Instagram profiles and interviews to get a sense of who they are psychologically by deciphering their appearance. Regarding which body parts do they feel secure and which do they not? How do they dress? Which silhouettes appeal to them? What sort of nonverbal cues do they use? In my research, all of this comes together." Taapsee has consistently demonstrated a great deal of faith in her. They have collaborated on numerous photo shoots where they didn't even try on the clothes beforehand. But for some shots, she makes it quite apparent when there's a certain silhouette she doesn't like. "In contrast, Radhika is quite clear about what she wants. To help me better understand what she wants in the bigger picture, she would look up references and convey the styles that speak to her. However, she has also shown a great deal of trust when it comes to actuals, and fortunately, her most recent appearances have been quite beneficial to both of us. We ended up having a terrific time together because we shot in and around my birthplace

of Delhi, where I styled Yami for one of my films. I dressed her with accessories and textiles that were distinctly Delhi-inspired. Undoubtedly, there were preliminary briefings and comments. Overall though, I recognized a lot of myself in that persona," she added.

How was it collaborating with the renowned fashion innovator Sonam Kapoor? The stylist answered, "To be honest, I was a little anxious. She goes through the clothing quickly because she knows it all by heart. Her familiarity with the majority of Indian and foreign designers' collections is apparent, and her passion for fashion is reflected in the images we were able to capture. She is the personification of the outfit's personality. She would exhibit a ballerina's elegance and feminine body language when modeling a long, sheer dress, and an explosive male energy when wearing a pantsuit. Sonam Kapoor's individuality is what makes her look distinct with every change of clothes. She truly seems to have been made to appreciate fashion from birth."

Then, she became genuinely enthralled with Zoya Akhtar's perception and comprehension of urban fashion. She thinks Priyanka Chopra and Anushka Sharma have some of the greatest fashion senses seen in Bollywood to date in *Dil Dhadakne Do*. In fact, the stylist observed how the entire cast of the movie wore the most exotic nautical clothes, which were expertly tailored to fit each character in a unique way. In *Made in Heaven*, Shobhita's character wore exquisite clothing that was distinctive and didn't mimic Western or Hollywood styles, but rather an extremely hip Indian-urban look.

Creating a niche for herself in the fashion world with her creativity is Amandeep Kaur. The celeb go-to stylist for the Kaushal brothers at the moment, speaks of her journey, working with the biggies, and more.



## Battling the chill of Anemia this winter

As winter approaches with short days and frigid temperatures, maintaining warmth often emerges as a key challenge for those living with anemia's debilitating effects. When the very cells meant to oxygenate our body lack adequate numbers, cold sensitivity, and shivers often follow. Anemia as a condition is characterised by the body's inability to produce healthy red blood cells, resulting in reduced oxygen supply to the tissues. Reasons for this range from nutritional deficits to chronic diseases destroying cell production capacity.

Regardless of the underlying cause, the ensuing symptoms, including fatigue, headaches, dizziness, pale skin, brittle nails, shortness of breath, and heart palpitations, frequently feature as disconcerting hallmarks, alerting clinical attention toward diagnosis. However, the extreme sensitivity to cold is an often neglected aspect of the disease. Here are some ways that this can be managed at home.

### LIFESTYLE CHANGES COUNT: LOW-RISK HABITS FOR HOMEOSTASIS

While doctors treat underlying causes through medical management, small proactive tweaks to daily living can greatly assist through anemia's difficult phase. Protecting yourself starts with recognising key nutrients needed for enhanced response capacity in the body.

For example, iron forms the essence of hemoglobin, imparting the signature red hue that highlights healthy cells. Since anemia signals already inadequate cell counts, depleted iron undercuts production and aggravates symptoms. So anemics need more iron-rich foods, like green leafy vegetables, sprouted pulses, nuts, and certain meats. Since bodies absorb only modest quantities via diet, physicians suggest supplements to replenish reserves quickly.

Furthermore, research reveals that vitamin C is essential for metabolising dietary iron into forms easily assimilated by blood cells and fortifying the hemoglobin supply. Many inexpensive citrus fruits and juices, like amla, orange, and lemon, high in vitamin C, can provide this vital nutritional edge for iron-deficient patients battling chronic anemia.

### SUN EXPOSURE JUMPSTARTS CELL FACTORS

Experts believe that exposure to sunlight is key for vitamin D synthesis, which is needed to activate stem cells to produce new red blood cells. Since wintry weather curtails incidental exposure, one needs to consciously step out on sunny days to help the body produce the vitamin.

### BEYOND NUTRIENTS: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SELF-CARE

A holistic healing paradigm also encompasses nurturing well-being across physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions—aligning medical care with healthy habits plus mental peace. Therefore, always prioritise adequate restorative rest, de-stressing me-time, positive social connections, and simple, home-cooked, warm comfort foods that nourish you wholesomely.

### LAYER UP TO TRAP HEAT

For insulating against winter's chill, trapping air between multiple loose, lightweight clothing layers forms the cornerstone for retaining body warmth when headed out. The enclosed air gets heated by the transfer of body warmth but cannot quickly dissipate outward. Technically, the distinct layers function together as insulators.

Step outdoors wearing leggings under pants, topped by a t-shirt, sweater, and jacket, to create sufficient barriers limiting warmth loss. The key lies in modulating layers based on planned activities and expected temperatures while out to prevent rapid heat depletion. So staying prepared to adjust backup layers as needed enables stability.

### SHIELD EXTREMITIES FROM LOSING HEAT

Remember, mittens, mufflers, caps, and thermal socks are critical for safeguarding peripheral areas like the head, neck, hands, and feet from losing precious warmth. Choosing insulating materials like wool, fleece, or cashmere rather than conductors like silk also matters. This balances fashion and function while keeping toasty.

Employing simple home remedies harmoniously alongside clinical treatments empowers taking greater ownership of health. Monitor warning signs, nourish yourself wholesomely, and self-advocate for responsive care attuned to your lived experience. With an openness to learn and customise, you can discover the optimal recipe for keeping your inner fires burning despite the dipping mercury this winter.

(The author, Partha Pratim Das Mahapatra, is the Founder and CEO of EzeRx.)

# what's brewing?



● Rhea Sachdeva

● Priyanka

● Ulka Gupta

● Richchie

● Kushitha

Actor Vishwak Sen during a event, was appointed as the Appointed Brand Ambassador of HPSL -Telugu Team- HPSL (Horse Power Sports League). The event also witnessed the launch of My South Diva Calendar-2024, featuring actresses like Shriya Saran, Catherine, and Kushitha, Ulka Gupta, among the rest.

**PARTY**



● Akshitha

● Vineetha

● Poornima

● Rashi Singh, Swathi Vemula and Anjali Reddy

● Sumathi and Vishwani

Tollywood actress Rashi Singh inaugurated the two-day SWAN - the fashion fair fashion and lifestyle exhibition, held at the Convention Hall of Film Nagar Cultural Center in Film Nagar.



Super Grandmaster Sergei Tiviakov, played chess with player Shloka, a student of at Ekgra Chess Academy in Jubilee Hills, during its 2-day training camp. Grandmasters Shloka Dandu and Tanish said that the playing style is unique and the academy children are showing very active playing style. Coaches Sandeep Naidu, Sheethal and Suresh, also graced the camp.

**Photos by - SV Chary**

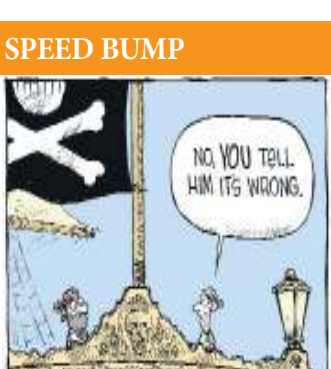


Telangana BC Commission Chairman Dr Vakulabharanam Krishna Mohan Rao, graced the first edition of Hybiz.TV Realty Awards-2024 presented by Maha Cement, held at HICC Novotel in Hyderabad. Several other dignitaries includes G Ram Reddy, National General Secretary of CREDAI, along with V Rajasekhara Reddy, President CREDAI Hyderabad, Vijay Vardhan Rao, Senior President Marketing, Maha Cement; and Jai Prakash Babu D, Regional Manager LIC Housing Finance Limited, among the rest, presented the awards to the winners in different categories.



Ahmed Balala, MLA of Malakpet Constituency inaugurated the Aazebo – The Royal Arabian Restaurant at Moosarambagh X Roads in Malakpet. The restaurant dishes out one of the most appetizing Mandi with a Tag "Your Search for Authentic Mandi Ends Here". Aazebo is a restaurant of its kind with a royal ambience giving an experience of royal Arabian palace – the interiors with a finish of gold, silver hues imitate a decked up Arabian Palace which makes the delicacies at Aazebo exceptional.

**FUN**



**CROSSWORD**

**ACROSS**

- Calm and quiet
- Sit on this
- Steam bath
- Oboe player
- Applaud
- An area of cut grass
- A box for a body
- Once more
- Heartbeat
- Practise something before doing it for an audience

**DOWN**

- A keyboard instrument
- From one side to the other
- Simple to do

**SOLUTION**

P	R	E	G	N	A	N	T	S
E	T	L	E	S				
R	A	G	E	S	C	A	L	S
F	H	O	S	A				
O	R	T	E	N	C	H	A	I
R	O	E	D					
M	I	X	U	P	C	R	E	E
E	A	L	L	K	A			
R	A	T	T	L	E	W	A	S
X	O	A	C	E				
E	R	E	P	O	R	T	E	R

**SUDOKU**

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

**Yesterday's solution**

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



## Janhvi Kapoor to reportedly star alongside Suriya in *Karna*

Tamil star Suriya will be making his big Bollywood debut with the ambitious mythological magnum opus, *Karna*. The 2-part film will be helmed by the National Award-winning director Rakeysh Om Prakash Mehra. And here's the latest buzz on this highly anticipated project.

Even though speculations on *Karna*'s leading lady have been doing the rounds for the past few months, the latest buzz in Bollywood circles confirms that popular young actress Janhvi Kapoor has been roped in by *Karna* makers for the leading lady's part. However, it remains to be seen if Janhvi will be essaying Draupadi's character in this mega-budget drama.

As the title suggests, *Karna* is based on the iconic Karna character from the epic Mahabharata. The first part of this epic franchise will commence in the second half of this year, after Suriya wraps up *Kanguva* and another project with his *Soorari Potru* director Sudha Kongara. *Karna* will have a massive pan-Indian release in 2025.



## *Utsavam* unfolds the resurgence of theatre plays

*Utsavam*, billed to be an impactful drama, revealed its first look poster by the makers on the Republic Day, which features debutant Dilip Prakash is seen sitting on the floor with several drama objects around him. It indicated the film is about the forgotten culture of theatre arts. The caption- "The Show Must Go On" hints at the plotline.

On Sunday, the makers unveiled the teaser for *Utsavam*. It introduces a tale that unfolds the resurgence of theatre plays. With an impressive

ensemble cast, the film immerses viewers in the life of Krishna (Dilip), who is trying to resuscitating theaters. Accompanied by his ladylove Rama (Regina), he is driven by an unwavering love for his father, played by Prakash Raj (Abhimanyu Narayan). Terrific actors like Prakash Raj, LB Sriram, and Rajendra Prasad's presence offer an enigmatic cinematic experience. *Utsavam* is a complete family entertainer laced with emotions, love, and entertainment. Dilip Prakash and Regina Cassandra are playing

the lead roles. It has an ensemble cast comprising Nassar, Rajendra Prasad, Bramhanandam, Ali, Prema, L.B. Sriram, Anish Kuruvilla, Priyadarshi, Amani, and Sudha.

*Utsavam* is written and directed by Arjun Sai, and Suresh Patil is producing the movie on Hornbill Pictures. The film has an accomplished technical team, with cinematography by the renowned Rasool Ellore and a music score by Anup Rubens. Kotagiri Venkateswara Rao is the editor.

## Vishwak Sen amazes in the get-up of an Aghora in *Gaami*

Mass Ka Das Vishwak Sen is an ambitious star who has made a big impression on the audience in his short career. Besides being a regular commercial entertainer, he is also experimenting with unique concepts. His upcoming film, *Gaami*, directed by Vidyadhar Kagita and produced by Karthik Sabareesh at Karthik Kult Creations, is one of his most ambitious projects. V Celluloid presents the movie, which is tipped to be an adventure drama. The movie is funded by the crowd.

*Gaami* has been in the making for several years. Meanwhile, the makers kick-started the

promotions by unveiling the stunning first look poster at the Hyderabad Comic Con. Vishwak Sen amazes in the get-up of an Aghora. While his character is wrapped in a ragged desi black attire, he is surrounded by many Aghoras who try to touch him. The poster is a spine-chilling one and has a dark mysterious feel to it. It generates a lot of curiosity among the viewers.

Makers also announced that in this film, Vishwak Sen plays an Aghora named 'shankar', who has very rare condition- 'an inability to experience any human touch'. The Tagline on the poster, "His biggest fear is human touch... His deepest desire, is also human touch"

emphasises the depth of that character's emotional conflict.

Makers also revealed that the film- in addition to the Aghora setup, there are two different setups and other characters, and they would be unveiled down the line of promotions. Chandini Chowdary of *Colour Photo* fame is the leading lady, while M. G. Abhinaya, Harika Pedada, and Mohammad Samad are the prominent cast. The movie has cinematography by Vishwanath Reddy and Rampy Nandigam, music by Naresh Kumaran, and the screenplay was written by Vidyadhar Kagita and Pratyush Vatyam.



## DIRECTOR DAYANANDH REVEALS THE SECOND HALF OF *GAME ON* OFFERS 'ENGAGING CHALLENGES'

In the upcoming action thriller *Game On*, which is produced by Ravi Kasturi under the auspices of Kasturi Creations and Golden Wings Productions and presented by Sakshi Ravi (Sai Lakshmi Talari), Geetanand and Neha Solanki will play substantial roles. The film has been used by Dayanandh. The movie is scheduled to have a wide release on February 2. The promotional material for the movie generated a lot of buzz. Director Dayanandh discussed the movie with the media today and offered some fascinating observations.

"When I was in school, I became interested in movies, and my interest grew after seeing *Yem Maaya Chesave* and *Happy Days*. I wanted to be a director, inspired by Puri Jagannath. I made a few short films before enrolling in a six-month production and sound course at Annapurna Film School. Traveling among writers inspired me to compose a gripping narrative. Steering away from traditional commercial film, I wanted to stand out from my first feature. From a cinematic perspective, we show how the inclusion of a game changes a person's life. As the film progresses through nine activities, the second half offers engaging challenges. The main theme looks at how this game helps people who have experienced trauma."

While exploring deep familial feelings, the movie stays authentic and honest, appealing to young audiences. Aditya Menon's portrayal of a psychologist and Madhubala's legendary character were among the many aspects of the film that were hidden in teasers and trailers. The film's richness is enhanced by the crucial part that Shubhalekha Sudhakar plays. A hint of masculinity is added by Neha Solanki's character, who has unanticipated surprises similar to a second hero.

"Producer Ravi Kasturi gave me creative freedom and enthusiastically embraced the script. After the original timeline, confidence improved and an additional budget was allocated for a better cinematic experience. Because of its underlying realism, *Game On* promises to be an unforgettable film for everyone. Although the film may have a restricted release at first, encouraging trailers suggest that theater attendance will gradually increase. According

to early feedback, it appeals to a wide range of viewers and offers families an engaging viewing experience without any dull moments." For movie buffs, the film is a captivating viewing because of its distinct story and varied cast of characters. Don't miss the realistic and vivid sensation it offers on screen.



## Kamal Haasan-Vinoth's *KH233* is 'not on cards' anymore

Kamal Haasan is currently in the midst of an impressive comeback, having signed up for numerous exciting projects. The seasoned actor, who took a substantial hiatus from cinema, marked his return to the silver screen with the resounding success of the action thriller *Vikram* in 2022. Now, the versatile artist is gearing up to collaborate with some of the finest filmmakers and technicians in the Indian film industry for his upcoming ventures.

For those unfamiliar, Kamal Haasan had initially announced his first onscreen collaboration with the acclaimed filmmaker H Vinoth around mid-2023. This project, tentatively titled *KH 233* and expected to be the actor's 233rd cinematic venture, was highly anticipated as a political thriller. However, recent updates suggest that the project has been shelved, leaving fans disappointed.

Originally slated to commence filming in early 2024, *KH 233* has gone silent

since its initial buzz-generating announcement. The absence of any updates or mentions of the project in Kamal Haasan's lineup has led to confirmation from the makers that the project has indeed been abandoned. Instead, Vinoth will be directing his efforts towards a new project with Dhanush, for which he is currently crafting a script.

Sources reveal that Kamal Haasan made the decision to drop *KH 233* in favor of focusing on his collaboration with Lokesh Kanagaraj. This move aligns with their successful partnership in *Vikram*, a film that not only holds significance in Kamal's illustrious career but also stands out in the Tamil cinema landscape. *Vikram* is the second installment in the Lokesh Cinematic Universe, following *Kaithi*. The buzz around Kamal and Lokesh joining forces once again is gaining momentum, promising another noteworthy chapter in their cinematic journey together.



## Rashmika wraps *Chhava* shooting, Vicky Kaushal calls her 'major inspiration'

Bollywood star Vicky Kaushal, who was recently seen in the biopic *Sam Bahadur*, has called his *Chhava* actress Rashmika Mandanna a "major inspiration."

The actor recently took to the Stories section of his Instagram and reposted a Story by Rashmika where she expressed her gratitude to the cast and crew of the film after she wrapped up the film.

Rashmika said in jest that Vicky has been very warm and kind to her during the filming except for the last day of the shoot.

In her next story, the actress praised her co-star Vicky Kaushal and wrote: Calling him a "Maharaj", she wrote: "It's been such a pleasure working with you. You are just toooooo warm and kind (except for the last day where you were just taking my case) but most days you were amazing. I am kidding, you are such a gem. I will always wish the best for you man. Was such a pleasure. mom has told me to convey regards to you (sic)." Responding to the same, Vicky wrote: "@rashmika\_mandanna... neen yennane ullia? The whole set is missing your warmth and energy immensely. People don't know that the smile you have on your worst days is bigger and better than the smile most have on their best days." He further mentioned: "Major inspiration! Thank you for being our Yesubai and my regards to Aunty as well. Oh and btw what are you thinking now?"



## 'VIJAY IS NOT MY COMPETITOR BUT WELL-WISHER,' SAYS RAJNIKANTH



During the audio launch event of *Jailer*, Superstar Rajinikanth shared a story about a crow and an eagle. It blew out of proportion and triggered fan wars between Rajini's and Vijay's fans. Now, Rajinikanth clarified that the story was not directed at Thalapaty Vijay. "He is not my competitor but a well-wisher," said Rajinikanth.

At the *Jailer* audio launch, Rajinikanth's anecdote led to a social media frenzy, with fans speculating that it was aimed at Vijay. Despite disappointment over his speech's misinterpretation, Rajinikanth stated, "Vijay grew up in front of my eyes. During the shooting of *Dharmathin Thalavaiyan*, he was just 13 years old. After the shooting, SA Chandrasekar introduced Vijay to me, and he expressed his interest in acting. I advised him to concentrate on his studies first."

Rajinikanth commended Vijay's discipline, hard work, and talent that led him to the top of the film industry. He mentioned Vijay's upcoming political entry, stating that hearing about their perceived competition is disheartening. Rajinikanth requested the fans not to compare and emphasized that he has huge respect on Vijay.

On the work front, apart from *Lal Salam*, Rajinikanth is also working on *Vettaiyan* and *Thalavaiyan 171* with Lokesh Kanagaraj.

## RGV 'not thrilled' with Padma Vibhushan Award, gets schooled by netizens

Chiranjeevi was bestowed with the prestigious Padma Vibhushan Award on Thursday, January 24, joining the distinguished list of five individuals recognized for their exceptional and distinguished service. The Padma Vibhushan stands as the second-highest civilian honor, highlighting Chiranjeevi's remarkable contributions.

The announcement garnered positive reactions from many, including director Ram Gopal Varma, who, despite expressing joy for the veteran actor, introduced a note of complexity into the celebration. Taking to the microblogging site X (formerly Twitter), Varma remarked, "I never heard of Shri Padma Subrahmanyam or Shri Bindeshwar Pathak and so to put them in the same position as Mega star, I am not at all thrilled with the award, but if @chirutweets gaaru is happy I will also pretend to be happy?"

This statement drew criticism from some netizens, urging Varma to broaden his knowledge and perspective. One user emphasized, "You should read more about Bindeshwar Pathak," while another suggested, "Because your knowledge is limited to a few states or regions and a few fields only." A third person commented, "If you have not heard about Bindeshwar Pathak, then it is your problem. He is not less than a superstar or what you say Mega Star."

In contrast, Chiranjeevi responded to the honor with a heartfelt speech, expressing being "speechless" upon learning about the accolade. He conveyed feeling "overwhelmed, humbled, and grateful," reflecting the deep significance of this recognition in his illustrious career.



Hsieh, Elise win Australian Open women doubles

AP ■ MELBOURNE
Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan has become the second-oldest woman to win a Grand Slam doubles title after teaming with Elise Mertens...



of Poland. Mertens won the Wimbledon title with Hsieh in 2021 and won the Australian Open title the same year with Aryna Sabalenka...

really close. "It was a really great match for us and we had to stay focused all the time." Ostapenko and Kichenok faced a tough road to the final...



Pavon is first Frenchman to win on PGA Tour since World War II

AP ■ SAN DIEGO
Mathieu Pavon became the first player to win a PGA Tour event under the French flag since World War II when he made an 8-foot putt on No. 18 at Torrey Pines South on Saturday...

alternate event, while representing the United States. He later switched his nationality to France. Pavon took the lead on the 12th hole, built the advantage to two strokes and then missed a 3-foot putt on the par-4 17th for a bogey that cut his lead to one stroke.

His only birdie on the back nine saved him from a playoff. He appeared to be in trouble on the par-5, 541-yard 18th when his drive landed in a sand trap, about 4 inches from the front lip. His second shot went 103 yards into the left rough, which was high because of heavy rain Monday, with 145 yards to the hole.

After watching Hojgaard's 300-yard drive down the middle of the fairway, "I was like, OK, it's going to be spicy now. I might have to do a birdie or something special," Pavon said.

After ending up in the trap and then not getting back to the fairway, he and Sherwood discussed whether he should lay up or go for it. "It was like, Listen, like the lie doesn't look too bad, I feel like I can do it. He said 'OK, but it's your call.' 'It's my call. And I was so pumped at that time, I know I had the energy to lift that ball up on the green. I kind of aimed to the middle of the green knowing the face would close a little bit because it's quite deep and thick. That ball came out like a butterfly and it really fed the slope on the green. That was the right time to prove I have the guts to finish that tournament and I did it so I'm so happy about that last hole."

International kayaking tournament in Tawang from February 5 to 10

PTI ■ TAWANG

A six-day international kayaking tournament will be organised next month near India's border with China in Arunachal Pradesh on the fast-flowing Tawangchu river, in which two rivers from Tibet converge before it flows through Tibet to finally reach the Brahmaputra.



Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Union minister Kiren Rijiju, who also belongs to the state, the organisers said, adding that the tournament will start from Lumla, near Tawang. Tawangchu is the main river of Tawang. Strategically significant Tawang is located at an altitude of above 10,000 feet and is close to the border with China.

passion meets the untamed waters of Arunachal Pradesh." The event will be witness to the kayakers' incredible skills and precision as they navigate a course filled with gates and obstacles. The race is a single lap of the course, according to the organisers. "Experience the camaraderie of a global community, sharing a common love for adventure and conquering the Tawangchu river's thrilling rapids together," the statement read.

rivers from Tibet 'Tsona Chu' and 'Nyamjang Chu' join the Tawangchu in the district. The combined river then flows west into Bhutan, from where it enters Assam as river Manas and later, merges with the Brahmaputra river. The organisers said participants will be provided top-class tented accommodations equipped with electricity supply, warm food and hygienic toilets. Tawang is also a historic and picturesque town, known for its stunning landscapes and its spiritual heritage.

Hockey5s Women World Cup India lose to Netherlands, finish runners up

PTI ■ MUSCAT

India lost 2-7 to the Netherlands in the final to finish runners-up at the FIH Hockey5s Women's World Cup here. Jyoti Chhatr (20th minute) and Rutuja Dadaso Pisal (23rd) scored for India in the summit clash on Saturday. Janneke van de Venne (2nd, 14th), Bente van der Veldt (4th, 8th) and Lana Kalse (11th, 27th) struck a brace each for the Netherlands, while Sosha Benninga (13th) was the other goal-getter.



start and it wasn't long before the Netherlands found an opening. Janneke van de Venne took a long-range shot which deflected off the Indian goalkeeper Rajani Etimaru into the goal to hand Netherlands the lead. Moments later, Bente van der

Veldt found herself open in front of the Indian goal and smashed the ball into the net to double the lead. A period of Netherlands dominance followed. Bente van der Veldt remained alert in front of the Indian goal as her quick overhead shot sailed past the Indian defence

into the goal. With four minutes to go in the first-half, Lana Kalse pounced on a loose ball and unleashed a powerful shot to make it 4-0 in Netherlands' favour. Soon after, Sosha Benninga used a deft touch to bypass Rajani in goal and further extended their lead.

As the Netherlands continued to put pressure on the Indian defence, Janneke van de Venne capitalised on an opening and scored to end the first half 6-0 in the Netherlands' favour. The Dutch dominance continued in the second-half, resulting in a challenge which was saved by Rajani. India opened their account five minutes into the second-half as Jyoti found some space and struck a shot from distance to beat Netherlands' goalkeeper Kiki Gunneman. Rutuja then received the ball under pressure, turned on a sixpence and breached Netherlands' goal to make it 6-2. As India started to pile on the pressure, a quick counter-attack goal from Netherlands' Lana Kalse restored their five-goal cushion.

Xavi will not continue at Barcelona after this season

AP ■ BARCELONA

Xavi Hernández won't continue as Barcelona's coach after this season, saying he can't get the team out of a slump. Xavi announced his decision on Saturday, minutes after Barcelona lost to Villarreal 5-3 in the Spanish league, leaving it 10 points adrift of leader Real Madrid. "I would like to announce that on June 30 I will cease being the coach of Barça," Xavi said. "As a Barcelona fan, I can't allow this situation to continue, we need a change of

course and of dynamics." Xavi said he made the decision "several days ago," and although the hard defeat to Villarreal set the scene for him to announce the decision, he "would have made" it soon enough. He said he hoped this decision will decrease the stress and tension his team is enduring. "The feeling of being the coach of Barcelona is cruel, it is unpleasant, you feel like you don't get the respect you deserve," Xavi said. "It wears you down, affects your mental health, your emotions, up to the point that



you say you can't go on. My loved ones know that." Xavi returned to Barcelona as the coach in November 2021 with his only experience a stint in Qatar. He has a contract through the end of next season. The 44-year-old Xavi led Barcelona to the Spanish Super Cup title and the Spanish league title last season, the club's first trophies since the exit of Lionel Messi. The club mortgaged its future to help him do that by signing players like Robert Lewandowski. But Barcelona has struggled

this season and has shown severe signs of suffering as collapse this month. Barcelona saw its best two chances of getting a title in this campaign evaporate recently. Xavi's side exited the Copa del Rey quarterfinals after losing in extra time at Athletic Bilbao 4-2 on Wednesday, a loss that came two weeks after Barcelona was dismantled by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup. After the Villarreal debacle Xavi said his players' lacked the "maturity" to know how to hold onto leads, and after

the Bilbao loss he also underscored that he was playing with several young players. But that seemed at odds with the fact that his starting side was led with veterans like Lewandowski, Ilkay Gundogan and players in their prime like Pedri González and Frenkie de Jong. Barcelona is set to play Napoli in the Champions League round of 16 next month. Xavi said he was still motivated to lead the team at what is no doubt a long-shot bid at ending his stint with a European Cup.

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona loses thriller with Villarreal

Barcelona again showed it is not a championship-caliber team when it conceded twice in stoppage time to lose a 5-3 thriller with Villarreal in front of its stunned fans. In one of the wildest games of the season on Saturday, Villarreal was up 2-0 then Barcelona roared back with three goals in a 12-minute span to lead 3-2 in the 72nd minute. But Barcelona's defense again let it down and new Villarreal arrival Goncalo Guedes leveled on a counterattack in the 84th. Striker Alexander Sorloth, who also set up two goals, then found the winner in stoppage time and José Morales added to Barcelona's misery. Barcelona was trying to bounce back in La Liga from

its elimination from the Copa del Rey at Athletic Bilbao this week. Instead, its loss to an erratic Villarreal only added more pressure on beleaguered manager Xavi Hernandez to turn things around. Real Madrid rallied to win at Las Palmas 2-1 without top scorer Jude Bellingham and reclaim the league lead. It opened up a 10-point gap over Barcelona in third. "This is a huge blow," Xavi said. "We lost this game because of our mistakes. Today is difficult to digest for me as a coach but also for my players, who are all feeling really bad. We did the hardest part



which was to turn it around, and we even had more chances to score, but that was when our problems started. We are paying a heavy price for our mistakes this season." WHERE'S THE DEFENSE? Gerard Moreno opened the scoring near halftime from a pass by Sorloth. Former Barcelona youth player Ilias Akhomach took full advantage of horrible control by João Cancelo, who came on at halftime, to double the advantage. Ilkay Gundogan pulled one back for Barcelona in the 60th. Substitute Pedri González took a second before an own goal by Eric Baily put the hosts

ahead. Barcelona then looked close to sealing it with a fourth goal before Sorloth launched Guedes on the flank to beat goalkeeper Iñaki Peña from an angle to make it 3-3. The Norwegian striker put Villarreal back in front after Barcelona failed to clear the ball from its area. "If you are losing 0-2 and then go up 3-2 you cannot give it away and lose like that," Barcelona midfielder Frenkie de Jong said. "This cannot happen to an elite team." Cancelo, like De Jong, backed Xavi and tried to take the blame as players. "It truly was a disaster,"

Cancelo said. "Those were the worst 45 minutes of my career." Barcelona's defense, which is missing injured goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen is falling apart in January. Barcelona was crushed by Madrid 4-1 in the Spanish Super Cup in Saudi Arabia two weeks ago, and on Wednesday it conceded twice in extra time to lose to Bilbao 4-2. MADRID RALLIES Vinicius Júnior and Aurélien Tchouaméni scored second-half goals for Madrid in the Canary Islands. After a first half stalemate between the league's top defenses, midfielder Javi Muñoz put Las Palmas ahead in the 53rd from a pass by Sandro Ramírez. "We played a good first half against a great rival," Muñoz said.