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CENTRE, STATE, EXPORTERS TO DISCUSS **WAYS TO BOOST EXPORTS ON JAN 16**

To her amazement, the high tide 'almost carried' Manchu Lakshmi away at

The pioneer Ram Mandir is not for elections. Many people sacrificed their lives to construct the Ram Mandir. The construction of the Ram Mandir is the result of the sacrifices of many people. The BJP fought a long battle for Ram Mandir. Nobody will prevent Sonia Gandhi if she wants to do Ram Seva. Sonia Gandhi was sent an invitation and one can suggest that she come to Ayodhya and take part in the Prana Prathista of Lord Rama. Congress leaders are pseudo-secularists. The Centre also allotted Rs 100 crore for the development of the Bhadradri Temple. We also made the President visit the Bhadradri Temple

QUOTE OF THE DAY

- G. Kishan Reddy, TS BJP president P4

Happy Pongal

Grand start to cockfights...

Despite the High Court ban, cockfights began at several places in Krishna and NTR districts on Sunday as part of the Sankranthi celebrations. Apart from the bloodsport, several gambling activities are also rampant during the three days of the festival. However, no cops were seen at the cockfight arenas. Even the Revenue department officials hesitate to take any action to prevent their conduct. Several YSRCP MLAs are organising cockfights through the party's local leaders. Most importantly, sarpanches..

Predictions of Al-powered...

Al-powered prediction models made accurate predictions within the trial they were developed in, but gave "random predictions" outside of it, according to new research. Researchers said the study showed that generalisations of predictions of artificial intelligence-based models across different study centers cannot be ensured at the moment and that these models were "highly contextdependent". The results of the study have been published in the journal Science. Pooling data from across trials too ... -PAGE: 5



'Army troops turn Davos into ...

As Davos readies to host its annual talkfest of rich and powerful from across the world. nearly 5,000 army personnel have been deployed to help police and civilian authorities secure this small Alnine resort town. Dayos estimated to have a permanent population of just about 10,000 but is frequented throughout the year by tourists including skiing enthusiasts in ski season, but it is the week of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting when it sees the maximum footfalls with at least 30,000 people..

-PAGE: 8

When cricket meets tennis...

Indian cricket icon Virat Kohli on Sunday opened up about the mutual admiration he shares with Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic in a heart-warming tale of cross-sport camaraderie. It all started when Kohli reached out to the record 24-time Major champion on social media with a simple greeting. But to his surprise, the tennis maestro had already messaged him, marking the beginning of their friendship. "I got in touch with Novak very organically, I was just looking at his profile once on...

'Amaravati will be capital'

Naidu, PK dump 'anti-people' orders in Bhogi bonfire

PNS VIJAYAWADA

TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu along with JSP chief Pawan Kalyan actively participated in Bhogi celebrations at Mandadam in Amaravati on Sunday morning. The Sankranthi celebrations organised in the name of 'Telugu Jathiki Swarna Yugam-Sankranti Sankalpam' are held on the Golden Role School campus in Amravati on Sunday morning. The farmers of Amaravati gave a warm and traditional welcome to Naidu and Pawan Kalyan. Later, both the leaders burnt copies of the orders of anti-people policies released by this Government in the bonfire.

Addressing the farmers, Naidu made it clear that the public welfare rule will again begin here as Amaravati is going to remain the capital of the state. He said that the primary goal of the TDP-Jana Sena combine is to create assets in the State. Chandrababu Naidu expressed happiness for celebrating the festival in Amaravati. "The future is again going to be ours as Amaravathi is soon going to be the centre for administration," he added.

Making a promise that the TDP-Jana Sena combine will take the responsibility to employ the jobless, Chandrababu Naidu said that steps will be initiated by the coming TDP-Jana Sena government to create assets and distribute it to the people to bring them out of the present crisis. Naidu said that around 8,000 acres in the capital region of Amaravathi remain vacant after allocating lands for building government offices and other



if each acre is sold at Rs 30 cr. The land was worth Rs one lakh near Hitech City in Hyderabad 25 years ago while it now costs anywhere around Rs 100 cr and this is how assets should be created, he said.

Chandrababu regretted that the construction of buildings for High Court judges which began five years ago are not completed till now. Stating that he will take the responsibility to promote Visakhapatnam as economic capital, the former chief minister announced that a private institutions and this amounts to High Court bench will be established at

one lakh crore or even three lakh crore Kurnool. Naidu is of a firm opinion that the Chief Minister, Jagan Moĥan Reddy, is not fit for politics and said that the people must get rid of him.

Pawan Kalyan said that the time has come for the State to rid itself of evil and that he is aware of the problems being faced by the people.

Assuring the people that Amaravati will certainly be developed as the best capital in the country, Pawan Kalyan said that the coming TDP-Jana Sena government will transform Andhra Pradesh into a

SKILL DEVELOPMENT CASE SC verdict on Naidu's

plea tomorrow

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to deliver on January 16 its verdict on former Andhra Pradesh chief minister and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu's plea challenging the high court order refusing to quash the FIR against him in the Skill Development Corporation scam case.

Naidu was arrested on September 9 last year for allegedly misappropriating funds from the Skill Development Corporation when he was the chief minister in 2015, causing a purported loss of Rs 371 crore to the state exchequer. Naidu has denied the allegations.

The Andhra Pradesh High Court had on November 20 last year granted him regular bail in

An apex court bench comprising Justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M Trivedi had on October 17 last year reserved its verdict on Naidu's plea challenging the September 22, 2023 high court order refusing to quash the Continued on Page 2

tion from the party, in the lat-

est addition to a list of young

leaders who have left it to

begin new innings in other par-

But the Congress down-

secretary Jairam Ramesh saying

that one Milind Deora goes

away but "lakhs of Milinds

who believe in our organisation



The Pioneer wishes its readers, advertisers, suppliers and agents a happy Makara Sankranti. As our offices will remain closed today (15-01-2024), there will be no issue of the newspaper on Tuesday (16-01-2024).

CM embraces joy of Sankranti amid fervour

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and his wife YS Bharathi Reddy celebrated Sankranti at his camp office here on Sunday amidst rural ambience and festive spirit. The Chief Minister extended Sankranti greetings to all Telugu people across the world and wished them well on the occasion.

Attired in traditional dress, the Chief Minister couple worshipped cows at the Goshala and offered prayers at Vinayaka, Venkateswara Swamy and Kanaka Durga temples, besides offering Biksha to Hari dasu and the Sankranti Gangireddu. Vedic pundits blessed the couple reciting hymns and present-

ing new clothes. flowers and traditional Muggulu while the replica of Tirumala Silatoranam hogged the limelight. Replicas of the village secretariat, Government School and Rythu Bharosa Suresh and other leaders partici-Kendram also attracted the pated in the festivities.



and others. Later, the Chief

Minister felicitated the artists. Several YSRCP leaders including Government Chief Whip Reflecting Sankranti Chevireddy Bhaskara Reddy, grandeur, the camp office Deputy Chief Ministers Kottu vana (Endowments) and Narayana Swamy (Excise and Commercial Taxes), Municipal Administration Minister A, Suresh, YSRCP Regional Coordinator YV Subba Reddy, MP Nandigam

Cong wants to listen to people's 'Mann Ki Baat' Country is going through period of 'great injustice': Rahul

The Congress' Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra began from violence-hit Manipur on Sunday with Rahul Gandhi asserting that the party will present a new vision for India that will be based on harmony, brother-hood and equitability and devoid of hatred, violence and monopoly

At a rally here to flag off the over-6,700-km yatra from Manipur to Mumbai, Gandhi Minister Narendra Modi for

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

the authorities.

in the United States.

In a heart-wrenching incident,

two promising Telugu youths who

ventured to the US with dreams of

higher studies were discovered

dead in their rented house. The

news came to light when locals, alarmed by their bodies, informed

The deceased has been identified

as Gattu Dinesh, the son of Gattu

Venkanna from Vanaparthi District

in Telangana, who had recently

embarked on a journey to pursue

his Master of Science (MS) degree

Just 16 days ago, Dinesh bid

farewell to his family at the airport,



and Congress president not visiting Manipur as it Kharge attacked Prime reeled under ethnic violence, securing votes.

2 Telugu students found dead in US

filled with hope for a bright future.

Shockingly, news reached the family that Dinesh Chani had

gone missing, prompting immedi-

ate concern. Simultaneously, anoth-

er distressing message was relayed

to the relatives of a fellow student

from Srikakulam district. Maranim

Chada, in the same American city,

had tragically passed away.

Preliminary investigations by the

local police have revealed that

both youths were found blindfold-

and vowed to ensure justice for

its people. country was going through a ann Ki Baat'

Ahead of the January 22 consecration ceremony at the Ayodhya Ram temple, Kharge said everyone has faith in God but one should not resort to "dhongbaazi (deception)" for

The deceased has been identified as Gattu Dinesh of

Telangana and Maranim Chada of Srikakulam district in AP

ed while in their sleep. Authorities

are awaiting the results of the

post-mortem examination to deter-

mine the exact cause of death. The

police have assured that the bod-

ies will be repatriated to India soon.

promising young individuals has

left their families and communities

in shock and grief. As the investi-

gation unfolds, there is a collective

hope for answers that can provide

solace to the grieving families.

"Indian military

President

personnel cannot

stay in the Maldives.

This is the policy of

Dr Mohamed Muizzu

and that of this

administration."

The sudden demise of these

"Wo samandar ke upar sair Deora announced his resignakarte firte hai, aur jap karte Gandhi said he had to baithte hain -- Ram Ram Ram undertake the yatra as the Ram (He is seen enjoying the sea, sitting and chanting Ram period of "great injustice" and Ram). 'Mukh mein Ram, bagal stressed the party wants to lis- mein churi', do not do this with

> and actions differ. Hours before the start of the and ideology stay". yatra with much fanfare, senior Congress leader Milind

ident said, referring to the

Hindi idiom that cautions

against people whose words

3 killed as unidentified

PNS NELLORE

vehicle hits bike

In a ghastly road accident, three youths were killed when the motorcycle on which they were travelling was hit by an unidentified vehicle at Kalagunta village in Doravari Satram mandal on the national highway in the wee hours on Sunday.

Police said that the deceased Muni Raja (24), Ramki (23) and Goutham (25) were friends. They were going to their native village Yekollu to celebrate the Sankranti festival on a motorcycle. An unidentified vehicle hit their motorcycle killing them instantaneously. The police registered a case and shifted the bodies to the GGH in Naidupet for postmortem.

Indian High Commissioner Munu

Maldives Foreign Ministry said

"Discussions were held on a wide

range of issues of mutual interest,

including development coopera-

tion. Both sides expressed willing-

ness to intensify cooperation and agreed to fast-track the withdrawal

of Indian military personnel," the

that during the meeting both sides

reviewed the existing bilateral coop-

Mahawar.

eration.

statement said.

SANKRANTI COCKFIGHT EXTRAVAGANZA



Godavari villages abuzz with punters, spectators

PNS ■ PEDAMIRAM (WEST GODAVARI DIST)

Thousands of punters and spectators descended upon several villages in the Godavari districts and others in Andhra Pradesh on Sunday to gamble crores of rupees in the annual Sankranti cockfight extravaganza.

At Pedamiram village near Bhimavaram in West Ğodavari district, fleets of cars rolled in from various states, including some festival celebrants turning up from overseas to gamble.

"I came from Shamirpet village near Hyderabad. Every year I come to Bhimavaram for Sankranti to watch cockfights. Some of my friends engage in gambling," M Prabhu (27) from Telangana told. Prabhu was posing for photographs at a Sankranti-themed selfie point beside a large white tent where the roosters armed with sharp knives fastened to their feet were competing in the bloody sport.

Large flex posters of local ruling party leader P V L Narasimha Raju welcomed the crowds to the

Carrying wads of cash in bags, punters placed bets on their chosen roosters, which were well-fed and trained for months together in the run-up to the Sankranti festiv-

Besides the main punters who are inside the ring, a large number of spectators also gamble with their fellow spectators who watch the contests live on LED screens outside, arranged by the organisers for their convenience.

A few metres away from the cockfight ring, another white tent has been pitched, where a large number of gambling enthusiasts from Hyderabad and the rest of Telangana are engaging in different forms of poker.

Seating arrangements for more than 1,000 gamblers, a cash counting machine and card-swiping machines have been arranged to facilitate poker. Breakfast and a non-vegetarian buffet for lunch have also been arranged.

Not only cockfights and poker but also a few other formats of gambling, including board games, see brisk activity.



Maldives asks India to withdraw troops by March 15

PNS MALE

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu has asked India to withdraw its military personnel from his country by March 15, a senior official here said on Sunday, nearly two months after Male sought their removal.

According to the latest government figures, there are 88 Indian military personnel in the Maldives.

In a press briefing, Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, the public policy secretary at the President's Office, said that President Muizzu has formally asked India to withdraw its military personnel by March 15, the SunOnline newspaper reported.

"Indian military personnel cannot stay in the Maldives. This is the policy of President Dr Mohamed Muizzu and that of this administra-

tion," he said.

High-Level Core Group to negotiate the withdrawal of troops.

In a statement in New Delhi, the Ministry of External Affairs said that the first meeting of the India-Maldives High-Level Core Group was held in Male on Sunday.

issues related to bilateral cooperation towards identifying steps to enhance the partnership, including expediting the implementation of ongoing development cooperation projects,

Both sides also held discussions "During the meeting, both sides on finding mutually workable solu-Maldives and India have set up a held discussions on wide-ranging tion to enable continued operation

of Indian aviation platforms that provide humanitarian and medvac services to the people of Maldives," the MEA statement said. It was agreed to hold the next

venient date, it added

The meeting was also attended by

Soon after taking oath as the President of Maldives on November 17 last year, Muizzu, who is regarded as a pro-China leader, formally

meeting of the High Level Core Group in India on a mutually con- make this request to New Delhi.









requested India to withdraw its mil-

itary personnel from his country,

saying the Maldivian people have

given him a "strong mandate" to



Monday Mirchi

HATCHET MAN OF AP ADMINISTRATION

People like to hear good news about them. No amount of niceties and none of those bewitching smiles of the messenger can sweeten a bad news conveyed officially or matter-of-factly. This is where a hatchet man comes into play. Andhra Pradesh is preparing for the General Election as well as the Assembly elections. The ruling YSRCP has begun announcing tickets to some of the innumerable aspirants. Party chief and Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy is talking to sitting MLAs in this connection. If the ticket is confirmed for a sitting legislator, he himself is telling them. But if the ticket is to be denied to a sitting MLA, hatchet man Dhananjay Reddy takes over. A little bird told us that Dhananjay has been conveying the bad news to the aspirants. It is not fair to shoot the messenger, but not everyone can take lying down what Dhananjay sugar-coats and tells them.

JAYESH FOR DAVOS

A man with stuff does a lot more than occupying a position. He often becomes professionally adept and gets so entrenched in the position that, in due course, the system will be at a loss to find a proper replacement. Jayesh Ranjan, the go-to person in the previous Bharat Rashtra Samithi government for all things important, still has grip over the administration, despite the regime change. That he is here to stay is evident from the fact that he is again headed for Davos. While there has always been jealousy among some of his peers over his foreign visits, Jayesh comes across as someone who is a cut above the rest. While some of the babus concur that he is indeed a domain expert, his green-eved peers decry that there is still chance of his being replaced after the Lok Sabha elections.

SHAKING UP ACB

As the head of the Anti Corruption Bureau, C V Anand has become a head-turner of sorts. He gets anand (what if he is alone?) from leaving no stone unturned while doing his job. Consequently, there is pervasive fear in the department now; for, clear instructions have been given to tighten things up and to a create deterrence for graft anywhere and everywhere. So, he has been getting compliments via social media posts too for his efforts to clean up the administation. It remains to be seen whether the recognition that matters at the end of the day -- from his higher-ups -- comes.

TOP-DOWN APPROACH WORKS

The Sanskrit proverb 'Yathta Raja, Tatha praja' can be mirrored best by the administration; only then it can percolate down to the lowest level. The bureaucracy in Telangana has begun to feel this. In the erstwhile Bharat Rashtra Samithi government,

it was very difficult for the common people to meet some of the key bureaucrats, leave alone the Chief Minister. Even Ministers and legislators could not meet the bureaucrats ensconced in the Chief Minister's Office (CMO). However, a recent social media post of senior IAS officer Smitha Sabarwal has raised eyebrows in bureaucratic circles. Recalling how difficult it was to meet her when she was CMO Secretary in the previous dispensation, some circles pointed out how Smitha has changed her ways. After taking over as Finance Commission member secretary in the new government, Smitha Sabarwal posted that anyone could walk into her office to air their grievances. To leave no doubts about her intention, she even posted Google map coordinates of her office to make things easy for people. Employees at lower levels in the administration in particular are feeling the winds of

MAGNETS FOR ADDITIONAL CHARGE

People holding responsible positions successfully become magnets for additional responsibilities simply because they don't grudge it, and it is not always easy to quicky find proper replacements for them in the ádministration. İn Andhra Pradesh, senior IAS officer Ajay Jain has been elevated by being vested with additional charge as Special Chief Secretary Revenue (Lands & Disaster Management). Ajay Jain is already helming key departments as Special CS --Housing and Grama Sachivalayas.

When Sai Prasad, Special Chief Secretary Revenue (Lands & DM), went on leave; the government had initially given the additional charge to A Md Imtiaz Ahmed, who is presently discharging duties as Secretary CCLA and helming two other departments. Within two days, it was disaster for Imtiaz Ahmed; he was relieved.

STRIKING WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

At senior levels, interpersonal skills and tact in people management count. This includes ability to prevent or at least minimize the negative fall-out of a strike by a section of the employees. Senior IAS officer Vivek Yadav, presently Commissioner of Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority, has been given full additional charge of the post of Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration until further orders. A little bird told us that P Koteswara Rao, who had been discharging duties as the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration, was transferred and appointed as Joint Commissioner State Chief Electoral Office in the Secretariat, since he could not effectively handle the ongoing employees' strike.

-- Yours truly

SYMBOL OF COMMUNAL HARMONY

Muslims join Sankranti celebrations

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In a remarkable display of communal harmony, the Muslim community came together to celebrate the Sankranti festival in Vijayawada under the banner of the Muslim Samkshema Samithi. This inclusive event, organised by the MSS, transcended caste and religious barriers, exemplifying the 'Unity in Diversity' that characterizes secular India. The celebration also featured the felicitation of farmers, acknowledging their pivotal role in addressing societal hunger.



The festivities commenced at Labbipet in Vijayawada, with the active participation of Vijayawada's 19th Division Corporator, Rehana Nahid, and Krishna Lanka CI K Durga

Rao. Durga Rao expressed his approval of this commendable initiative, emphasizing the significance of celebrating Sankranti under the leadership of Muslim brethren and fostering unity across diverse backgrounds. He highlighted that Sankranti, a festival rooted in agriculture, should be a joyous occasion for everyone to come together with their families, transcending barriers of caste and religion.

MSS President Muktar Ali shared insights into the organization's longstanding tradition of celebrating Sankranti. He emphasized the intention behind the celebrations, focusing on mutual respect for diverse religions and the acknowledgement of customs, traditions, and rituals associated with each.

Rehana Nahid, the 19th Division Corporator, remind- unity.

a harvest festival, urging everyone to pay homage to and appreciate the efforts of farmers during this auspicious time. Syed Aleem, VMC Cooption member, and Mohammed Abid, Wakf board director of Krishna district, noted that the Muslim community's participation in Sankranti celebrations symbolizes a profound commitment to religious harmony.

This collaborative celebration is a heartening example of communities coming together to embrace diversity and strengthen the fabric of social

Jawan loses life to banned 'manja'

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a tragic incident, 30-yearold Naik Kagithala Koteswar Reddy, an Indian Army soldier, lost his life to a banned Chinese 'manja' string while riding his two-wheeler on the Indira Reddy Flyover in Langer House, Hyderabad, on Saturday evening.

The horrifying tragedy has sent shockwaves through the community and reignited concerns about the continued use of this dangerous product despite its prohibition. Reddy, who hailed from Pedda Waltair in Visakhapatnam district, was returning home when his throat was fatally cut by the glass-coated nylon/synthetic thread used for kite flying.

Although rushed to a nearby hospital, he succumbed to his injuries due to excessive bleeding. This heartbreaking incident prompted the Hyderabad police to register a case under Section 304 (II) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), dealing with culpable homicide not amounting to murder. It also casts a harsh light on the persistent use of manja, despite a ban imposed

PM's virtual connect with **PVTG tribes in V'nagaram**

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will engage in an online interaction with representatives from the Primarily Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in Vizianagaram as part of the 'Jan Man' programme on Monday (January

The live interview will be broadcast in the Deppur tribal village of Gantiyada mandal Kilthampalem panchayat in Vizianagaram district, as directed by District Collector S. Nagalakshmi. Public Welfare Officer T. Chandrasekhar Rao highlighted the preparations, including the setup of stalls related to various departments for community engagement and awareness.

The programme, covering PVTG tribes from eight districts nationwide, aims to address the multifaceted needs of these communities. In Vizianagaram district alone, approximately 4,000 PVTG



tribes are covered under the 'PM Jan Man' scheme. Proposed initiatives include the approval of 124 houses, allocation of Rs10 crores for the construction of 10.2 km of roads, and plans to provide drinking water to the homes of

170 PVTG tribes through taps. Infrastructure enhancement efforts include the proposal for an Anganwadi building in U Gadabawalasa of Terlam mandal, and the establishment of One Dhan Vikas Kendra in Mentada mandal

The 'Jan Man' programme is making substantial strides in fostering development and improving the overall well-being of marginalized PVTG communities in the Vijayanagaram district.

Guddiwalasa, aiming to boost the income of tribal farmers through marketing facilities for their forest products.

The 'Jan Man' programme is making substantial strides in fostering development and improving the overall wellbeing of marginalized PVTG communities in the Vijayanagaram district. The broadcast is scheduled for Monday at noon, bringing attention to the initiatives aimed at uplifting and supporting these tribal groups.

Cong wants to...

Continued from Page 1

The BJP described the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra as "Bharat Todo Yatra", and said the Congress should first provide justice to the leaders wronged by its erstwhile governments instead of promoting Rahul Gandhi and trying to maintain the hold of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Later in the day, Gandhi embarked on the journey in a bus after it was unveiled by Kharge with top Congress leaders, including chief ministers Siddaramaiah, Revanth Reddy and Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, cheering him on.

The bus travelled from here to Manipur capital Imphal, a distance of about 40 km, with Gandhi interacting with locals who lined up along the route.

The yatra flag-off rally was attended in large numbers by women and youth.

Lok Sabha MP Danish Ali, who has been suspended by the BSP, also attended the rally and joined Gandhi in the bus for the yatra.

Sukla Paksha

to Jan 15 08:07 AM Jan 15 08:07 AM to Jan 16 06:10 AM

8:16 AM to 9:39 AM

11:02 AM to 12:25 PM

03:09 PM to 04:39 PM

10:49 PM to 12:17 AM

Abhijit Muhurtham: 12:03 PM to 12:47 PM

Updated: January 14, 2024 5:00 PM

VIJAYAWADA WEATHER

Forecast: Partly Cloudy

Temp: 30°° Humidity: 71%

Sunset: 5:54 PM

1:48 PM to 3:11 PM

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham

Tithi:Panchami

Nakshatram:

Rahukalam

Varjyam:

Gulika:

Yamagandam:

Uttara Bhadrapada:

Shashthi

'Samskruta Sirulu' dance festival delights audience

PNS VIJAYAWADA

A scintillating dance festival called 'Samskruta Sirulu' took place at Sai Enikepadu, near here, on The two-day event start-

ed with talented children showcasing different classical dances like Kuchipudi and Bharatha Natyam. Aronodaya Kala Samithi, a well-known cultural organization in Vijayawada, organized the event. The audience was captivated by the performances of Ch Chakarika, K Soudamini, G Sreenisha, Y Dikshitha, and K Sri Sai Lakshmi.

Natya Guru Chinta Venkat, from the Abhinaya Art Academy,



was the Chief Guest and inaugurated the program. He stressed the importance of preserving our rich cultural heritage by encouraging children to explore the world of dance and music. Guest of honour Krishna Kumar KK

also emphasized the growing interest among NRIs in Indian classical arts, warning that without parental support, future generations might have to go abroad to study Indian cultural arts.

The event's organizer,

Pikki Manzoosha, President of Arunodaya Kala Samithi, shared that ten groups would participate in the festival. The izing performances, including Kuchipudi Nrityam, Kuchipudi Classical, and Bharatha

The 'Samskruta Sirulu' Dance Festival not only celebrates the talent of young performers but also highlights the importance of preserving India's classical dance traditions.

As the event continues, it promises to be a cultural delight, fostering appreciation for our rich artistic heritage. On Day 2, expect performances of Kathak Dance, Kuchipudi, Folk dance, and more.

Cancellation of flights hits passengers seeking to reunite with loved

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Travel plans have been thrown into disarray at Visakhapatnam Airport as inclement weather the cancellation o numerous flights since Sunday morning. Passengers, eager to reach their destinations for the festival, are facing difficulties due to these unexpected disruptions. Departures to major destinations such as Delhi, Vijayawada, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Chennai have been halted, primarily affecting services operated by Indigo and Air India. The sudden cancellations, attributed to a swift change in weather and the occurrence of snowfall, have left passengers stranded and disappointed, particularly as many had hoped to travel on

this crucial festival day. The abrupt cancellations



have led to frustrated passengers engaging in heated exchanges with officials from Indigo and Air India airlines. Many express their discontent, highlighting that they were not allowed to proceed with their travel plans on the festival day.

In response, passengers have initiated protests, demanding swift alternative arrangements to accommodate their travel needs. The disruption comes at an inconvenient time, with the festival adding an extra layer of urgency for those

Airport authorities and airline officials are working to

address the concerns of strandthat efforts are underway to find suitable alternatives for their travel. The unpredictability of weather conditions has posed a considerable challenge, and authorities are actively monitoring the situation to provide timely updates to affected travellers. Passengers are advised to stay in close contact with the airlines for real-time information on flight status and potential

rescheduling. As the festival approaches, both authorities and travellers remain hopeful for a swift resolution, ensuring that the festive spirit is not overshadowed by travel disrup-

SC verdict on Naidu's ...

Continued from Page 1

During the hearing on the plea before the apex court, the counsel appearing for the state had argued that Naidu's petition for quashing the FIR be rejected as the question about the applicability of section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act does not arise as the provision came into force in July 2018, while the CBI began probing the case in 2017. Section 17A was introduced by an amendment with effect from July 26, 2018 and the provision stipulates a mandatory requirement for a police officer to seek prior approval from the competent authority for conducting any enquiry or inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant under the Prevention of Corruption Act. The lawyers appearing for Naidu had argued that all allegations in the FIR pertain to decisions, instructions or recommendations made by Naidu when he was the chief minister and section 17A was applicable in the case as the inquiry started in December 2021.

The TDP chief had contended that the FIR against him was registered without obtaining the prior approval of the competent authority in the scam case, and, therefore, his arrest was illegal. He had moved the top court challenging the Andhra Pradesh High Court order dismissing his petition for quashing the FIR against him in connection with the alleged scam. While dismissing his petition, the high court had said criminal proceedings ought not to be scuttled at the initial stage and quashing an FIR should be an exception rather than the rule.

Godavari villages....

Continued from Page 1

Similarly, half a kilometre away from this venue on the other side of Juvvalapalem road, a smaller cockfight arrangement has been made, which is also hosting a few other gambling activities such as 'gundu aata' (board game) and

Though the majority of the participants are men, a few women, children and families also showed up at the cockfights as part of Sankranti celebrations.

The cockfights and gambling are expected to last for three days until the end of the festival not only in Godavari districts but also in a few others such as Krishna, NTR and others.

Maldives asks...

Continued from Page 1

The request for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel comes amid a diplomatic row between the two nations in the backdrop of derogatory comments posted by three deputy ministers of the Muizzu government against Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Muizzu suspended the three ministers after their social media postings, which stirred concern in India and calls for a boycott by Indian tourists who ranked highest in numbers followed by Russia. Chinese tourists figured third.

During his just-concluded state visit to China, Muizzu sought to align Maldives closer to Beijing.
Speaking to the press on

Saturday after returning from China, President Muizzu indirectly attacked India. Without naming any

country, he said, "We may be small, but that doesn't give you the license to bully us.

He also announced plans to reduce the country's dependency on India, including securing imports of essential food commodities and medicine and consumables from other countries.

"We aren't in anyone's backyard. We are an independent and sovereign state, he said, addressing the reporters gathered at the Velana International Airport. He said that no country

has the right to exert influence over the domestic affairs of a country, regardless of its He vowed that he would

not allow any external influence on the domestic affairs of the Maldives. Male is also reviewing more than 100 bilateral

agreements with New Delhi signed by the previous government here.



Sri Goda Kalyanam' held

PNS TIRUPATI

Andal Sri Goda Kalyanam was observed on Sunday at Annamacharya Kalamandiram in Tirupati to mark the end of the auspicious month of Dhanurmasam.

During Dhanurmasam, under the auspices of the TTD Alwar Divyaprabandha Project, Tiruppavai discourses were delivered by eminent scholars for a month across all 216 centres in the country.

On this occasion, Dr

Dwaram Lakshmi rendered Pasurams in a melodious manner. Similarly, the dance program organized by Kumari Bhanuja troupe from Tirupati was impressive. Chakravarty Ranganathan, a famous scholar of Tirupati, delivered the

Tiruppavai Pravachans. TTD FACAO Balaji, AEO of Dharmic Projects. Śriramulu, Superintendent. Ramachandra, Alwar Divya Prabandha Project Coordinator. Purushottam and devotees participated in this programme.

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Grand start to cockfights, defying ban

Gambling

also in full swing

in Ampapuram,

Despite the High Court ban, cockfights began at several places in Krishna and NTR districts on Sunday as part of the Sankranthi celebrations. Apart from the bloodsport, several gambling activities are also rampant during the three days of the festival.

However, no cops were seen at the cockfight arenas. Even the Revenue department officials hesitate to take any action to prevent their conduct. Several YSRCP MLAs are organising cockfights through the party's local leaders. Most importantly, sarpanches, corporators, and MPTC and ZPTC members are supervising the game and gambling activities at the cockfight are-

Ampapuram of Bapulapadu mandal in Gannavaram constituency is one of the biggest cockfight arenas in the erstwhile Krishna district. VVIPs from both the Telugu States were seen witnessing the bloodsport in the district. The organisers have made elaborate arrangements for the visitors to watch the event. Arrangements for gundata,







playing cards and other games ave been made.

Cockfights are going on in Punadipadu, Edupugallu, Thotlavalluru, Pamarru, Gudivada, Pedana, Bantumilli, Kruthivennu, Machilipatnam

and other areas in Krishna dis-

In NTR district, Kothuru Tadepalli, Jakkampudi, Ajith Singh Nagar (Ambapuram), Kondapalli, Bhavanipuram, Mylavaram, Vissannapet, and

Rs.50,000.

In the absence of Police, Revenue, and Animal Husbandry department officials, the organisers publicly displayed flexes of cockfights in many areas. According to sources, punters, including those who came from Chennai, Hyderabad, Bengaluru and other cities, bet on the roosters. Bids on each rooster ranged in many big arenas between Rs.50,000 and Rs.5 lakh.

Anticipating a heavy rush of spectators in the next two days, the organisers pitched tents, arranged barricades, erected fencing and even deployed bouncers as part of crowd control measures. LED screens have been set up in agriculture fields for people to watch the sport. Liquor was sold at a few places besides biryani and other food items.

The cockfight organisers have given sub-leases for vehicle parking, biryani points, and liquor sale points. Similarly, gamblers have arranged special tables for playing cards at the mango garden at Kothuru Tadepalli near Vijayawada.

Ambati steals the show at Sankranti celebrations

Grooves to the beats of popular Telugu film numbers

PNS VIJAYAWADA

The vibrant festivities of Sankranti took an electrifying turn as Water Resources Minister Ambati Rambabu showcased his rhythmic prowess during the Bhogi celebrations on Sunday. The Minister led a spirited group of tribal women and enthusiastic youngsters, grooving to the beats of popular Tollywood numbers. Bedecked in a casual T-shirt, Rambabu's spirited dance moves echoed through the air, drawing cheers from

his ardent supporters.
Amid the flickering flames of the Bhogi fire, marking the commencement of the threeday Sankranti festival, the Minister's lively performance added a touch of exuberance to the festivities. This isn't the first time the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) leader has captivated audiences with his dance moves. Last year, his Sankranti dance became a

media. Interestingly, the steps performed by Rambabu found their way into the limelight when actor Prudhvi Raj replicated them in actor-politician Pawan Kalyan's supernatural fantasy film 'Bro.' Portraying the character Shyambabu in the movie, Prudhvi Raj imitated the minister's dance sequence. This act, however,

viral sensation on social

who accused Pawan Kalyan of intentionally mocking and demeaning him throughout

Fuming over the perceived insult, Rambabu had strongly criticised his political rival Pawan Kalyan. He alleged that the role and dance sequence were deliberately designed to belittle him. In response, the YSRCP leader even went on to announce his intention to make films on Pawan Kalyan.

Cockfighting, gambling cast shadow over traditional festivities

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Despite the city police issuing stern warnings and maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for any unlawful activities during Sankranti celebrations, cockfighting and widespread gambling have started in specific rural areas, casting a shadow over the traditional festivities with a subdued atmosphere. In stark contrast to the vibrant colours and celebratory spirit of Sankranti, the rural villages of Rambilli, Elamanchili, and Munagapaka, as well as the urban areas of Anandapuram, Sabbavaram, and Pendurthi, unfold a different spectacle. Organisers, emboldened by years of lax enforcement, openly defy the legal ban on cockfighting. Elaborate arenas and gambling dens are erected under the guise of Sankranti celebraA web of illicit financial activity feeds illegal operations through digital payment mode

tions, with intricate escape routes planned to evade police

Behind the scenes, a web of illicit financial activity feeds the illegal operations through digital payment mode. Punters withdraw large sums from banks, secure risky loans, and even utilise dedicated loan sharks within the gambling camps to fuel their bets. This financial ecosystem fuels the demand for prized fighting birds, sourced from neighbouring States and meticu-lously trained with specialised diets and swimming lessons. With the upcoming general elections, the situation deteriorates further. Allegations of political leaders striking deals with organisers and pressuring the police to turn a blind eye due to concerns about potential electoral repercussions. This blatant disregard for the law adds a layer of complexity to the already challenging situation. The organisers exploit the cultural significance of cockfighting in certain communities, masking the illegal activity as an integral part of Sankranti celebrations. However, the reality is far from a harmless tradition. It involves animal cruelty, financial risks, and potential social unrest.

Tiruvuru are the places where

the banned game is rampant.

ters exchanged lakhs of rupees.

At big arenas, bets worth

Rs.50,000 to Rs.1 lakh are

rampant. In smaller fields,

Even on the first day, pun-

Curbing this illegal and ethically reprehensible practice requires a coordinated effort. While the police department conducts occasional raids, their efforts are insufficient. Increased collaboration between Police, Revenue, and Animal Husbandry departments is crucial for effective patrolling and enforcement. The joyous spirit of Sankranti should not be marred by the darkness of illegal activities. Protecting animals, maintaining law and order, and upholding public welfare should be the priority during this festive season. It is time to reclaim the true essence of Sankranti -- a celebration of harvest and hope, not a breeding ground for ani-mal cruelty and illegal gam-

Land grabbing by benami realtors alleged

PNS ANAKAPALLI

A real estate project in Anakapalli has sparked controversy over alleged land grab-bing by benami realtors affiliated with the ruling party. The project, situated far from the district centre on Avakhandam crop fields, raises concerns about environmental degradation and disregard for proper procedures.

It is alleged that lands were acquired from farmers without the requisite approvals, and development work for housing plots commenced without obtaining necessary permissions, including the Non-Agriculture Land Assessment (NALA) fee. Furthermore, reports indicate that gravel is transported from hilly areas at night to raise the land, adding to the list of unauthorised activities. There are accusations that a prominent leader of the ruling party is orchestrating a significant venture in collaboration with a well-known real

estate company.

Following the reorganisation of districts, the value of land in and around the new district headquarters, Anakapalli, has witnessed a substantial increase. The demand for houses has surged, leading to soaring property

prices. Presently, a cent of land along the roads in Anakapalli and its surroundings is commanding prices ranging from Rs.10 lakh to

Rs.15 lakh. Farmers in the catchment area, initially reluctant to sell, expressed concerns that the Avakhandam lands might not be suitable for anything other than agriculture due to their flood-prone nature. However, under alleged pressure and the promise of favorable prices, many farmers sold their lands to the realtors involved. Notably, permissions

for non-agricultural use (land conversion) have not been obtained.

Department has declared these lands unsuitable for habitation and building construction due to their lower elevation

Environment

and susceptibility to flooding. Previous attempts to develop layouts in the Āvakhand land were halted without the after locals raised objections. Despite environmental concerns and past

setbacks, the benami realtors, allegedly backed by a ruling party leader, continue their ventures without the required permissions.

Illegal gravel extraction is reportedly taking place in near-by areas of Kunchangi, Jamadulapalem, Kondakoppaka, Bhatlapudi, and Golagam. The gravel transportation contract, essential for land raising and road construction, has purportedly been awarded to local ruling party leaders. Locals have filed complaints with Revenue authorities, but allegations of inaction and indifference per-

While Revenue authorities and VMRDA permissions are typically mandatory for real estate ventures on agricultural lands, concerns have been raised about officials shying away from taking necessary action due to political influence. Despite complaints, no concrete steps have been taken to address the reported illegal activities.

When questioned by The Pioneer regarding the ongoing real estate venture works without permits, VRO Nagaraju acknowledged receiving complaints. He stated that notices have been issued to the concerned real estate company, instructing them to cease venture works until the necessary conversion fees are paid.

Mayor, Municipal Commissioner convey Sankranti wishes

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Vijayawada Municipal Corporation Mayor Rayana Bhagyalakshmi Commissioner Swapnil Dinkar Pundkar, on Sunday, wished the people of Vijayawada city a happy and prosperous Sankranti.

City Mayor Bhagyalakshmi said that the Sankranti festival is celebrated with fervour. She explained that the sun entering Makara Raasi is known Makara as Sankarmanam and is called Sankranti.

Swapnil Dinkar said that Sankranti is celebrated for three days and the first day is Bhogi, which was observed on Sunday.

The second day is Makar Sankranti, and the third day is Kanuma. He asked the public to cooperate with the VMC by avoiding littering of streets during the celebra-

No Spandana today

The weekly Spandana grievances programme, organised on every Monday, will not take place today January 15) due to Sankranti festival.

The Vijayawada Municipal Commissioner said here on Sunday the Spandana grievance programme, which is a platform for solving people's problems, is organised every Monday at the main and zonal offices of the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation.

He asked the people to note the holiday and not to come to VMC for the Spandana pro-

CONCERNS OVER UNSAFE

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Amidst the bustling festival season, the roads of Visakhapatnam are witnessing several buses operating beyond their capacity, raising serious concerns about safety. The Sankranti festival has drawn travellers from cities such as Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru, and Bhubaneswar, leading to a spike in the number of accidents due to overcrowded and improperly managed private buses. Thousands of festival-goers, seeking alternative transportation options due to high demand, are turning to private buses. However, reports suggest that some operators are taking advantage of the situation by deploying old and unfit vehicles lacking essential features, including proper seating, functional air conditioning, and, in some instances, operat-

ing without the necessary per-

Despite Transport department regulations mandating at least two drivers and one helper

for long-distance journeys, numerous buses are observed operating with only one driver, particularly on festival days. Some public buses, including Chennai, those operated by the RTC, also seem to be violating this rule, compromising passenger safety. Additionally, regulations requiring two drivers for journeys exceeding ignored.

six hours are reportedly being The situation is further worsened by allegations of buses intended for passenger transport being used to transport goods, a clear violation of safety guidelines. Critics argue that authorities are not taking adequate

action against such practices,

potential dangers. Reports of artificial ticket shortages, online manipulation, and price hikes are emerging as unscrupulous individuals exploit the high demand during the festival sea-

son. Authorities are being urged to conduct inspections to curb bus operators such malpractices taking advantage and ensure fair of rush by deploying pricing for travold and unfit The Transport vehicles

Department is facing criticism for inadequate oversight, with some bus owners reportedly operating without paying taxes based on distance travelled. Instances of buses crossing district tax limits and transporting passengers to other states without proper authorisation have also been reported. In contrast, the RTC is reported to be running 250 special buses during the festival, with specific routes catering to increased demand. However, private buses, numbering up to 200, continue to operate to and from Visakhapatnam, serving destinations like Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Vijayawada, Tenali, Guntur, and Tirupati. Transport

Deputy Commissioner G.C. Rajaratnam of the Road Transport Authority (RTA) revealed a crackdown on private travellers starting last Saturday. Surveillance focused on private vehicles arriving in Visakhapatnam from the Vijayawada route. Rajaratnam reported, "By Sunday, we had filed 12 cases. Passengers allegedly paid an additional Rs 500 to Rs 1,000 for these private buses. Based on their feedback, it appears they chose private travel due to unavailability of confirmed tickets in public transport," as conveyed to The

Sankranthi: APSRTC operates 4,293 special bus services

PNS VIJAYAWADA

In view of the Sankranti festival, the Andhra Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (APSRTC) operated approximately 4,293 special bus services until January 13. These services were provided by the Andhra Pradesh Public Transport Department (APPTD) to handle the

passenger rush from various places, includ-Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and to Chennai, Vijayawada, between

January 10 and 13. Of the total special bus services, a majority of 1,895 special services were run from Hyderabad to Vijayawada. Most of the people who hail from the State are settled in Hyderabad and they usually visit their hometowns during the festival of Sankranti. The RTC started the special bus services on January 6, but a huge rush was registered from January 10 to

said RTC Executive Director (Operations) KS Brahmananda Reddy.

He said that the corporation has planned to run as many as 6,975 special bus services before and after the festival. As many as 3,570 bus services were planned before the festival. However, due to the increase in

the number of passengers, the RTC ran 4,293 bus services, he said. Of them, 1,895 serreservations vices were from made for the Hyderabad, 338 from Bengaluru and 60 bus services were

from Chennai. Another 2,000 special bus services were operated in the remaining important cities and towns to

Vijayawada, he explained. Further, he stated that the return journey of passengers would begin on January 16 and would continue up to January 18. So, the RTC has made elab orate arrangements to avoid inconvenience for the bus com-

Maternal health initiative launched

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Pregnancy is a transformative journey, and proper care is essential for the health and well-being of both the mother and the baby. Kamineni Baby Bliss is designed to cater to every aspect of pregnancy, offering expectant mothers a seamless and reassuring experience. The programme encompasses state-of-the-art obstetric and gynaecological services, led by a team of highly qualified and experienced specialists, says Dr D Santhi Priya, Consultant Obstetrics, Gynaecologist &

Laparoscopic Surgeon. The doctor says recognizing the paramount importance of comprehensive pregnancy care, the hospital aims to revolutionize maternal health with this holistic and personalized program. Services Included:



Experienced Obstetricians, State-of-the-Art Ultrasound Scans, Blood Tests for Mothers Neonatal Infants, Personalized Prenatal Nutrition

& Exercise Plans, Delivery. She emphasizes the significance of specialized care during pregnancy. She states, "Pregnancy is a unique and delicate phase in a woman's life, and ensuring the best possible care is essential. Kamineni Baby Bliss is a testament to our commitment to ensuring a joyous and healthy pregnancy journey for every mother. We believe in providing personalized care that goes beyond medical excellence, focusing on the emotional and physical well-being of expectant mothers.

Quality concerns arise over road construction projects PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

Criticism is mounting over the alleged disregard for quality standards in the construction of roads, raising concerns about the transparency of the process. Accusations have surfaced that officials are conducting activities in a clandestine manner, bypassing established procedures.

Under the supervision of the reater Visakhapatnam Greater Municipal Corporation (GVMC), ongoing road construction projects in the city are facing scrutiny. Recently, the reconstruction of the double road in front of Shivaji Park, spanning wards 17, 20, and 22 of the East constituency, funded by the 15th Finance Commission, has come under fire.

Tenders were issued for a 650-metre road from



struction is expected to

progress incrementally, ensur-

ing proper thickness as per ten-der rules. The asphalt layer

Shivajipalem Saibaba Gudi to Ramalakshmi Apartment Junction, with a budget of Rs 2.4 crore. However, concerns have been raised about the quality of construction and the hasty completion of the project, causing vehicles to face difficulties on the poorly rolled surface.

Typically, road construction projects should be supervised by the Assistant Engineer (AE) or Work Inspector responsible for the respective ward in the Engineering Department. roller. Compliance with asphalt quality and stone size, in accordance with standards, is expected. Moreover, road con-

must be promptly and adequately rolled with a hydraulic

Regrettably, the construction of the double road in front of Shivaji Park has been reported to deviate significantly from these standards. Because of this non-compliance, the roads are deteriorating rapidly, forming silos under the pressure of vehicles. Residents fear that the

In another instance, concerns have been raised regardmain road in Pedjalaripet, undertaken at a cost of Rs. 93 lakh. Locals allege that the road, intended to be four inches thick, falls short in many places, measuring less than two inches. Additionally, it is claimed that the proper rolling of the asphalt after mixing has been neglected, leaving the edges of the road insufficiently rolled. The hurried construction has led to doubts about the road's durability, prompting questions about the silence of engineering officials.

Citizens are calling for Vigilance and Enforcement officials to investigate these irregularities.

he pioneer



COCKFIGHTS GO ON DESPITE POLICE WARNING

PNS BHIMAVARAM/ELURU

Disregarding the police caution, the cockfights and other gambling were organised unabatedly at various places in WG EG and Krishna district

on Sunday.

A huge arena was constructed at Pedaamiram village in Bhimavaram mandal to organise the cockfights. A giant LED screen was also installed to exhibit the cockfights. Crores of rupees changed hands on Sunday in the cockfights and other gambling at various places.

Besides the blood sport, other gambling like poker, gundata and kothata were also organised. Sources said that the cockfight organizers have enjoyed the patronage of local political leaders and that is why the police adopted a lenient attitude to check the blood

The cockfights were orga-



Veeravasaram, Iragavaram, Yelamanchili, Narasapuram, Palakollu and Achanta in the WG district. The cockfight arenas were constructed in open areas and cockfights and other gambling were organized openly. Interferingly floodlights were also installed at the arenas to organize the cockfights during the night

A large number of people including some NRIs, industrinized in a big way at alists and film personalities were among those who watched the cockfights on Sunday in the WG district. At Siddhantam in Penugond mandal, an ASI and a consta-

try to stop the cockfights. In the Eluru district, emboldened by the police disregarding the curbing of cockfights, the cockfight organizers erected arenas in over 250 places. The organizers have claimed that they have got permission to organize cock-

ble visited the area but did not

fights from the police. When contacted, the police said that permissions were given to organize cockfights without tying knives to the legs of roosters and betting money. The cockfights were rampant in Denduluru, Unguturu, Jangareddygudem, Chintalapudi, Bhimadole, Nuzvid and Polavaram mandals in the Eluru district.

In Krishna district, a cockfight arena was constructed like a cinema set by spending lakhs of rupees in Gannavaram mandal in 25 acres of private land where flexi banners of ruling party leaders were erected. A special gallery was also erected for VVIPs to watch the

blood sport. The vehicular traffic on the busy Chennai-Kolkata highway was disrupted at Gannavaram as hundreds of people rushed in cars. A large number of people came from neighbouring Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana to take part in the cockfights.

Rs 25 lakh eco-tourism project unveiled in Krishnapuram

PNS VISAKHAPATNAM

In a bid to enhance the tourism potential of the picturesque Krishnapuram pine groves near Lambasingi, Andhra Kashmir, Forest officials have initiated a comprehensive ecotourism project. The project, funded with an initial allocation of Rs.25 lakh, aims to attract more tourists to the

Krishnapuram pine groves have long been a favored destination for tourists. Travellers en route to Lambasingi, Kothapalli waterfalls, Paderu, and Araku frequently stop at these groves, capturing picturesque moments and taking a leisurely break. Recognising the growing popularity of the location, the Forest Department has embarked on the development of an ecotourism project spanning 15 acres within the Krishnapuram pine plantations

Forest officials have already begun work on creating essential facilities for tourists at the Krishnapuram eco-tourism

project. Initial developments include the construction of internal roads and an entrance arch. Tenders have been issued for the construction of toilets, a restaurant, running water facilities, and a coffee house, with work scheduled to commence in the next fifteen days. The first phase of the project

In the pipeline are plans for tree huts, a viewpoint, and permanent rooms to be construct-

will see the installation of 15

single and 10 double tents to

accommodate visitors.

ed in subsequent phases of the project. The eco-tourism site aims to cater to tourists yearround, offering various sports and trekking paths for their enjoyment. The designated forest meals area will be adorned with flower plants and crotons, providing a charming setting. Additionally, the forest department is organising open dinner events and entertainment programmes.

The eco-tourism project is designed to be accessible throughout the year, with ample parking facilities and a 24-hour task force ensuring the safety of tourists. Forest officials are optimistic that development of Krishnapuram pine plantations as a tourist hub will receive a positive response from visitors travelling to the region. As the project progresses, it is expected to not only boost tourism in the area but also contribute to the conservation and sustainable util-

isation of the Krishnapuram

MP Margani Bharat Ram participates in Bhogi celebrations

PNS RAJAHMUNDRY

Local MP Margni Bharat Ram along with his wife, daughters and parents participated in the sacred Bhogi bonfire held at his apartment near the ONGC office here on Sunday.

The MP's wife Mona, his two daughters and his parents took part in the Bhogi bonfire in the early morning. A large number of YSRCP activists and leaders also took part in the programme. A festive buzz prevailed on the premises and they exchanged pleas-

The MP said that he invoked God to bless the state with prosperity and a bright future in the year 2024.



Mother of 'Kodikatthi' Srinu stages dharna

the court to give evidence, the

court has not granted bail to

Srinu. She said that she has

become old and she is in dire

Golla Arun, Dwaraka and

Mallela Venkata Rao were

among those who took part in

the Dharna. The leaders of

Dalit associations assured

It may be mentioned here

that Srinu attacked the then

Leader of the Opposition in the

Legislative Assembly Y S Jagan

Mohan Reddy with a sharp-

edged knife, which was used to

tie to one of the legs of roost-

ers during a cockfight in the

Visakhapatnam airport on

October 25, 2018. Jagan Mohan

Reddy suffered a bleeding

injury in the incident on his

shoulder. The accused has not

been granted bail since then.

Savitri of their support.

Dalit association's leaders

need of her son's presence.

PNS ■ GUNTUR

Savitri, the mother of 'Kodikatthi' Srinu, with the support of Dalit Association leaders, staged a dharna near the Ambedkar statue at Lodge Centre here on Sunday demanding that Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy attend the court to depose in connection with the attack on him.

Savitri and the Dalit leaders garlanded the statue of BR Ambedkar and submitted a memorandum to the statue symbolically urging the release of Srinu from prison. They raised slogans demanding Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy to attend the court and ensure the release of Srinu.

Talking to the media, Savitri lamented that since Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy has not attended before

Teenage girl run over by lorry PNS ELURU

In a tragic incident, a teenage girl was killed and her injured when a speeding lorry ran over them when they were drawing rangoli in front of their house at Kanukollu village in Mandavalli mandal on Sunday.

Police said that the siblings Pangilla Thejaswi (16) and her elder sister Pallavi Durga were drawing rangoli in front of their house on the occasion of the Bhogi festival. A speeding brick-laden lorry ran

The neighbours shifted the injured sibling to a private hospital in Gudivada where Thejaswi was declared dead while Pallavi Durga was undergoing treatment. The deceased Tejaswi and injured Pallavi Durga were studying Intermediate at a private college in Mudinepalli.

The lorry driver Prakasa Rao was held by the police. A pall of gloom descended on the village with the death of a girl. The villagers staged a dharna on the highway demanding the police get the lorry driver punished rigorously by the court.

The father of the deceased girl Pangilla Nagababu is a

RRR PREDICTS 135 SEATS FOR TDP-JSP ALLIANCE

PNS BHIMAVARAM

YSRCP rebel MP Raghu Ramakrishna Raju has predicted that the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Jana Sena Party (JSP) alliance would win 135 seats in the coming elections. He also predicted that the TDP-JSP candidates

would win in all the seven Assembly segments in the Narsapuram Lok Sabha constituency. The YSRCP rebel MP lamented that

he had suffered a great difficulty which no MP might have suffered in the country. "I could not visit my constituency as an MP for nearly four years. No MP in the coun-

try might have faced this," regretted. He said that he had vehemently opposed the Jagan Mohan Reddy-headed government's proposal of selling Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam lands in 2020. Jagan Mohan Reddy had

also opposed the same when he

was in Opposition, he claimed. However, after being unable to face the pressure, the government repealed the GO, he stat-

Though the government repealed the GO, the Chief Minister had grown a grudge against him, he said. RRR made it clear that he had

also opposed the sand policy of the YSRCP government. A lorry load of sand was sold at Rs 12,000 during the TDP government and the same is being sold at Rs 40,000 in the YSRCP regime, that

is too, on the recommendation of YSRCP leaders, lashed out. The YSRCP government's sand policy has crippled the construction sector, he deplored.

He also predicted that YS Sharmila and her husband Anil would influence the YSRCP vote bank. The couple might take away the Congress vote bank from the YSRCP, he

Council Chairman Moshenu opens bridge at Taderu

PNS BHIMAVARAM

Legislative Council Chairman K Moshenu Raju along with Whip and MLA Grandhi Srinivas inaugurated the newly constructed bridge at Taderu on Sunday.

The bridge was constructed at a cost of Rs 2.30 crore. Speaking on the occasion he said that the new bridge had come as a Sankrati gift to the people of the area. He appreciated Whip Grandhi Srinivas for his efforts to complete the construction of the bridge in three

Moshenu Raju said that CC roads and drainages were constructed in many areas and development works were taken up in a big way in Bhimavaram

He appealed to the people to give another opportunity to Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy to work as the Chief Minister.

He said that a 100-bed hospital was constructed and approach roads were being constructed to the bridges. The after January 20. The construc-Legislative Council chairman

said six acres of land were acquired for the setting up of a compost fertilizer yard and funds were also allocated for the He said that 2000 TIDCO

houses were handed over to the beneficiaries under the first phase adding that in the second phase, 900 houses would be handed over to the beneficiaries

tion of 2,500 TIDCO houses is in its final state, Moshenu Raju stated.

He said that development works were carried out in Bhimavaram town at a cost of Rs 100 crore. DCMS chairman Venkata Swamy, AMC chairman Kotipalli Babu, MPP Pericharla Vijay Narasimha Raju and other leaders were among those who were present.

Arrangements in full swing for Ambedkar statue unveiling

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Under the supervision of Municipal Administration and Urban Development Special Chief Secretary Y Sri Municipal Lakshmi, Commissioners Swpanil Pundkar Dinakar (Vijayawada), Dinesh Kumar (Rajamahendravaram), Bhargav Tej (Kurnool) and other urban development authority chiefs are tirelessly working for the unveiling of Dr BR Ambedkar's 125-foot statue and Smrithi Vanam, set up in 18.81 acres of land in

Vijayawada. The inaugural ceremony will take place on January 19 and Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy will be inaugurating the Ambedkar statue and Smrithi Vanam. The VMC authorities have made elaborate arrangements for the function.

The Smrithi Vanam has

Park bombings took place

before Modi took charge and

that Pakistan's ISI tried to keep

India under its control.

However, that is not the situa-

Speaking to the media on

"Terrorism has been rooted

Sunday, Kishan said that there

are no communal riots, curfews,

out from India after Modi

became the PM. Pakistan used

AK-47s and RDXs now.

tion now, he added.

PNS HYDERABAD



been decked up with different types of fountains and a museum displaying the life story of Dr BR Ambedkar.

Speaking on the occasion, Sri Lakhsmi said that they were planning to make necessary arrangements without any hurdles for the inauguration of the Smrithi Vanam and Ambedkar statue. With the cooperation of NTR district and VMC administrations, the arrangements are in full swing, she added.



ISI agents camped in Hyd before Modi took over



Joseph Thambi Tirunallu celebration to conclude today

PNS VIJAYAWADA

Bro. Joseph Thambi Tirunallu is being celebrated grandly at Peda Avutapalli of Unguturu mandal near Gannavaram in Krishna district.

The celebration began on January 13 and will end on January 15. However, the rush of people would continue for another two to three days.

To attend Tirunallu celebration, Christians have been coming from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Telangana States. Some of them stay at the shrine for three days to offer special

On the second day, on Sunday, Guntur Bishop Chinnabattini Bhagaiah performed special prayers at Thambi's gravestone. After that, he offered the 'Divya Bali' at the Kala Vedika on the premises of the Thambi shrine. Later, Guntur Bishop Bhagaiah gave blessings to the devotees.

Capuchin Provincial Mariya Das P, Shrine Rector Paladugu Joseph, Abhilash Gopu, and others participated in the

Interstate bike-lifting gang busted; 22 bikes recovered

PNS CHITTOOR

The police busted an interstate motorcycle stealing gang by arresting two persons and recovered 22 motorcycles worth over Rs 20 lakh at V Kota.

DSP Sudhakar Reddy told the media on Sunday that on a tip the V.Kota CI LIngappa along with his staff conducted checking of vehicles on the V.Kota-KGF road near

Patrapali check post. The police held two persons who were suspiciously coming on a motorcycle. During the questioning, they confessed



to stealing 22 motorcycles. One of the two persons, arrested by the police, belongs to Karnataka state.

They were addicted to vices and to earn money easily started stealing motorcycles. They

had stolen 22 motorcycles in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. They sold 21 motorcycles out of the 22 stolen bikes. The two accused were being produced before the court, the DSP said.



BJP Telangana unit president Kishan Reddy, along with MP Dr K Laxman and others flying kite while participating in Kite Festival on Necklace Road in Hyderabad on Sunday

to spend thousands of crores to create destruction in India. However, the people of Pakistan are now fighting for a piece of roti. We successfully isolated Pakistan under Modi's leadership. Interestingly, Pakistanis are killing themselves now," he

said. He said that Modi re-wrote history and showed to Pakistan that Indians will kill 10 Pakistanis if Pakistan kills an

He said that 46,000 Indians were killed in Jammu and

Indian.

Kashmir. India gave terrorists a

stunning blow through its surgical strikes inside Pakistani

He said that the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya was destroyed by Babur. Later, they constructed Babri Masjid in Babur's memory. In 1990, Lal Krishna Advani launched a Rath Yatra to construct the Ram Mandir. Since then, the BJP has been trying to construct Ram Mandir. However, some political parties do not like people living in peace. Pseudo-secularists were opposing the construction of the

yodhya Ram Mandir, he said. Kishan said that the Congress is not in a position to understand people's aspirations. The Congress graph is falling by the day. The Congress is not in a

position to retain its LS seats in the coming elections. People have decided to make Modi the PM once again, he said. "Ram Mandir is not for elec-

tions. Many sacrificed their lives to construct the Ram Mandir. The construction of the Ram Mandir is the result of the sacrifices of many people. The BJP fought a long battle for Ram Mandir. Nobody will stop Sonia Gandhi if she wants to do Ram Seva. Sonia Gandhi was sent an invitation and we suggest that she must come to Ayodhya and attend the Prana Prathista of Lord Rama. Congress leaders are pseudo-secularists. The Centre has allotted Rs 100 crore for developing the Bhadradri

Truck driver arrested for offering 'namaz' on roadside in Gujarat

truck driver was arrested for allegedly offering 'namaz' (prayers) on the side of a busy road without permission in Gujarat's Banaskantha district, police said Sunday. A case Awas registered against Bachal Khan (37) after a video surfaced on social media, in which he was seen offering prayers in front of his truck parked on the side of a busy crossroad near Palanpur city, an official from Palanpur (west) police station said. The

accused offered 'namaz' after stopping his truck at a busy crossroad on a highway on Friday, he said, adding that someone shot a video which went viral on social media, prompting police action. A first information report (FIR) was registered against Khan under sections 283 (danger in public way), 186 (obstructing public servant in discharging duties) and 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), he said. The accused was placed under arrest on Saturday, the



PIL on demolition: Gauhati HC grants 4 weeks to Assam govt

he Gauhati High Court has granted four weeks to the Assam gover undated status report in connection with the demolition of houses of people who were accused of setting a police station on fire two years ago. Hearing a PIL, Justice Kaushik Goswami, in an order, said senior government advocate D Nath produced a communication, dated January 10 this year written by the joint secretary to the state

government, "wherein it is stated that the one-man inquiry committee had submitted the inquiry report to the government in the Home & Political Department on January 4 2024". The government counsel sought four weeks to file an updated status report. which the court accepted. "Praver is allowed. List the matter on February 16. 2024," the court said. The Batadrava Police Station in Nagaon district was set on fire on May 21, 2022, by a mob following the custodial death of a local fish trader. Safikul Islam (39), who was picked up by the police



Case against six for duping Mumbai senior citizen of Rs 31L

he Navi Mumbai police have registered a case against six persons for allegedly duping a senior citizen of nearly Rs 31 lakh after luring him with "investment schemes" offering high returns, an official said on Sunday. The 66-year-old complainant, who lives in Koparkhairane, told the police that the alleged fraudsters first

communicated with him and enticed him to invest Rs 31.1 lakh in various "schemes" claiming that he would get handsome returns, the official said, citing the complaint. The retired man approached the Cyber police station after he did not receive any money in return despite follow-ups, he said. The police registered a cheating case against the six on Friday and a probe is underway, the



Modi govt will ensure well-being of armed forces veterans: Rajnath

Noting that armed forces veterans hold a special place in the heart of every Indian, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said the Narendra Modi government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure their wellbeing, be it implementing the "one rank, one pension" scheme or providing healthcare and reemployment.

Indian soldiers rise above family, caste and creed in the service of the nation as they know if the country is secure, everything is safe, he said, adding their integrity and professionalism is respected and recognised not just by the whole country but by the entire world.

Addressing an Armed Forces Veterans' Day event at the Air Force Station in Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, Singh said it is a collective responsibility of the people to treat soldiers and their dependents as their own family members and ensure that they stand with them always.

He appealed to the people to further strengthen their will to honour the retired as well as the serving soldiers.

Singh interacted with the armed forces veterans attending the event and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to them for their selfless service to the moth-



He emphasised that the veterans hold a special place in the heart of every Indian, according to an official statement.

"Our soldiers rise above family, caste and creed and only think about the nation. They effectively carry out their duties as they know for a fact that if the nation is secure, everything is safe. This gives them the moral strength to face every challenge," he said.

Singh reiterated the defence ministry's commitment towards the welfare of ex-servicemen.

From implementing the "one rank, one pension" scheme to providing healthcare and reemployment, the government led by Prime Minister Modi has

Indian soldiers rise above family, caste and creed in the service of the nation as they know if the country is secure, everything is safe, he said, adding their integrity and professionalism is respected and recognised not just by the whole country but by the entire world.Indian soldiers rise above family, caste and creed in the service of the nation as they know if the country is secure, everything is safe, he said, adding their integrity and professionalism is respected and recognised not just by the whole country but by the entire world.

been leaving no stone unturned to ensure the wellbeing of veterans, he said.

Singh said the bravery, integrity, professionalism and

humanity of the Indian soldiers is respected and recognised not just by the whole country but by the entire world, according to the statement. "The bravery of First and Second World Wars are remembered with respect across the globe. We, Indians, not only respect our own soldiers, but also those of other countries.

"In the 1971 war, more than 90,000 soldiers of Pakistan surrendered to India. We could have treated them in any way we wanted. But, such is our culture and tradition that we adopted a completely humanitarian attitude and sent them back to their country with full respect. Such treatment to enemy soldiers is one of the golden chapters of humanity," he said.

On the occasion, the defence minister laid a wreath at the War Memorial and paid homage to the heroes for their supreme sacrifice and dedicated service.

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Maintenance Command Air Marshal Vibhas Pande and Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Station, Kanpur Air Commodore M K Praveen were among the dignitaries present on the occasion. The Armed Forces Veterans' Day is celebrated on January 14 every year to recognise the service rendered by the first Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Field Marshal K M Cariappa, who retired on

FCI must to be corruption-free, win people's trust: Piyush Goyal

PNS NEW DELHI

Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday asked state-owned FCI to adopt modern technologies in its overall functioning, reduce the cost of operations and prevent any wrong-doings besides winning the trust of farmers and poor beneficiaries under the public distribution system.

The Food and Consumer Affairs Minister also asked FCI and its employees not to tolerate corruption in its operations.

He was speaking at the 60th Foundation Day of the Food Corporation of İndia (FCI), the government's nodal agency for procurement and distribution of food grains. The FCI was established on January 14, 1965.

Addressing the event, Goyal complemented the FCI for ensuring that farmers get reasonable prices for their produce and providing food grains to 81 crore people.

He asked the FCI and its employees to focus on three pri-

First, he said, "We should win the trust of our farmers as well as our beneficiaries, which are poor and lower-middleincome people. This should be our first priority to win the trust of the people and we should reach them with sensitivity and sincerity".

He stressed carrying out the procurement, storage and distribution of foodgrains in a

Addressing the event, Goval complemented the FCI for ensuring that farmers get reasonable prices for their produce and providing food grains to 81 crore people.

transparent manner with full

Secondly, Goyal said, "We should adopt technology and digitisation to improve operational efficiency"

Thirdly, the minister said, The amount we are spending, how we can control expenditure and reduce it"

Goyal said the cost could be reduced through route optimisation, mechanised loading and unloading and the adoption of a modern storage system to cut overall operational costs.

He suggested hosting of hackathon to generate ideas in

Goyal asserted that FCI operations would be further strengthened and it would live up to its legacy if the corporation followed these priorities. The minister highlighted that

the FCI is already making efforts to modernise and digitise its entire operations, but needs more to be done.

Goyal urged the FCI employees to make the corporation a world-class organisation.

"We should stop any wrong doing in the operations by using technologies and also taking stringent actions," he said, adding this should be our common efforts and common responsibilities. The minister asserted that a

corruption-free nation and women's empowerment are two key elements to make India a developed country. He said the FCI would play a major part in this endeavour.

Northern border stable but 'not normal': Army

General

PNS SRINAGAR

Lieutenant

The northern border is stable but "not normal", a top Army commander said on Sunday, referring to the situation along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Ladakh region.

Upendra Dwivedi, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Northern Command, said five of the seven friction points in eastern Ladakh, where the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA are locked in a standoff since May 2020, have been resolved and talks are underway for the remaining areas.

The northern border area is stable but it is not normal or I can say it's sensitive," he told

Apparently referring to Pakistan, the Army commander said the neighbouring country has orchestrated the terrorist attacks in the Poonch-

reporters here.



Rajouri region as they did not like the ongoing development work here. "There was pros-perity and improvement in the lives of people in Poonch-Rajouri area. Investments were coming in and people were getting jobs. Our neighbouring country did not like this atmosphere of peace and prosperity. That's why they have been promoting militancy in the area but we have launched counter operations," he said, expressing confidence that they will control militant activities in the coming days.

PM Modi says Pongal reflects the spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' Considered as a welcome symbol

PNS CHENNAI/DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the festival of Pongal reflects the national spirit of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' and the same emotive connect could be witnessed in Kashi-Tamil and Saurashtra-Tamil Sangamam. In his address at the Pongal celebrations held at the residence of Union Minister L Murugan in

the national capital, Modi said festive fervour marked every home in Tamil Nadu and wished joy, prosperity and contentment in the lives of all the people Drawing similarities to India's diversity with 'Kolam,' the prime minister said that when every corner of the country connects emotionally with each other, the nation's strength appears in a



Kolam is a popular art form, which involves making drawings on the ground --at the entrance portion to the house-- using a variety of rice flour. Modi said: "The festival of Pongal reflects the national spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat " The same spirit can be witnessed in the tradition started by Kashi-

and a sign of auspiciousness,

Tamil Sangamam and Saurashtra-Tamil Sangamam which records enthusiastic participation of Tamil people in large numbers. The prime minister said, "This feeling of unity is the biggest force to build a Viksit Bharat by 2047. The main element of the Panch Pran that I have invoked from the Red Fort is to energize the unity of the country and to strengthen the unity.

Quoting saint poet Thiruvalluvar, the prime minister underscored the role of educated citizens, honest businessmen and good crop in nation-building. During Pongal, fresh crop is offered to God which puts Annadata Kisans' at the center of this festive

He underlined the rural, crop and farmer connection of every

SC to Centre: Consider enhancing compensation in hit-and-run accidents

PNS NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has directed the Centre to consider whether the compensation amounts in case of death and grievous injury in hit-and-run accidents can be enhanced annually.

The top court asked the gov-

ernment to an appropriate deci-

sion within eight weeks and posted the matter for further onsideration on April 22. The apex court noted that the Motor Vehicles (MV) Act, 1988 provides that in case of death of

any person resulting from hit-

and-run accident, a compensa-

tion of Rs 2 lakh or such higher amount as may be prescribed by the central government shall

be paid and in case of grievous

injury, the compensation

amount is Rs 50,000.

The top court also asked the police to inform the family members of victims of such accidents about the compensation scheme under the MV Act.

A bench of Justices A S Oka and Pankaj Mithal noted in its order that as per the year-wise reports published by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, 55,942 hit-and-run accidents were reported in 2016, while in 2022, the figure stood at 67,387.

"It is evident from records published by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways of the Government of India from 2016-2022 that there were

55,942 hit and run motor accidents in 2016, which increased to 65,186 in 2017, 69,621 in 2018, and 69,621 in 2019. During COVID-19 period, the number of accidents decreased," it said.

The bench also noted an answer given by the road transport and highways minister in the Lok Sabha in March last year.

"The answer records that in the last five years, there were 660 deaths in hit-and-run cases, and there were 113 injury cases for which compensation of Rs 184.60 lakh was disbursed," the bench said in its January 12

BJP leaders participate in cleanliness campaign in temples

PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP on Sunday launched a nationwide cleanliness drive in temples and surrounding areas, with its president J P Nadda participating in the exercise at Guru Ravidas temple in Karol Bagh here.

Its senior leaders, including Union ministers and chief ministers, picked up the broom in different parts of the country as the BJP looks to build up a fervour in the run up to the consecration of Lord Ram's idol at the Ayodhya temple on January 22. Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat chief ministers Yogi Adityanath and Bhupendra Patel joined the cleanliness campaign in



Ayodhya and Gandhinagar respectively.

Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw attended the exercise at a temple in Baleswar in

Nadda said every BJP member is taking part in the cam-paign in different temples and will also be part of 'bhajan-kirtan' exercises till January 22.

Police bust fake call centre in Mumbai; 10 held

PNS MUMBAI

The Mumbai police raided an illegal call centre in the western suburb of Andheri here and arrested 10 people for allegedly duping US nationals on the pretext of selling them medicines, an official said on Sunday.

The crime branch raided the premises at Summit Business Bay in Andheri on Saturday and apprehended the accused, who have been booked under section 420 (cheating) and other relevant provisions of the Indian Code

Information Technology Act, he said.

The fraudsters allegedly targeted US nationals through VoIP calling and posed as representatives of online pharmaceutical companies, the official said.

The accused took orders for medicines from the victims, who paid them in US dollars, and then did not deliver the medicines, he said. The crime branch seized electronic equipment during the raid, the official said, adding that further probe is underway to find out the extent of the fraud.

PNS NEW DELHI

AI-powered prediction models made accurate predictions within the trial they were developed in, but gave "random predictions" outside of it, according to new research.

Researchers said the study showed that generalisations of predictions of artificial intelligence-based models across different study centers cannot be ensured at the moment and that these models were "highly context-dependent". The results of the study have been published in the journal Science.

Pooling data from across trials too did not help matters, the team found.

The team of researchers, including those from the universities of Cologne (Germany) and Yale (US), were testing the accuracy of AI-driven models in predicting the response of schizophrenic patients to antipsychotic medication across several independent clinical

The current study pertained to the field of precision psychiatry, which makes use of datarelated models for targeted therapies and suitable medica-



Predictions of AI-powered models strictly trial-specific: Study

tions for individuals. "Our goal is to use novel models from the field of AI to

treat patients with mental health problems in a more targeted manner," said Joseph

Kambeitz, Professor of Biological Psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Cologne and the University Hospital Cologne.

'Although numerous initial studies prove the success of such AI models, a demonstration of the robustness of these models has not yet been made," said Kambeitz, adding that safety was of great importance for everyday clinical use.

"We have strict quality requirements for clinical models and we also have to ensure that models in different contexts provide good predictions.

"The models should provide equally good predictions, whether they are used in a hospital in the USA, Germany or Chile," said Kambeitz.

That these AI models have highly limited generalisability was an important signal for clinical practice and shows that further research is needed to improve psychiatric care, the researchers said.

The team is hoping to overcome these obstacles and is currently working on examining large patient groups and data sets to improve the accuracy of AI models, they said.

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Vivid contours

INDIA bloc gathers momentum for LS polls with Kharge as chairperson and Nitish as convener

ust when it seemed that the INDIA bloc was heading towards implosion on account of inflated egos, it has managed to cobble up some semblance of order in the house. A consensus is emerging among the grouping of 28 parties which have joined ranks to take on the Narendra Modi-led BJP in the Lok Sabha elections. In a significant development, the bloc has finalised the name of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as the Opposition grouping's chairperson and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar's nomination as the convener is all but sealed. This move marks a crucial step in unifying the Opposition forces and fostering collaboration among their diverse ideologies. The INDIA bloc was formed to transcend political boundaries and work towards the common goal of taking on the BJP's "divisive politics", which has led to hardships for vulnerable sections of society, especially the Scheduled Castes, tribes and 'Other Backward Classes' (OBC). Kharge is a seasoned leader hailing from an OBC background with a wealth of experi-



ence. His leadership is expected to provide a steady hand to guide the India bloc through political intricacies. Kharge, known for his strong advocacy for social justice and economic equity, brings a wealth of legislative experience as well to the table. As the INDIA chairperson, he is likely to play a pivotal role in shaping the bloc's policies and strategies, ensuring that they are aligned with the all-party vision of a progressive and harmonious India.

Nitish's appointment, assuming he agrees to the responsibility, adds another dimension to this formidable political alliance. A prominent leader from Bihar, Nitish has a track record of successful governance and admin-

istration. Known for his focus on development and governance, his selection underscores the bloc's commitment to effective governance and sustainable development. As the convener, Nitish is expected to play a key role in coordinating the bloc's efforts. His emphasis on inclusive growth and social welfare aligns with its broader goals, fostering a sense of collaboration among the members. While the INDIA bloc represents a promising development in Indian politics, it also faces challenges. The biggest stumbling block is sharing seats, which would be the first challenge for Kharge. His own party is being criticised for high-handedness and selfishness in accommodating regional parties. Building consensus among leaders with differing ideologies and regional interests is no small feat. However, the potential benefits of a united front - efficient governance, improved policy implementation and a stronger voice on the national stage are significant. The bloc's progress is a promising development for the Opposition. As this alliance gains momentum, it holds the potential to bring about a paradigm shift in the BJP's policies. Thanks to the Opposition, the BJP is now thinking about caste census in a positive manner. The coming months will likely witness the INDIA bloc making significant strides, offering a beacon of hope for a harmonious and prosperous India.



Young women participate in the kite festival organised to celebrate Makar Sankranti festival, in Bhopal

Bose's winning goal for Independence



The INA had won its war on the day Netaji persuaded the Indian prisoners of war in Axis hands to quit their servitude to their British masters and come over to the Azad Hind Fauj

have read commentaries on, football and hockey matches, where the focus has mostly been on whether goals were scored, by whom and how. Commentaries on these games would seldom mention who dribbled the ball into the 'D', to be converted into a goal by his centre-forward colleague.

f you ask me who scored the goal that won India its independence in August 1947, it was Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Strangely, post-independence commentaries do not mention this historic goal, not even those who grew up with me in Kolkata. Most virtually worshipped Netaji for his patriotism and sacrifices, but would not give him substantial credit for scoring the winning goal of Indian independence. Beyond a few who were close to Subhas, others did not walk out of Congress because of Subhas's expulsion from the party in April 1939. Nor was there the scale of protest one would have expected given the stature of Subhas. What was his fault? Did he harm

the Congress? No. His crime, if any, was to get elected as Congress president for a second consecutive year. What he had done, albeit not willingly, was to not have taken Gandhi's consent before contesting for the Congress presidentship the second time. Where was the inner-party democracy Jawaharlal Nehru later boasted of? But even he lay low. Subhas Bose concluded that he had no political future left in the Congress. Had he wanted any further progress, he would have to emigrate. Subhas picked Germany as the only likely country he could shift to.

Bose made a daring escape from British captivity on January 7, 1941, travelling through Afghanistan and the Soviet Union to finally reach Germany. His stay, meeting Adolf Hitler and obtaining German support and assistance are the stuff of legend. He then undertook a perilous threesubmarine to transfer to a Japanese submarine surfacing off the coast of Madagascar in the Indian Ocean. A nucleus of the Indian National Army (INA) already formed by Ras Bihari Bose, awaited his command, and



Subhas soon raised the number of soldiers, including a women's battalion, to a total of 50,000 soldiers. The remarkable thing about these INA numbers was the large number of prisoners of war who had formally sworn loyalty to the king and country (Britain). This had never happened before in British history. Such mutinous behaviour was unthinkable and shocked the British leaders of the day.

Not that the British had not experienced a mutiny. They had in fact, overcome a serious one in 1857-58—the Sepoy Mutiny. But the mutineers then had not sworn by the English king and country. They were mere employees of a private commercial enterprise, the East India Company. The INA came up to Imphal, with one famous battle between the British Indian army and Subhas Indians taking place on the tennis court of the collector's bungalow. This was the INA's last clash before it retreated towards Singapore in 1944.

Netaji and his immediate colleagues like Kayani and Shah Nawaz Khan must have been dejected at the defeat and retreat. They might not have realized that even in their THE BRITISH

THEMSELVES, IN THE

SERVICE OF THE JEWEL IN THEIR CROWN, WOULD HAVE NUMBERED NO MORE THAN 50,000 MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ENTIRE SUBCONTINENT. COULD SUCH A SMALL NUMBER

POSSIBLY HAVE CONTROLLED A POPULATION OF 40 CRORE PEOPLE?

defeat lay the seeds of triumph. They could not have imagined that the INA had won its war on the day Netaji had persuaded the Indian prisoners of war in Axis hands, to quit their servitude to their British masters and come over to the Azad Hind Fauj (the INA). Thereafter, His Majesty's government could never again trust an Indian soldier who had been sworn in by the king and country. There were several lakh officers, clerks and

fighting men of them. The British themselves, in the service of the jewel in their crown, would have numbered no more than 50,000 men and women in the entire subcontinent. Could such a small number possibly have controlled and helped rule a population of 40 crore people? În 1956, Clement Atlee (Prime Minister of Britain during 1945-50), visited Calcutta and stayed with the acting governor of West Bengal, Justice P.B. Chakraborty.

enquired of Atlee why the British quit India in such a hurry when they could have hung on for another ten years. Atlee did not agree with this assessment. Instead, he said that Netaji Subhas forming the

THE EDITO

Misconception about dogs

INA and their confronting the British had lit a spark. This could have easily happened with the civilian employees as well. How then could we have held on to the levers of governance? No, Mr. Governor, our time was up. It was best to quit gracefully before being kicked

The former British Prime Minister's unequivocal opinion reveals that it was Netaji Subhas who won independence for India. He scored the winning goal, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi knows only too well and has not only acknowledged but has acted upon it as well. It is befitting that the grand consecration of the Shri Ram Temple at Ayodhya on the coming January 22 falls just a day ahead of Netaji's birthday on January 23rd. Aptly, the pranpratishtha (consecration ceremony) is to be performed by Narendra Modi, who has fulfilled Netaji's clarion call of "Chalo Dilĺi" by finally giving India's true independe his rightful place in history, both figuratively and literally.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed

UCC: Will it happen before the general elections?



Despite PM Modi's endorsement, the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code remains uncertain, but some States have taken the initiative

he BJP Government in its current tenure is unlikely to implement the Uniform Civil Code that is, the law applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters like marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc. Is. However, after the abrogation of Article 370 and the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, UCC is being seen as the last ideological promise that is on the agenda of the BJP and RSS.If we are to believe government and party sources, the party will keep this issue alive and fresh in the political discussion. Hope was further strengthened when Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed the need for UCC in a rally in Bhopal on 28 June 23 and said that a law could be made soon. That's when top officials of the party as well as the government said that the law would require very intensive research and extensive consultation, and thus was unlikely to be implemented until the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. To keep the issue alive, many BJP leaders and government ministers start-



ed making statements on the need for UCC. A private bill introduced by Sunil Kumar Singh, BJP Lok Sabha MP from Jharkhand, listed 'appropriate legislation to for a comprehensive law.

implement Uniform Civil Code throughout the country'. However, the Lok Sabha did not show much interest in considering the bill. However, the Sangh Parivar believes that states can implement the UCC on their own, and the Center can wait before initiating discussions Several state BJP governments - Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat – have already initiated efforts to introduce UCC; Assam is going to become the third state in India to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), as announced by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma at a press conference held in Dispur. Following the Ashram, which works footsteps of Gujarat and among tribals, welcomed

Uttarakhand, Assam's UCC suggestions that tribals should be kept out of the will be tailored to the specific needs of the state. CM ambit of the law. But over the Sarma stressed that the govpast two weeks, these meeternment is actively working ings have witnessed heated debate over Prime Minister to tackle child marriage and is in the process of introduc-Narendra Modi's move to ing a bill to ban polygamy in implement the Uniform the state However, Uttar Civil Code across India. Pradesh which is the poster These protests and these boy for the BJP Government meetings in Jharkhand are has not shown any signs of now turning into training implementing it "This is not sessions to organise, oppose Article 370 or triple talaq, and oppose the UCC meawhere bills can be brought in hastily... UCC is a complex issue concerning different sections of the society from different castes and communities. This will require much wider consultation and more in-depth research. The Law Commission of India has already started consultations on UCC. It had issued a public notice on June 14 to seek public views

on the UCC and its extend-

ed deadline for submitting

suggestions ended on July

28. There is also a plan to

hold consultations in cities.

Sangh Parivar has also

Earlier this month, RSS-

affiliated Vanvasi Kalyan

sure of the Bharatiya Janata Party. It is not just the All India Muslim Personal Law Board; The movement has started in tribal India. More than 100 protests have taken place so far. In early July, more than 30 tribal organizations under the Adivasi Coordination Committee protested in Ranchi, taking out protest marches and staging a sit-in outside the state BJP headquarters. Organisation BJP leader and MP Sushil Kumar Modi has suggested in the parliamentary panel that tribals should be kept out of warned to exercise caution. the UCC in view of Article 371 and Scheduled Areas.

(The writer is a senior journalist, views are personal)

HASINA SWORN IN AS PM AGAIN

Sir —Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh for the fifth term on Thursday. This comes days after her Awami League secured an over-whelming majority in the general elections, which were boycotted by the main opposition BNP and its allies.

President Mohammad Shahabuddin administered the oath of office to the 76year-old Hasina at a ceremony attended by politicians, foreign diplomats, civil society figures, and senior civil and military officials at the presidential palace. This marks her 12th term as prime minister, the fourth consecutive term, and the fifth overall. Under Hasina's leadership, the governments of India and Bangladesh have worked to strengthen diplomatic ties, and her fifth term as PM is expected to ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific. Jahangir Shaikh | Mumbai

JOLT TO UDDHAV

Sir —When a party splits, determining the authentic or original faction becomes crucial. In Shiv Sena's case, Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar asserts the Shinde faction as the true Shiv Sena. Uddhav Thackeray vehemently opposes the Speaker's ruling, labeling it a "murder of democracy." Yet, Uddhav's own political history includes betraying the BIP for an alliance with the Congress, seizing power against the people's mandate. He now faces a taste of his own medicine as Eknath Shinde challenges his

The Speaker rightly emphasizes that the National Executive holds supreme authority, curtailing the Paksha Pramukh's absolute power. Uddhav's failure to demonstrate a convened National Executive Committee meeting supports the verdict favoring the Shinde faction. The Speaker's stance shields the MLAs from disqualification due to defection. Uddhav's claim to Shiv Sena, founded by his father Bal Thackeray, is chal-



n a society clouded by the misconception that dogs are potential threats, the heartfelt fondness and affection these animals shower upon humans often go unnoticed. Despite their undeserved reputation dogs demonstrate an incomparable capacity for love and care. Behind the veil of stereotypes, innumerable stories emerge about dogs enriching human lives with unwavering gentleness and loyalty. These

misunderstood creatures, marked as dangerous possess an innate ability to sense human emotions, offering solace in times of adversity Studies divulge that interactions with dogs can reduce stress and lift one's spirit, exhibiting the therapeutic power integrated into their companionship. From therapy assistance to rescue operations dogs play an essential role in enhancing human well-being.

In the often unseen interactions between humans and dogs an impactful lesson emerges: summons to eliminate prejudgements and embrace the unspoken bonds formed through canine companionship. As we endeavour for a more empathetic society, recognising the overlooked love and care given by these misunderstood dogs becomes a groundbreaking step towards overcoming hindrances and appreciating the pure unconditional endearment they

Tanisha Gupta | Ujjain

ideology for power diverges from his father's principles. With elections looming in 10 months, Uddhav has an opportunity to prove the Speaker wrong by sur-passing BJP and Shinde's team in the Assembly polls.

K V Seetharamaiah | Bengaluru

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Sir — The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) expressed "extreme disappointment" with the US Department of State for not designating Nigeria and India as Countries of Particular Concern (CPC), despite both meeting the legal standard. USCIRF urged Congress to hold a public hearing on the State monitors global religious freedom, pro-Department's failure to follow recommendations.

In India, alongside domestic religious freedom violations, the government's transnational repression activities targetlenged, emphasizing that the party isn't ing religious minorities abroad raised his personal property. Uddhav's altered concerns. The USCIRF recommended ing religious minorities abroad raised

CPC designation for India and Nigeria in its 2023 report.

While the State Department re-designated 12 countries as CPCs in 2024, including Burma, China, Cuba, Iran, and others, India and Nigeria were omitted. USCIRF rejected this omission, vowing to ensure the US prioritizes religious free-

dom in foreign policy. In October 2023, USCIRF noted a decline in religious freedom conditions in India, citing discriminatory policies against minorities. During a September hearing on 'Advancing Religious Freedom within the US-India Bilateral Relationship,' the commission emphasised these issues. USCIRF, an independent federal entity, vides recommendations to deter persecution, and upholds freedom of religion in US foreign policy.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

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FIRST COLUMN DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOURSELF

Compare yourself to who you were yesterday, not who someone else is today



Ith the advent of the adoption of the so-called Western culture, many of us especially the youth have never developed a relationship with ourselves for it was neither modelled in families nor it was ever encouraged. Moreover, stepping out of the family, popular culture movies, media and literature also made an individual aware that one needs to prioritize building relations with others and not with selves. But having a healthy relationship with self is the cornerstone of happiness and forms the foundation.

Today, perfectionism and self-comparison have been heightened by social media. It has been damaging to one's mental health, as the person is guaranteed to compare self with others who are doing better at something over time. And the loneliness and despair that can lie underneath a bright smile and successful life can be hidden. When an individual struggles with self-comparison, they are actually dealing with envy - which is a universal emotion. It happens when someone wants to have something that others have but can't have due to several factors such as time, money, experience and a lot many.

Though it is inherently normal, too much can cause a person to engage in self-destructive behaviours such as making excessive efforts to change self in ways that will ultimately destroy a person's personal well-being, health and authenticity. Negative self-comparison is essentially a losing game of competing against anyone but yesterday's version of the indi-



Instead of obsessing over ways to change oneself or be like others, one should count upon the blessings that the lord has bestowed upon one; give several reminders to selves that they are beautiful, smart and have wonderful qualities instead of envying or getting the feeling of jealousy. The person must follow the path of admiration for admiration is on the positive end of the comparison spectrum. When an individual admires other people's qualities, they too want to improve themselves. Shifting the focus to taking inspiration from others rather than self-degrading through comparison is a game changer so that the individual can be proud of the fact that they are improving, regardless of how others are doing. Remember, a person should set the standards so that nothing can com-

It does take work, but the person does get there. When people put others into their categories, they greet their confusion with compassion. In learning to cultivate self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-compassion, a person unlocks the opportunity to fully embrace individual beauty and uniqueness.

The mind is powerful and one must use it to their advantage and focus on their journey rather than being in comparison to others. Comparison and negativity bias are hard-wired into the brains as survival mechanisms as they often cripple an individual by moving forward. In conclusion, as we navigate the complexities of modern society influenced by Western culture, it is crucial to recognize the importance of fostering a relationship with oneself. The pervasive emphasis on external validation, fueled by societal norms and amplified by social media, has led many to overlook the significance of internal well-being. The prevalent culture of perfectionism and self-comparison has not only taken a toll on mental health but has also obscured the genuine struggles that individuals may be facing behind seemingly successful facades.

To break free from the damaging cycle of self-comparison, it is essential to shift the focus from external standards to internal growth and selfappreciation. Rather than succumbing to envy, individuals should celebrate their unique qualities, acknowledging that true fulfillment comes

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Indo-Maldives ties: An emotional tightrope



The Maldives must not let political theatrics erode the core principles that have defined its history, interests and relations with India

he ongoing dispute between a select few individuals in one of the world's behemoth nations and the tiniest sovereign state is a stark illustration of the contemporary diplomatic landscape heavily shaped by media biases and their exaggerated, contentious rhetoric. Unfortunately, a substantial portion of Indian analysts adopted a narrative that further inflamed tensions, giving the Maldivians reasons to amplify their dissent against India. In contrast, astute Maldivian analysts swiftly engaged in damage control, countering the repercussions spurred by the ceaseless prattle of inept politicians. The Maldives' shrewd pragmatism in forging alliances with major powers while safeguarding its autonomy is central to understanding its global approach. Unlike many larger nations in the region, including India, the Maldives evaded British colonization, strategically orchestrating a protectorate agreement in 1887 that preserved its political independence while deferring only on foreign affairs to London. Consequently, Malé never flew the British flag, and no British governor held sway, except during the threat posed by Japan in 1941 when Britain established a naval and air base at Addu Atoll in the southern reach-

es of the archipelago. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi showcased his strategic response in a brief video highlighting Lakshadweep as an alternative destination to the Maldives, 35 days after meeting the newly elected President of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, on the sidelines of the COP28 summit in Dubai. The subsequent action in this video, not a mere coincidence but rather a calculated response with long-term aims aligned with the evolving policies of the Maldivian administration, echoes Otto von Bismarck's perspective that politics is the art of the possible, the attainable — the art of the next best. On the flip side, there is no cause for jubilation or satisfaction regarding the responses to the video by three young anti-Indian politicians in the Maldives who, a few days ago, exploited their social media platforms, proving in politics, nothing is contemptible. The ensuing disgraceful comments directed at Prime Minister Modi prompted the government to issue clarifications, emphasizing that the statements emanated from individual members of the cabinet and did not reflect the official stance of the government.

President Muizzu, revelling in the triumph of his recent electoral victory, appears to be basking in the dubious glory of long-standing anti-Indian sentiments prevailing in the country. This revelry, however, exposes him as still ensnared in the psychological labyrinth typical of a mere politician. Despite his judicious decision to take swift action against his errant colleagues, suspending Malsha Shareef, Mariyam Shiuna, and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid from their positions as deputy ministers in the socalled Youth Ministry, the repercussions of their fervent anti-Indian rhetoric remain unpredictable. The lingering discontent among the populace has the potential to ignite a fresh wave of violence, inevitably causing further harm to the nation.

Simply seeking attention without a nuanced understanding of the intricate political dynamics within the region and the country offers no tangible benefits for individuals making such inflammatory remarks, either for society or personally. Foreign Affairs Minister Moosa Sameer aptly stated, "The recent remarks against foreign





IN THE MALDIVES, PRIORITISING JUVENILE POLITICAL MATURE DIPLOMATIC SKILLS IS NOT ONLY FOOLHARDY BUT ALSO A PERVERSE DANCE THAT REVELS IN INSTANT GRATIFICATION, INFLICTING UNIMAGINABLE

PAIN ON SOCIETY

unacceptable and do not reflect the official position of the Government of Maldives. We remain committed to fostering a positive and constructive dialogue with all our partners, especially our neighbours, based on mutual respect and understanding." Following decisive actions, President Muizzu swiftly embarked on a state visit to China, marking the first visit since assuming the presidency, where he reaffirmed the longdelayed Free Trade Agreement initiated in December 2014 and many more. Muizzu, under the banner of "India Out," seeks to reshape the social fabric, leveraging existing political culture. His methods, irrespective of perception, place him on a precarious edge, with the stability of his presidency contingent on the outcomes of the upcoming MENTALITY OVER parliamentary elections. Having solidified his position within the party, Muizzu strategically secures loyalty by distributing governmental positions among senior figures in the PPM and the PNC, even appointing his wife. The lack of anti-defection laws in the Maldives introduces complications, as the repercussions of his juniors' statements could greatly influence whether Muizzu continues to wield tumultuous political decline.

power unchecked or experiences a Feeble minds, devoid of strategic principles and ethical conduct, persist in their unabated campaign of animosity against India, shamelessly unleashing their vitriol through various social media channels. This toxic behaviour, although not a recent development, has been an enduring characteristic of these politicians. On the contrary, India has unexpectedly taken these provocations more seriously than the juvenile politicians who, in their recent diatribes against India, never anticipated the sudden surge in popularity. India's strategic response seems to revolve around globally tarnishing Maldives' reputation, utilizing its own carefully crafted narratives. However, this ploy is destined for a short-lived existence, as an entrenched ideological revolt against India continues to simmer throughout the region. Those fanning the flames of anti-India sentiment perceive India not as a benevolent caretaker in times of need but as a manipulator, underscoring the pivotal role played by strategies and counter-strategies in this ongoing narrative.

Acknowledging deep cultural, ethnic, and economic ties between the Maldives and India is crucial. Historical connections are evident in linguistic roots, shared exposure to Hindi music, and a history of educational exchanges. Recent collaborations, notably in healthcare, exemplify India's pivotal role, as seen in the timely supply of Covishield vaccines during the pandemic peak. The Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital stands as a tangible testament to India's enduring assistance, and India remains a primary source of tourists for the Maldives, enhancing the bilateral relationship.

Both nations strengthened ties through agreements, including significant financial support for maritime connectivity and credit lines. Despite this positive trajectory, the Maldivian current administration holds diverse sentiments towards India, ranging from nationalist fervour against military presence to concerns about transparency in agreements. Doubts persist over projects like the new police academy and Uthuru Thila Falhu, fueled by baseless rumours. Despite reservations, the overall relationship, which reached new heights in the previous administration, now faces challenges.

India's understanding of the internal power dynamics in the Maldives seems miscalculated, considering its profound strategic and economic interests in the region. The Maldives strategically holds a pivotal position in the Indian Ocean Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC). Its historical context, from British operational bases to Soviet attempts at naval facilities, underscores its significance. India's concerns about the Maldives' strategic location heightened after the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, with reports suggesting the potential adversarial use of the Maldives' position in the region. In the Maldives, prioritizing juvenile political mentality over mature diplomatic skills is not only foolhardy but also a perverse dance that

revels in instant gratification, inflicting unimaginable pain on society. This misguided approach exposes a grotesque disparity between intent and justification, rendering any sympathetic validity null. It sents a condemnable manifestation of disregard, turning governmental relations into a mockery. This is not a call for 'India first' or 'India out,' but an impassioned plea for the Maldives to strengthen its sovereignty and prioritize its interests under the banner of 'Maldives First.' The nation must not let political theatrics erode the core principles that have defined its history - true friendship and sovereignty. Vigilance is paramount against separatist forces exploiting public sentiment, as risking the essence that made this sovereign archipelago unique throughout history is not an option. Unfortunately, many countries and leaders in the world are yet to learn from the untold lessons to be learned from krainian President Zelenskyy.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist and worked as a communications consultant for the Government of Sri Lanka. Views are personal)

Empowering rural India through digital access

Common Service Centres are transforming lives in rural India by offering employment opportunities and delivering digital services

n the expansive rural landscapes of India, where dig-Lital access was once a distant aspiration, Common Service Centres (CSCs) have emerged as transformative agents. Operated by CSC e-Governance, a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) of the Government of India, these centers provide a myriad of services to citizens resources and business serin rural areas. The objective of vices. these centers is to provide the benefits of government schemes by providing e-governance facilities to the people, especially in the villages of the country. Boasting over 500 services, CSCs act as vital information and communication



KUMAR GIRISH

The Success of CSCs: The impact of CSCs on rural India becomes apparent when examining the statistics. Since their inception, these centres have touched the lives of millions, becoming a beacon of digital inclusion across the technology access points, country. The success of CSCs seamlessly connecting citizens transcends mere numbers; it is

closing the gap between urban and rural areas through digital avenues. Tele-Law Scheme: Among

the multitude of services offered by CSCs, the Tele-Law Scheme stands out as a beacon of justice. Department of Justice (DoJ) has entrusted a task to CSC e-Governance Service India Limited for mainstreaming legal informa-tion, legal aid, and advice to the marginalized communities through Common Services Center (CSC). Launched in 2017 as a pilot project in the Northeast and Jammu & Kashmir, this initiative aimed to bring legal aid to the doorsteps of marginalized communities.

Utilizing video-conferencing infrastructure at CSC centers, to digital government a narrative of empowerment, citizens can connect with panel



lawyers, seeking advice and the Tele-Law Dashboard assistance. The success of the pilot project led to its expansion in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and subsequently to all aspirational districts across the country. As of April 2023, Tele-Law has reached an impressive 2,50,000 CSCs in 765 districts, providing free legal ser-

vices to all sections of the com-

showcases its impact, with over 65 lakh cases registered and legal advice extended to more than 64 lakh beneficia-

Online Resume Maker: In the digital age, job hunting has evolved, and CSCs have adapted to this change by introducing the Online Resume Maker

Portal, empowers individuals to create professional resumes tailored to their skill sets.

The impact of the Online Resume Maker service is evident in its features, providing AI-driven content, a choice of professional templates, and seamless integration with job portals like Rozgar.com. The service not only enhances the job application process but also opens doors to daily job alerts, direct calls from recruiters, and downloadable mobile applications with advanced features," says Sanjay Kumar Rakesh, Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer at CSC e-Governance Services India Limited.

Cultivating Prosperity The Agriculture Department munity. Real-time data from tool. This AI-based product, of CSC e-Governance Services

available on the Digital Seva India Ltd, established in 2019-20, has redefined the landscape of agricultural services in the country. Operating through the CSC eAgri portal, the department has achieved significant milestones, surpassing business turnovers and fostering collaborations with leading agricultural brands.

The success of the Agriculture Department is marked by its achievements in FPO network expansion, business growth, brand collaborations, retail portals for VLEs, KVK Crop Healthcare Service, PACS Project, and SFAC Value Chain Organization.

Digital transformation, financial transactions, PACS onboarding, and progress in the SFAC project highlight the impact of the CSC eAgri portal on the agricultural sector. With over 46 lakh transactions and the onboarding of 50,000+ PACS into the CSC network, the department's role in promoting e-governance services and digital agribusiness is commendable.

"The journey of Common Service Centres (CSCs) in India continues to be one of sustained growth and innovation. As of the latest data available, the network of CSCs has expanded its reach to even the remotest corners of the country, acting as catalysts for rural development. The commitment to providing over 500 services reflects the adaptability and responsiveness of CSCs to the evolving needs of the population," says Sanjay Kumar Rakesh.

(The writer is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Luxmi Tea plans retail expansion, to step up presence in airports

across the country, an official of the company said. The company has already opened stores to sell its premium tea inside Kolkata and Bagdogra airports, and also inside the international terminal of Mumbai airport. "The retail and online channels of our tea sales are growing fast. Presently, online and retail constitute less than ten percent of overall

sales," MD of Luxmi Tea Rudra Chatterjee said. Luxmi Tea, which has gardens in West Bengal, Assam, and Rwanda in Africa, produces around 25 million kilograms of the crop annually, Chatterjee said. He said, "We have started with three airports at present. Preliminary talks are on to open more retail stores in other airports like Bengaluru and Delhi as well". According to him, the stores have been branded after 'Makaibari' and sell the iconic tea and other premium Luxmi products at the airport outlets



Central Bank of India extends festival offer till March 31

State-owned Central Bank of India has extended its festival offer for three months till March 31 with a view to increasing its retail asset book. Earlier, the offer was till December 31, 2023. The bank is offering low interest rate, waiver in processing fee and other facilities for customers during this period, Central Bank of India general manager (retail assets) Vivek Kumar said. Cent Grih Laxmi Scheme and Cent Business Scheme are

offering the lowest rate of interest across the industry starting from 8.35 per cent. Last week, the bank also held meeting with major real estate developers across Delhi-NCR. About 150 Direct Sales Agents (DSAs) and 50 renowned builders across the region joined the event. He also said that interest rates on most of the products have peaked and there is hardly any scope for further hike. Rates on the liability side have also more or less saturated and liquidity position is within manageable range, he said.



TCPL to tap pharma channels with Organic India

ata Consumer Products Ltd (TCPL) now plans to tap pharma channels as the acquisition of Organic India would provide a "fully rounded portfolio" combined with healthy offering from its own brands, said MD and CEO Sunil D'Souza on Sunday. Also, the acquisition of Capital Foods, which has brands including Smith & Jones and Ching's Secret, will address the western cuisine and 'desi Chinese' flavours, which it

plans to extend to the oriental cuisine space, he said. Combined with its own brand Sampann, under which it offers Indian food and spices, TCPL now aims to offer a wide gamut of the Indian culinary palate with Ching's Secret, and Smith & Jones. "We now have the brands that were required to address the entire portfolio of the Indian consumer's cuisines per se," D'Souza said. On the other hand, with Organic India, TCPL will enter into the nutraceutical supplement



ONGC makes back-to-back gas discoveries in Mahanadi block

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has made two significant back-toback natural gas discoveries in a Mahanadi basin deepwater block in the Bay of Bengal as its calculated game plan of venturing into high-risk deep water exploration starts yielding results. The firm made the discoveries in the block MN-DWHP-2018/1, which it had won in the third round of auction under the open acreage licensing policy in 2019, two sources with direct knowledge of the development said.

Significantly, the discoveries have been made in an area, which previously was classified as a 'no-go' area because of national security interests.

The first discovery, named Uktal, is in 714 metres of water depth and flowed more than 3 lakh cubic metres per day of gas during initial testing, they said, adding the other find is at a water depth of 1,110 metres.

ONGĈ has notified the discoveries to upstream regulator Directorate General of



Hydrocarbons (DGH) and is now doing pool size and commercial viability assessments, they said. For a nation that imports roughly half of its gas needs, finding new reserves augurs well for its energy security. India is targeting raising the share of natural gas in its energy basket to 15 per cent by 2030 from the current 6.3 per cent and more domestic production will aid that.

Gas is being seen as a transition fuel in India's journey towards net zero carbon emission by 2070. As the country pivots away from polluting fossil fuels, natural gas with a lower carbon footprint is seen as a bridge fuel.

Natural gas extracted from below ground or sea-surface is used to generate electricity, make fertilisers or turn into CNG to use as fuel in automobiles and piped to household kitchens for cooking purposes. Greater use of natural gas will replace coal in power generation and liquid fuels in industries.

Sources said ONGC was able to fast-track exploration after the government freed almost one lakh square kilometres of area from restrictions for exploring and producing oil

area as it was either in the path of missile testing or on a satellite launch route. Restrictions on more than 98 per cent of the 'no-go' areas were removed in 2022, allowing for energy companies to send vessels and

drillships to find oil and gas. ONGC acquired 1,432.14 sq km of 3D seismic data in MN-DWHP-2018/1 block (Mahanadi deep-water) and spud well MNDW181H-B-1 in

August last year. The first of its kind under the open acreage licensing policy (OALP) regime, the well has been drilled by the mighty drillship West Polaris.

Sources said these exploration successes in Mahanadi offshore will catalyse opening up new exploration fronts, attracting more investments.

ONGC had last year inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with French energy giant TotalEnergies to establish a framework for the exchange of information on deepwater offshore acreage, especially in the Mahanadi

Quarterly earnings, global trends to guide equity markets this week: Analysts

PNS NEW DELHI

Movement in the equity market this week will largely be dictated by quarterly earnings of blue-chip firms HDFC Bank and Hindustan Unilever, along with the announcement of WPI inflation data and global trends, analysts said.

The trading activity of for-eign investors, global oil benchmark Brent crude and the rupee-dollar trend would

also guide the movement.

"The focus will shift towards Q3 earnings, with key players such as HDFC Bank, HUL, Asian Paints, IndusInd Bank, and Ultratech Cement set to announce their results. Pre-budget expectations are also likely to influence the sector and stockspecific movements," Santosh Meena, Head of Research, Swastika Investmart Ltd said.

As the market gears up for the Budget, institutional flows will play a crucial role in determining its direction, he

WPI inflation data for December is scheduled to be

Centre, state, exporters to discuss ways to boost exports on Jan 16

The Centre, state governments and industry representatives will meet on January 16 to discuss ways to boost the country's exports, an official said.

Issues which are expected to figure in the meeting include rupee payment challenges, need of global shipping, and challenges being faced by traders on account of the Red Sea crisis, and uncertain global economic situation due to the Russia-Ukraine war and Israel-Hamas conflict.

The meeting will be chaired by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. They all are members of the Board of Trade (BoT).

"There are over 135 members of BoT. It is meeting on January 16 at Bharat Mandapam," the official said.

Headed by the minister, the board includes participants from various states, Union Territories, and senior officials from the public and private sectors. In the meeting, representatives of export promotion councils present their views on



The board provides an opportunity to have regular discussions and consultations with trade and industry and advise the government on policy measures on foreign trade.

It also provides a platform for state governments and Union Territories to articulate their perspective on trade policy and also for the central government to apprise them about international developments affecting India's trade potential and opportunities.

"The Indian pharma sector

merchandise exports in April-November 2023-24 contracted by 6.51 per cent to USD 278.8 billion.

Imports were also down by 8.67 per cent to USD 445.15 billion in the eight-month period due to a fall in oil mports.

The trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) during the eightmonth period was USD 166.35 billion against USD 189.21 billion in the corresponding



India asks US to permit domestic labs for fruit irradiation to cut trade cost

PNS NEW DELHI

India has asked the US to allow domestic labs also for irradiation of certain fruits like mangoes with a view to helping exporters cut additional trade costs, an official said.

At present, exporters have to carry out irradiation at the US ports, which increases cost and uncertainty in case of rejection of the consignment.

The issue was raised during the 14th India-US Trade Policy Forum meeting here on January 12.

"We have raised the issue of fruit irradiation which they do on their coast. Let it happen here. They can allow Indian labs to do so. It will reduce trade costs in a way," the official said. According to international trade experts, several Indian products may require irradiation at the US ports before entering the US market to comply with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) regulations and prevent the introduction of harmful pests and diseases.

Think tank GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said that a better way is to carry out irradiation in India before exports as modern facilities are available in India that can meet the US import require-

Irradiation improves safety of fruits as it kills microorganisms. Irradiation helps eliminate pests without affecting the quality of the fruit.

'Incentives key to promote bio-fertilizers'

PNS NEW DELHI

Industry body Indian Biogas Association (IBA) has tives including a dedicated Rs 1.4 lakh crore 'Biogas-Fertilizer Fund' that aims to promote the use of organic fertilizers for improved soil and human health.

It said the key to accelerating the Bio-CNG/CBG (compressed natural gas/biogas) industry's growth lies in crafting pro-biofertilizer policies.

This includes favorable regulations, tax exemptions, financing incentives, and accessible credit options, with a spotlight on fermented organic manure, it noted.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present an interim budget for financial year 2024-25 on February 1.

In a pre-budget memorandum submitted earlier this month to the finance ministry, the IBA has proposed to set up a new 'Sustainable Biogas Plant Fertilizer-Based Cultivation Programme' (SuBiCulP) with a dedicated Rs 1.4 lakh crore fund for five

Pharma industry seeks sops for R&D, conducive policies PNS NEW DELHI The pharma industry has sought fiscal incentives to pro-

mote research and development (R&D) in the sector, as it is likely to reach USD 400-450 billion market size by 2047. In a statement, Indian harmaceutical

Secretary General Sudarshan Jain said there is a high risk, long gestation period and low success rate in research, and therefore, there is a need for continuous investments.

"The budget 2024-25 should outline conducive policies that



provide benefits in terms of both direct and indirect taxes and also facilitate ease of doing business for the pharma companies," Jain noted.

The interim Budget is sched-

uled to be presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1.

Jain said the domestic pharma industry is at the cusp of

aims to achieve USD 120-130 billion by 2030 and USD 400-450 billion by 2047. To achieve this vision, the Union Budget 2024-25 should accelerate the pace of innovation and R&D," The announcement of the

Innovation Program (PRIP) Scheme in 2023 was a positive step to spur innovation, he stated. Healthcare industry body NATHEALTH said it is advocating for an increase in healthcare spending to 2.5 per cent of GDP and the rationalisation of

the GST framework.

"Additionally, we aim to enhance the medical value travel segment by addressing the MAT credit issue and strengthening the healthcare value chain, which is essential for driving economic growth and creating new job opportunities," NATHEALTH MD and CEO Ashutosh Raghuvanshi said.

A key focus should be on building local capabilities to deliver healthcare services even in the most remote regions, alongside the localisation of the healthcare value chain, he

Lupin gets USFDA nod for generic hypertension drug

Drug maker Lupin on Sunday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic hypertension drug in America.

The company has received approval from the US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) for Propranolol Hydrochloride extendedrelease capsules in multiple strengths, Lupin Ltd said in a regulatory filing. The company's product is the generic ver-

sion of ANI Pharmaceuticals' Inderal LA extended-release capsules, it added.

The product will be manufactured at the company's Pithampur-based manufacturing plant, the drug firm Propranolol stated. Hydrochloride extendedrelease capsules USP are indicated in the management of hypertension.

They may be used alone or in combination with other antihypertensive agents, particularly a thiazide diuretic.

FPIs infuse Rs 3,900 cr in equities

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have adopted a cautious stance and put around Rs 3,900 crore in Indian equities in the first two weeks of this month, against the backdrop of uncertainty over the interest rate scenario.

The investment has slowed down compared to Rs 66,134 crore attracted in the entire December.

Before that, FPIs invested Rs 9,000 crore in November. According to data with the depositories, foreign investors



made a net investment of Rs 3,864 crore in Indian equities this month (till January 12).

The latest investment pattern could be largely attributed to investors booking profit with Indian equity market trading near its all-time high

level, said Himanshu

Manager Research, Morningstar Investment Adviser India.

Moreover, uncertainty over the interest rate scenario could have also prompted them to stay on the sidelines and wait for further cues, before taking investment decision with respect to investing in emerg-

ing markets like India, he said. Continuing geopolitical conflicts are also a persistent risk, which foreign investors are cognisant of while making investment decisions, he

'Army troops turn Davos into fortress ahead of WEF meet'

PNS DAVOS

As Davos readies to host its annual talkfest of rich and powerful from across the world, nearly 5,000 army personnel have been deployed to help police and civilian authorities secure this small

Alpine resort town. Davos is estimated to have a permanent population of just about 10,000 but is frequented throughout the year by tourists including skiing enthusiasts in ski season, but it is the week of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting when it sees the maximum footfalls with at least 30,000 people in the

Given the high-profile nature of the event, beginning Monday, the security is both discreet and visible and comprises snipers, drone jammers, regular frisking and checking and round-the-clock

In addition to army personnel, there is a huge number of police men and women, support staff running into thousands and then nearly 3,000 world leaders are attending this year's summit, and so are over 500 journalists. And there is no less number of

tourists, it being a ski season. Armed forces began their deployment on January 9 itself and they would be here till January 25, according to Swiss Army. Air Force has also been tasked to monitor

and secure the airspace. Besides, it will use its helicopters to transport people protected under international law on behalf of the Swiss federal government.



These flights are not to be confused with the private helicopter taxis for business giants, which also will be

The persons protected under international law mostly include high-ranking officials such as presidents and

members of the government of foreign states, who can benefit from VIP transport by the Air Force.

High-ranking members of international organizations such as the UN or the EU also belong to this group of people, including the UN

Secretary General and the President of the EU Commission. More than 200 internationally protected persons, including nearly 300 heads of state and government, are expected for this year's meeting. The additional costs for security at the WEF Annual Meeting 2024 are estimated at around CHF 9 million (nearly Rs 87 crore).

As in previous years, the federal government, together with the WEF Foundation and its other partners (Canton of Graubunden, commune of Davos), will contribute to the costs of WEF Annual Meeting securi ty measures for the period 2022-2024 as part of a three-

tier finance model. There is a cost ceiling of CHF 9 million a year for security. If the cost ceiling

should be exceeded due to exceptional circumstances, level-2 of the finance model is

The federal government has set aside maximum additional funds of CHF 900,000 to cover such cases for the three annual meetings from 2022 to 2024. If the additional costs exceed this amount, the extra expenditure will be met by the finance partners according to the ratio set under level 1, unless level 3

comes into play.
In the event of exceptional incidents (for example, terrorist attacks, assassination attempts, major threats or clear indications that such acts may be carried out), the federal government will meet 80 per cent of any costs exceeding those under levels 1

India electronics exports to US jump over two-fold to US\$ 6.6 bn : ICEA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Electronics exports from India to the US jumped over twofold year-on-year to US\$ 6.6 billion during January-September 2023, industry

body ICEA has said. India Cellular and Electronics Association Chairman Pankaj Mahindroo told that this is an all-time high electronics export from India, while the share of electronics imported from China into the US market has declined.

"Recent data highlights a notable surge in India's electronics exports to the US, which increased by approximately 253 per cent to an estimated U\$\$ 6.6 billion in the current year (January-September), compared to an estimated US\$ 2.6 billion in the same period last year," Mohindroo said. According to



data shared by ICEA, India's electronics exports to the US increased by more than 300 per cent from an estimated US\$ 1.3 billion in 2018 to an estimated US\$ 4.5 billion in 2022.

The bilateral electronics trade between India and the US has also seen an impressive rise of 84 per cent, with the current estimate standing at USD 9 billion during January-September 2023 from an estimated USD 4.9 billion in the same period preceding fiscal.

what's brewing?

Ariana Grande slammed for 'huge disrespect' towards beau Ethan Slater's ex-wife



inger-songwriter Ariana Grande has been slammed for showing "huge disrespect" slammed for snowing inuge discovered towards her new boyfriend's ex-wife with the release of her new single.

The 30-year-old hit the headlines last year when it emerged she had split from ex-husband Dalton



Gomez and was dating Ethan Slater, who she met on the set of Wicked movie in 2022, reports Mirror.co.uk.

It was then reported that musical star Ethan, 31, had left his childhood sweetheart and wife Lilly Jay for Ariana, just months after they welcomed a new

The couple have laid low since news of their relationship broke, and both Ariana and Ethan have faced a fierce backlash over the last 12 months.

As per Mirror.co.uk, the award-winning singer first met Ethan when they were filming the big-screen adaptation of the hit musical in London, with Ariana playing good witch Glinda opposite Cynthia Erivo as the famed protagonist Elphaba.

On Friday, the Seven Rings hitmaker courted more controversy as she released her first single since 2021, 'Yes, And?' which seemingly takes aim at critics of her relationship. Fans were gobsmacked by the lyrics, including: "Your business is yours, and mine is mine/ Why do you care so much whose d*** I ride?"

Sources close to Lilly, 29, have come forward to slam Ariana - who has faced homewrecker allegations for months - with many accusing the singer of showing disrespect towards her new boyfriend's estranged wife. "For her to take the opportunity in her first song since all of this went down to show a complete lack of remorse for her actions is utterly disrespectful," the insider told the Daily Mail.

Ariana was accused of "lacking empathy," and could have "taken this opportunity to create music that would be therapeutic for her to heal and for fans to listen to," the source fumed. However, instead the singer has "created art that basically says f*** you, I don't care what I did to hurt anyone because I am happy."

Bobby Deol: Wish I was this mature when I was playing the character in Kareeb

ollywood star Bobby Deol has stolen the Bimelight with his performance in projects such as Ashram, Class of '83 and Animal. He is loving his villain era and feels he should have had the maturity that he has now during the 1990s when he did films such

as Kareeb. Asked if he loves his villain era or the 90s chocolate boy time, Bobby in a recent interview said: "As an actor I would pick now I feel as an actor I have learnt more... I was immature at that time

(1990s)... Talking about a special film Kareeb, which released in 1998 and was directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Bobby wishes he had the kind of "maturity" he has now

play the character of Birju in the film. "I wish I was this mature when I was playing the character in Kareeb, maybe I would have done a better job as an actor but that's how the character was in Kareeb. He was naive and was innocent.'

special film to him just like many in 1990s audiences. He added: "It worked very well for the film, though it didn't do well at the box-office. I special film.

Bobby minces no words when he says Kareeb was a will always cherish being a part of Kareeb. It was a

'My core is of an artiste. I want to be like this my entire life' says Nawazuddin Siddiqui

A ctor Nawazuddin Siddiqui expressed his enjoyment of commercial cinema, but expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that it appears to be the only genre still in operation today. The actor, who has starred in a number of well-known indie films, claimed that Bollywood doesn't appear to have fully shed the

When asked if he saw any differences between Bollywood in the 1990s and Bollywood now in a recent interview, Nawazuddin said, "Same films are being made, just with different actors, costumes, and make-up. I truly have no hope for the future. Many individuals are upbeat, but it's evident that the public prefers to see a particular kind of movie, which is fine, they have to. However, all forms of cinema ought to

endure, which isn't the case.' "I am not talking about commercial cinema, crores of people like it, and even I do. But the other kind of cinema may not survive today. It will take a lot of time. Earlier, both the kinds of cinema would survive, but not anymore."

Nawazuddin stated that his enthusiasm for performing hasn't diminished, despite the dark circumstances. Nawazuddin identified as a "obedient actor" and declared that his career is his life, which no one could take away from

The people I work with, they want to work The people I work with, they want to work with me again. I am an obedient actor, I will do everything for the film. I have a very sincere process. Acting is everything for me, my happiness is in my work. Acting is my life, it makes me happy, and I am proud of it. It is not like, 'Oh I have worked for a month, now I need to travel and rest.' I thank god that I chose this protravel and rest. I thank god that I chose this pro-fession, my core is of an artiste. I want to be like this my entire life, this is my life. If you tell me I can't act anymore, I might as well die. That's how connected I am to it. I have no off-camera life, and I don't even want it," he added.



and alcoholism. Speaking on the wellness podcast Hidden 20%, Harington said that he entered rehab in 2019 for alcoholism, and was diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) while there.
"I realised that my life was

hinging on this," he told host

"entered rehab drunk, sobered up in there, and went, 'F— this, not you guys in a circle. No, thank you." Harington then went to a second rehab facility, where

he was made aware of his ADHD, reports deadline.com. "And I left that pretty quick and said, 'I'll try to deal with this by myself, which didn't work after about four years,"

he said. Harington now says he's "sober "and "present," and is focused on his son, 2 years old, and daughter, 6 months. He shares his kids

every other thing in the room at once," he said, adding that he is sometimes "restless" when he plays with his young children.

Game of Thrones, where he played Jon Snow from 2011 until 2019, saw instant fame, which was hard on him.

Harington "tried to project this image of utter sophistication and coolness about what I was doing, but genuinely being sort of terrified about

everything."
That led to a downward spiral when it was coming to an end.

"That is a dangerous rabbit hole to fall down, because you find all of the bad stuff that people are saying as well as the nice stuff," he said.

ARCHIE









CALVIN AND HOBBES MOM SAYS SHE DOESN'T THINK WEVE FOUND A SKELETON AT ALL.







GARFIELD





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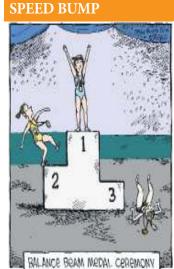
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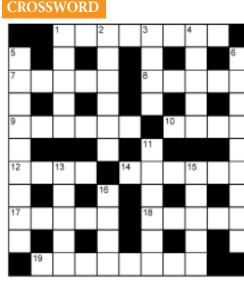




REALITY CHECK







IT'S IMPORTANT TO

THINK ABOUT THE QUALITY OF WHAT

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injured people DOWN

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frighten birds

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15 Kick out of school

6 One third of fifty-one

13 A communication device

16 Catch a mouse with this

the pioneer Jayawada

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Monday January 15, 2024

'No disrespect to anybody, but the women I have been around; I just emulate that on-screen'

Renowned filmmaker Sujoy Ghosh, who has created a niche in the filmy market, takes The Pioneer on an interesting ride about his filmmaking and mastery of the art.

TEJAL SINHA

ujoy Ghosh's directorial debut, *Jhankaar Beats*, a tribute to the legendary R.D. Burman, itself proved that this man has the skills to last long and undeniably create a confabulous impact. With no looking back since then, the renowned filmmaker has made some exceptionally worthy films like *Kahaani*, *Bang Bang*, *Badla*, *Lust Stories 2*, *Blind*, and the most recent *Jaane Jaan*, to name a few, which are way more than just a one-time watch.

Not just these, but his short films like Ahalya and Anukul Not just these, but his short films like *Ahalya* and *Anukul* have also equally enraptured hearts with their filmmaking prowess. As we talk of short films, he was recently a part of Royal Stag Barrel Select Large Short Films, discussing cinema. *The Pioneer* got an opportunity to interact with the adept filmmaker, who feels it's the content that they advocate, which made him get on board for the initiative. Sujoy, who is very grateful for the journey that he has had, begins, "I remember when I first did my first film with them; there were no restrictions, no requests, no guidelines, no parameters, or any fence. It was just that they wanted to do a short film to promote the format. I think it's the intention that makes the difference. They intend to create that industry. They intend to promote and invest in that industry. Because it's a very difficult thing to do, it's like when you make a short film, it's out of passion; there is no return from a short film, and you are not getting any money back from

your vision to the script, but the story is there, the screenplay is there, and the basic roadmap a short film. It's just that passion, which somebody has to say, 'Okay, here is some money; go and make a short film.' Good, bad, or ugly—it is there. Especially if you have written it yourself, it's even better, but if somebody else has doesn't matter. It's the encouragement; it's the intent, I think." written it, even then it works because half the work is done, and then it's just your vision and your thinking about it." He certainly gives us an allusion Well, it's not just the actors who get affected while playing a dark character, but also the director. At least that's what to his art. Basically, it depends on the story that he'd be keen to work we understood during our chitter-chaton. He reads the story, and if that excites the Kahaani filmmaker to ter. He further enunciates, "Some charinvest a year of his life, that is when you have 'Sujoy Ghosh' onboard. acters do impact my psyche, while others don't. I remember we were doing this But there's something that intrigued us to know: what takes him back to thrillers time and again. Well, again, it's the story. film called *Durga Rani Singh*, and it was about a lady who was abused when she was young, and she is still suffering from it. Because one cannot be insensitive to However, "it doesn't necessarily have that subject, we did a lot of reading up on victims, and when you read up on it, it to be a thriller, but coincidentally, affects you. Sometimes things do affect you. there have been a lot of thrillers. For example, the last film that I made was Jaane It stays inside your head. Sometimes when Jaan. For me, it was a love story. It wasn't a thriller, despite the fact that people keep you write some characters, they tend to because when you write, you have to telling me it's a thriller. For me, it never was a thriller." get into people's heads. Sometimes it takes a little bit of He goes on to take us indepth into his art: "If you are a director, vou are more or less led by the script. You have to add a little

Again, with narratives or actors like those of Badlapur and Kahaani, he says, "I have written something that looks like the person who is enacting it is very important to me. That's one—you were asking about my filmmaking process. When I write, I write a character; for me, I need to see at least some of that character in the actor that I am casting. It helps me. When I wrote Badla, there was nobody else but Sir (Amitabh Bachchan) in that character. But Kahaani was different. *Kahaani* was written for Vidya."

Then there is again how, interestingly, he has essayed the

power-play of characters through body language and levels. While it is intriguing for the audience, it's equally fun to him as well because, he says, "It's so much more powerful when you actually say something without saying anything. And I try to do it; sometimes I succeed, sometimes I don't, but it's not premeditated. I try as much as possible, but wherever it happens, I fly

The murder mystery and psychological thriller genres are not explored as much in Bollywood. Here's a busting of the myth: "I think there is this myth attached to thrillers and these kinds of subjects that purely stems from commerce. People say things like no one will watch such films, or if they watch it once, they won't watch it again, and it's a little dark, so it might get an Accertificate. So, a lot of this thinking, which has existed, is due to the commerce of filmmaking. They want a film that people will keep seeing over and over again, but I think that can be achieved with thrillers as well. But I think that mindset is changachieved with thrillers as well. But I think that mindset is changing now." Beyond any doubt, his films do revive genres in Indian cinema. And he agrees too. "If people watch and I manage to make my investors happy, they will be happier to invest in other people's films. Like, when we first did Kahaani despite many warnings, it opened up to a lot of female-led features, which earlier were a little difficult with a female protagonist. I mean, when I did *Ahalya* after that, boom, a lot of other people also started doing short films."

Be it Ahalya, Badla, Kahani, or Jaane Jaa, apart from being a thriller, these films have strong female characters too. Sujoy Ghosh, who slots himself as a commercial filmmaker, and with no two ways about it, signs off the chat by saying, "People keep asking me that, but I honestly don't know what women they have been with. No, because I have been surrounded by very strong women all my life. I have two mothers, one wife, and one daughter, and they are all very strong, as is my grandmother. I mean, no disrespect to anybody, but these are the women I have been around; I have seen them taking control of life, fighting life, surviving life, and making a life for me. I just emulate that on screen."

roid, a little gland in the front of the neck that resembles a butterfly, is essential for prothat support healthy bodily functions. Hypothyroidism is the term for when the thyroid gland in your body produces very little thyroid. You very little thyroid. You can have an underactive thyroid if you are overweight, fatigued all the time, and unable to withstand cold weather. Conversely, hyperthy-

gland, sometimes caused by gland, sometimes caused by nodules. Though associated with thyroid issues, goiter isn't certain. Many with thyroid problems never experience it, making it a misleading symptom. However, goiter can be a sign of a thyroid condition, but its absence doesn't rule it out its absence doesn't rule it out. Regular checkups remain key for optimal thyroid health regardless of visible neck

MYTH: IF YOU BECOME FAT, YOU WILL **DEVELOP A THYROID DISORDER**

factors like insulin resistance, es of thyroid dysfunction,

to an enlarged Obesity can worsen the symptoms of pre-existing thyroid problems like hypothyroidism. Focusing not be on overall health while monitoring weight is crucial. Weight is an important factor, but can't be generalized. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle (balanced diet, regular exercise, stress management) plays a

> MYTH: IF YOU HAVE A THYROID DISORDER, YOU SHOULD HAVE **MEDICATIONS FOR A**

Fact: The need for lifelong thyroid medication is subject to Fact: Though there might be a link between obesity and certain thyroid conditions, it cannot be generalised. Many other

MYTH: DELAY IN TREATING THYROID ISSUES, WILL LEAD TO CANCER

Fact: Delaying thyroid treatment in most conditions including hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism, doesn't directly increase the risk of thyroid cancer, it can have serious roid cancer, it can have serious health consequences due to the underlying condition itself. Additionally, in rare cases, it could delay the diagnosis and treatment of pre-existing cancer. However, untreated thyroid conditions may lead to health issues like fatigue weight gain/loss depression and heart gain/loss, depression, and heart

coli, cauliflower, and kale. These affect iodine uptake, but only in specific cases like severe iodine deficiency or uncon-trolled hypothy hypothyroidism. For most, a balanced diet including vegetables remains crucial

people laugh with her humorous videos A fountain of confidence and vitality, Yuvika Abrol serves as an inspiration to many. The influencer mom gets candid with

The Pioneer, about making it big in the content creation world SHIKHA DUGGAL

From diapers to laugh: Momfluencer making

She juggles being a mother, an entrepreneur, and an influencer like a champ and makes people laugh with her comedic videos. Telling us how she's killing it and giving us a little more background on her we have one of the most ground on her, we have one of the most influential mom influencers in our coun-

time to get out of that

charac-

try that's Yuvika Abrol. Creating content was never her intention. It was serendipitous. In order to take the pictures of her daughter, she purchased a DSLR camera. Well, her decision to share them on Instagram resulted from her ability to capture them, and doing so introduced her to the world of content creation. Despite all the information on the internet, as a first-time mother, she felt com-pelled to talk to someone about her experiences and share her

highs and lows. As a result, she began to net-work with other moms and provide content for

them. "Since I've always enjoyed acting, I created the page.

M y Instagram has changed over time, from funny photographs with funny captions to a mixture of parenting, fashion, and comedy videos. Over my career, I have worked with a number of well-

known and well-

liked businesses. I am a part of the Netflix subfocus group for parents and kids. As one of the two mom influencers, I had an appearance on a show in Colors *Khatra Khatra Khatra*. Being on multiple internet shows alongside Sunny Leone, Shruti Seth, and Nisha Rawal has increased my awareness of my place in the industry," she shares talking of her experience of the suddenly draw-

ing attention. The affection and trust she gets from her audience is the one thing that drives her, and she looks at it as a major accomplishment. The thrill is incomparable when someone remembers you and compliments

> the airport or shopping center. She is appreciative of this. She said, "Being a successful entrepreneur requires resilience and consistency. One must put in a lot of effort, make plans for the future, and keep the ideal balance in their lives. Finding the ideal balance between work and life is crucial in my opinion. On weekdays, I work from 9 to 7, and on Sundays, I take the day off to spend with my loved ones. When my sleep routine is on target, I'm eating well, and my body is in good shape, I feel more productive and active.

> your work when they see you at

She believes in maintaining a constant presence and a compelling USP that your audience can relate to. Making humorous parenting content has been her USP, making her stand out from other incredible women in the field. She believes that when someone visits your page, there ought to be a value-add that the creator may offer in the form of knowledge, amusement, or instruction. Finding that value add and working on it, she ends up saying is necessary.

Dispelling myths and... misconceptions around Thyroid

in which the body produces an excess of thyroid hormone, is characterised by weight loss, anxiety, insomnia, irregular menstruation, and heat sensitivity. Dr. Mahesh D.M., Consultant, Endocrinology, at Aster CMI Hospital, Bangalore debunks some popular myths around Thyroid:

MYTH: ALL THOSE WITH **THYROID DISORDER DEVELOP GOITER**

Fact: While both are linked to the thyroid, goiter and nodules differ. Thyroid nodules are lumps within the gland, while goiter is a visneck swelling d u e



ics, family history, lifestyle, and environmental exposures do play a crucial role and contribute to thyroid health. The majority of people with obesity don't have any thyroid condition. However, some studies suggest people with obesity have aslightly higher risk of developing hypothy-roidism, where the thyroid gland underproduces hormones.

gland produces insufficient hormones. require lifelong medication. However, with regards to hyperthyroidism, which occurs when the thyroid gland produces too much horgland produces too much hor-mone, depending on the sever-ity, antithyroid medications are recommended to control hormone production for a year or two and lifelong med-ication might

failure in severe cases, but not for optimal health. directly related to cancer.

MYTH: WOMEN WITH THYROID ISSUES CAN **NEVER BE PREGNANT**

Fact: Yes, both hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism can affect fertility. It might require treatment before conception to optimize chances of success. With appropriate medical guidance and manage-

ment, women with thyroid conditions can conceive and deliver healthy

MYTH: PEOPLE WITH THYROID ISSUES SHOULD NEVER **CONSUME MANY VEGETABLES**

Fact: It's a myth that all vegetables are off-limits for thyroid patients, but one does need to be mindful of goitrogens found in some crucifer**MYTH: YOU SHOULD**

ADD MORE SALT LOADED WITH IODINE TO KEEP THYROID **ISSUES AT BAY**

Fact: It's not recommended to add excessive amounts of salt to your diet, even if it's loaded with iodine. Instead, you can consume a balanced diet that includes natural sources of iodine such as fish, dairy products, and eggs, to maintain a healthy thyroid.

WHEN CRICKET MEETS TENNIS

ndian cricket icon Virat Kohli on Sunday opened up about the mutual admiration he shares with Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic in a heart-warming tale of cross-sport camaraderie.

It all started when Kohli reached out to the record 24-time Major champion on social media with a simple

greeting.
But to his surprise, the tennis maestro had already messaged him, marking the beginning of their

friendship.
"I got in touch with Novak very organically, I was just looking at his profile once on Instagram and I just happened to press the message button. I thought I'll just say hello, maybe," Kohli revealed on BCCI twitter ahead of his T20 comeback against Afghanistan at Indore.
"And then I saw a message from him

on my DM already. I never opened it myself. So, first time I saw my own messages myself, I saw, he messaged me himself. And I was like, let me just check if it's a fake account or some-

"But then I checked it again and it was legitimate. And then, yeah, we got talking. We keep exchanging mes-

sages every now and then. I congratulated him for all his amazing achievements."

The two athletes quickly found common ground, regularly exchanging congratulatory messages on their respective achievements. They both are also epitome of supreme fitness allowing them to excel even in their

Djokovic also congratulated Kohli on his 50th ODI century, by posting an Instagram story, a gesture that resonated deeply with the Indian cricketing great.

"When I got my 50th century recent-ly, he put out a story and he sent me a very nice message as well. So, there's been a mutual admiration, respect. 'It's really nice to connect with global athletes who are, you know, excelling at a high level. And I think, collectively, what I think about it is sending out a message of inspiration to the next generation in a way.
"I have a lot of respect for him, his





journey, his passion for fitness, something that I dearly follow myself and believe in a lot. So there's a lot to con-



he is playing. I will definitely catch up with him and just chill out and maybe

Kohli's message for Djokovic came hours after the 36-year-old tennis told the Sony Sports Network that they both are "text buddies".
"Virat Kohli and I have been texting

a bit for a few years. We never got a chance to meet in person, but it was really an honour and a privilege to hear him speak nicely about me.

"I obviously admire all of his career and achievements. I started to play cricket, but I'm not very good at it. But I have a task to perfect my cricket skills before I come to India, and don't embarrass myself, when I'm there," Djokovic said.

Djokovic's only visit to India came in 2014 when he visited New Delhi for the now defunct International Tennis Premier League. The 36-year-old hopes to revisit the country with which he feels strongly connected to. "I've felt that for many years (connection). I visited India only once around 10 or 11 years ago for a twoday exhibition event in New Delhi. It was a brief stay, and I hope to return soon to explore the country's rich history, culture, and spirituality," he added.

to Diokovic for the Australian Open where the Serb will look for a record-

extending 25th Grand Slam. Ahead of the Australian Open, Djokovic was seen playing an exhibition match with Aussie batter Steve

Smith. Kohli saw that clip and was also tempted to play with the Serb.

"I saw that clip of him and Steve playing a bit of cricket and tennis. I think he's way better at swinging the bat than probably we are at swinging that racket. Steve did pretty well to return his serve.

"So I was a bit tempted. I was like, you know when you play cricket and you have hand-eye coordination, you're very tempted with racket sports.

"You feel like, I can do this. But I've seen games live, tennis matches, and I know how fast those serves are, so I probably don't have a chance to touch that.

"But yeah, it'll be nice to probably do that with him as well. And hopefully, it's probably the only thing I can teach him is how to hold a cricket bat," Kohli added.

Chappell slams abysmal pace of play in Test cricket

 $T^{\text{he T20 boom has threatened}}_{\text{the existence of Test cricket}}$ but what is also hurting the red-ball game is the "abysmal pace of play", reckons Australian great Ian Chappell.

In a column for ESPNcricinfo, Chappell blamed the batters for wasting too much time in the middle.

"The pace of play in Test cricket is abysmal. It's slowing every day and nothing is being done to improve matters.
"On the one hand Ben Stokes

genuinely strives to improve the entertainment quotient of Test cricket but he's being undermined by the administrators' lack of initiative," he wrote before asking some pertinent questions.

Why are batters allowed to meet mid-pitch during overs to discuss who knows what without penalty? Why aren't batters informed that etiquette requires them to be in their stance at the crease when a bowler is ready to deliver?

"Heat extremes excepted, why allow drinks at times outside of the regular break? Why do glove changes occur so often? Surely this is superstition more than need. Why aren't boundaries sig-

nalled only for balls that hit the rope rather than allowing pointless replays that look at the whereabouts of a fielder's feet or hands?" he asked.

The DRS also has also contributed to the slow pace of the game, feels Chappell.
"Have administrators heard how

players shouldn't argue with an umpire? Then why do those same administrators encourage arguing with an umpire by allowing players to review decisions? The number of tactical reviews is growing out of hand and replays are taking too much

"How come players are allowed to charge at umpires while they are appealing, without any recrimination? I was appalled to see Australian players indulging

in this heinous behaviour in the SCG Test recently. This bad habit should be subject to penalty." He also questioned batters getting away with changing stance till the very last moment.

"How can it be fair that a bowler has to nominate his method of delivery through the umpire (right- or left arm, over or round the wicket) but a batter can face up left-handed but then change to play a right-handed shot?

"There's one main reason for this to undermine the field placings. There is no doubt it's skilful but it's not fair. Fairness should be a consideration when framing cricket's laws. A batter shouldn't be allowed to change the order of his hands or feet,"



"Hopefully If he comes to India soon-

er, I happen to be in a country where

Shaun announces retirement from professional cricket

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian cricketer Shaun Marsh on Sunday announced his retirement from professional cricket, with the Melbourne Renegades' fixture against Sydney Thunder in the Big Bash League on Wednesday being his last assignment.

He joins former Australian skipper Aaron Finch into retirement. 'I have loved playing for the Renegades. I've met some great people over the last five years, and the friendships I've made will last a lifetime," Marsh, 40, said in a statement to the Renegades.

"To the Renegades' coaches and staff and everyone behind the scenes, thank you for backing me in from the start and over my final years. It's made my job a little easier out in the middle." Despite starting the season late

due to an injury, Marsh accumulating 181 runs in five outings at an average of 45.25 and a strike rate of 138.16. He also hit three half-centuries.

Before joining Renegades during the 2019-20 season, he had a lengthy and successful stint with Perth Scorchers between 2011-19, and he also paid tribute to his previous team. "I owe a lot to the Scorchers. I've

got some fond memories of playing in Perth and really enjoyed my time there. The back-to-back titles are up there for me as the most enjoyable moments I've experienced on a cricket field," he concluded. Marsh also had a great stint with Australia across formats, scoring more than 5,200 runs and 13

centuries, while his last outing

for the Kangaroos was against

Sri Lanka at The Oval during the

2019 ODI World Cup.

New Zealand beats Pakistan by 21 runs in T20

AP HAMILTON (NEW ZEALAND)

New Zealand overcame the loss of its captain in an innings that faltered late to beat Pakistan by 21 runs in the second Twenty20 International Sunday, taking a 2-0 lead in the five-match series.

The Black Caps failed to build on the foundation of the first half of its innings, making 194 for eight batting first after being 111 for one at the end of 10 overs. The batting slump followed captain Kane Williamson retiring hurt after 10 overs with a tight hamstring. Pakistan also stumbled in the

second half of its innings and was bowled out for 173 in the 20th over. Williamson is making a managed return from a serious knee injury and New Zealand would fear any setback to his rehabilitation. But, while he didn't field, Williamson was still padded up and apparently prepared to bat at the end of the New Zealand innings. Finn Allen's 74 from 41 balls set

a cracking pace early on in the New Zealand innings. Allen put on 59 in 5.1 overs with Devon Conway (20) for the first wicket and 52 in 4.9 overs with Williamson before the Kiwi captain retired hurt on 26.



that point and New Zealand lost three for 35 between the 11th and 16th overs. Allen was out at 137 for two, then Daryl Mitchell fell at 147 and Mark Chapman followed at 157 as the innings began to trend sharply down-

Mitchell Santner made a bright 25 before being wastefully run out as New Zealand lost its last seven wickets for 55 runs. "It was a good surface which

we've come to expect here at Sedden Park and the way Finn Allen and the boys at the top set it up was very pleasing," New Zealand's stand-in captain Tim Southee said. "But Pakistan pulled it back well and the two innings were quite similar in a

New Zealand was relieved Pakistan also produced an innings of two halves. It looked well on course to level the series when Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman made half-centuries in an 87-run partnership for the third wicket. Fakhar reached his half-centu-

ry from 23 balls with three fours and five sixes and seemed likely to follow Allen in providing the impetus for a substantial innings. But, he was out at that score and the onus once again fell on Babar to guide Pakistan

Haryana humble defending champions Saurashtra

 $H_{ ext{champions}}^{ ext{aryana humbled defending}}$ their own backyard by four wickets in a low-scoring Ranji Trophy game here on Sunday.

Resuming day three at 148 for six, Saurashtra stretched their second innings to 220 all out with the help of skipper Jaydev Unadkat (23) and Parth Bhut (47), setting a 166-run target for Haryana. Haryana did experience some anxious moments before getting home in the final session, having lost three quick wickets. Ashok Menaria (58 not out) anchored

the chase with Rahul Tewatia (10 not out) staying with him at the other end.

Saurashtra let the game slip away from them on the opening day when they were bundled out for 145 with Jayant Yadav taking a five-wicket haul. Harvana had made 200 in their

first innings with Saurashtra doing well to dismiss the opposition after the visitors made a strong start.

The game was dominated by spinners including Jayant and Nishant Sindhu from Haryana. From the hosts' side, veteran Dharmendrasinh Jadeja, Parth



Bhut and Yuvrajsinh Jadeja were the main wicket takers. Cheteshwar Pujara made 49 and

43 in his two innings. It was the first defeat of the season for Saurashtra who had got three points against Jharkhand in their opening game of the season. For Haryana, it was a timely result as they had to share a point each with Rajasthan in their opening game in which only 42 overs could be bowled due to bad light.

BRIEF SCORES: Saurashtra 145 and 220 in 78.3 overs (Cheteshwar Pujara 43, Arpit Vasavada 45, Parth Bhut 47; Nishant Sindhu 5/84). Haryana

200 in 67 overs and 168/6 in 59.1 overs (Ashok Menaria 58 not out; Dharmendrasinh Jadeja 4/58). Haryana won by four wickets. IN PUNE: Jharkhand 1st

innings: 403 all out Maharashtra 1st innings: 543 all out in 132 overs (Kedar Jadhav 182, Pavan Shah 136, Ankit Bawne 114 not out).

IN DELHI: Services 1st innings: 466/4 declared in 161.2 overs (Anshul Gupta 149, Ravi Chauhan 107, Rajat Paliwal 108 not out) Rajasthan 1st innings: 131/9 in 59 overs (Shubham Sharma 36; Ariun Sharma 3/32, Poonia Pooonia 2/21).

221-run first innings lead after the away

Facing a significant deficit, Bihar's second

innings showed some signs of resilience.

Sharman Nigrodh's 60 and Babul Kumar's

52 laid the foundation, and the team

Chhattisgarh's Jivesh Butte, Gagandeep Singh and Sourabh Majumdar claimed a

wicket each, but Bihar displayed determi-

nation to narrow the deficit to 77 runs.

The spotlight will be on Bihar's middle

BRIEF SCORES

IN MUMBAI: Mumbai 395. Andhra 184;

72 overs (Prasanth Kumar 73, Uppara

Girinath 34 not out; Shams Mulani 6/65,

Dhawal Kulkarni 3/38) and following on

164/5; 51 overs (Shaik Rasheed 52 batting,

Hanuma Vihari 46; Mulani 3/63). Andhra

reached 144/3 at the end of Day 3.

side declared for 329/2.

Bhatt takes six thrash Puducherry



Exploiting helpful conditions, veteran leftarm spinner Bhargav Bhatt returned a six-wick et haul to lead Baroda to a comprehensive 98-run win over Puducherry in their Ranji Trophy Group D match, here on Sunday. The 33-year-old bowler, who had taken a fifer in the first innings, totalled 11 wickets for the match, his fourth 10-wicket haul

in first-class cricket.

He was assisted by young leg-spinner Mahesh Pithiya, who made full use of the conditions to grab four second-innings wickets as the two slow bowlers made

The day started with the match evenly poised. Baroda were tottering at 128 for 7. Their innings folded soon for 154 with Kinit Patel (28) emerging the highest scorer. However, the 218 Baroda scored on day 1 and the way their slow bowlers dismissed Puducherry for 155

Bhatt, after his fine 5/49 in his first innings, came back

to demolish Puducherry in the second essay. The left-right combination of Bhatt and Pithiya did not allow the Puducherry batters to settle down even as the

Gaurav Yadav was the only Puducherry batter to get past 30 with Bhatt returning a superb economy rate of 2.55 in his 18 overs.

BRIEF SCORES:

IN VADODARA: Baroda 218 and 154 in 48.5 overs (Sagar Udeshi 6/70, Jay Pande 2/26) beat Puducherry

Senapati 277, Harshit Rathod 60 not out). Madhya Praesh 246/6 in 80.3 overs (Harsh Gawli 137 not out; Sunil Roul 3/76).

overs (Aditya Tare 79; Abhishek Kumar 5/43). Himachal Pradesh 271 and 39/6 in 12.1 overs (Deepak Dhapola

Mulani 9 wickets haul propels Mumbai to brink of win against Andhra

Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani Claimed a stellar nine-wicket haul to put Mumbai on the brink of a big win against Andhra in their Ranji Trophy Group B fixture here on Sunday.

Mulani wreaked havoc on Andhra's batting lineup, scalping an impressive 6/65 wickets in the first innings to help Mumbai shoot out Andhra for 184 in 72

Forced to bat again, Andhra were reduced to 17/3 in the second essay inside the first hour with Mulani accounting for two of the top-three en route to his figures of The 26-year-old's ability to extract turn

and maintain control over the proceed-

ings left Andhra struggling to stage a

fightback as they found themselves tottering at 166/5 following-on. Veteran Hanuma Vihari showed some resilience with a resolute 101-ball 46 but seamer Royston Dias accounted for him. Andhra's battle revolved around Shaik Rasheed who remained unbeaten on 52 (103b) in company with their bowling hero Nitish Reddy (22 batting). The Ricky Bhui-led side need to score 47 more to

Mumbai bat again. RANA LIFTS UP HOPE VS BENGAL: Nitish Rana led from the front with an unbeaten 47 (43b) after Samarth Singh

avoid an innings defeat and make



(54) and Aryan Juyal (42) failed to convert their starts to give home side Uttar Pradesh a glimmer of hope after their first innings setback against Bengal at the

Kanpur Green Park. His aggressive yet composed knock, marked by five boundaries and two sixes, played a key role in guiding UP to 178/4 in their second essay, a crucial 50-run lead going into the final day.

Bengal, who are desperate for a win after managing just one-point against Andhra in their Ranji opener, found solace in pacer Mohammed Kaif who was their one contributor with 3/72.

The younger brother of India speedster Mohammed Shami, Kaif had claimed 4/14 in UP's 60 allout in the first innings. Kaif dismissed Samarth Singh (54), Aryan Juyal (42), and Priyam Garg (12) in UP's top-four to bolster Bengal's hopes. Under fading lights, UP lost Garg and Karna Sharma (4) in successive overs but Rana held the fort with Akashdeep Nath (11 battiing from 30b) as the match is poised for a tantalising final day. CHHATTISGARH ON TOP VS

BIHAR: In Patna, Rishabh Tiwari's magnificent 138 and Ashutosh Singh's unbeaten 134 gave Chhattisgarh a commanding

IN KANPUR: Uttar Pradesh 60 and 178/4; 52 overs (Samarth Singh 54, Nitish Rana 47 batting, Aryan Juyal 42; Mohammed Kaif 3/72). **Bengal** 188. UP lead by 50 runs. IN PÁTNA: Bihar 108 and 144/3; 40 overs (Sharman Nigrodh 60, Babul

trail by 47 runs.

Kumar 52). Chhattisgarh 329/2 declared; 83 overs (Rishabh Tiwari 138, Ashutosh Singh 134 not out). Bihar trail by 77 runs. IN GUWAHATI: Kerala 419; Assam 231/7; 62 overs (Riyan Parag 116; Basil Thampi 4/69). Assam trail by 188 runs.

wickets as Baroda



Baroda, led by Vishnu Solanki, after setting Puducherry 218-run target for victory, dismissed the opponents for 119 in 35.1 overs on day 3 of the tournament, with Bhatt (6/46) doing the maximum damage.

merry taking all 10 wickets.

to take a handy 63-run first-innings lead, gave them enough cushion to defend the 218-run target.

deteriorating day 3 pitch did its job.

155 and 119 in 35.1 overs (Gaurav Yadav 32; Bhargav Bhatt 6/46, Mahesh Pithiya 4/49) by 98 runs. IN INDORE: Odisha 498 in 170.2 overs (Subhranshu

IN DHARAMSALA: Uttarakhand 238 and 227 in 71.5

vijayawada | Monday January 15, 2024



Actress Manchu Lakshmi, who was recently having one of the best times at Koh Samui, gets candid with The Pioneer about this trip and shares some interesting experiences in this exclusive chat.

SHIKHA DUGGAL

The well-known Telugu cinema star Lakshmi Manchu recently revealed some old photos of herself alongside Pragya Jaiswal, Jackky Bhagnani, Bhumi Pednekar, and Rakul Preet Singh, among other celebrities from Koh Samui. The celebrities are seen in the photos enjoying a great time while on vacation. That prompted us to give the actress a quick call for an entertainment feature so we could find out what exactly went into these joyout what exactly went into these joyful pictures.

"Ît's a favorite spot of mine that I frequently visit. It encompasses



almost the whole island, from top to bottom. In forty-five minutes, you can drive it," with great delight, the seasoned actress spoke. She goes on to provide specifics. "When Nirvana was two and a half years old, my daughter visited Koh Samui.

We participated in all the tourist activities during our previ-ous visit! We merely enjoyed the water this time because, as become older, we don't want to visit the elephant and tiger reserve to see the animals in confinement. in particular, the

sea! Every day we were in the There were twenty of them, and for an instant, the actress thought

she was back in college. It was as though she had arrived on a field trip! There were schedules for things like breakfasts and early wake-ups. They accomplished something enjoyable every day that they will never forget. "If you're curious about my fashion game, it's hilarious. I made numerous attempts to style my hair so that it wouldn't fall

on my face. Your hair will frizz very quickly, so you can't blow dry it to quickly, so you can't blow dry it to make it appear presentable. You're going to get tired of the humidity! Being from Los Angeles, I am familiar with beach life. All I needed to do was determine if the beach would be Thai or European. Oh hi, it's

just me, yo, hence the gram on fire," the boss woman added. Everybody in the

gang loved to eat. They devoured whatever they could! They even have a group on Manchu Lakshmi's WhatsApp with the same name. Her pals from

Bombay love food a lot! "The coconut water had a really sweet taste. I ate rice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The mangoes were on the same list! I've given up on white rice and beef as of late January. When I was on vacation, I went into overdrive and now I have to make

up for it somehow."

She just liked to spend much of her time lying down on the sand so she could feel the warmth. Next, they grabbed a yatch! They leaped into the center of the ocean, and to

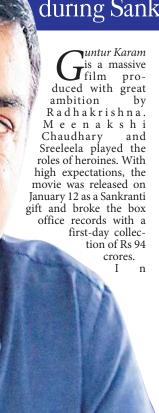
her surprise, the high tidal nearly took her away. It was really intense, and she needed to be saved! Her daughter and she were separated, and she was freaking out. "When I returned to the yacht, I asked my daughter weren't you afraid? And she says, 'Amma, I was just enjoying being in the water,' because I was wearing a life jacket and everyone could see me. Our children teach us so much. I realise shortly afterward that I could have responded the same way rather than freaking

tollywood

They were all staying at the same place, as she had previously mentioned, so it was similar to a slumber party. Waking each other up in the morning, and up in the morning, and then not letting each other sleep. And this amusing scene: "Pragya just stood up and yelled, 'Hey, you're eating all my mango sticky rice, Aman. Pragya has rarely raised her voice, so when she did her voice, so when she did, we all burst out laughing. Pragya was really possessive about her sticky rice with mango, hehe."



'An excellent film cannot be stopped, little conflicts between producers during Sankranti happen every year'



Karam was released in honour of Sankranti. "The fact that the response exceeded our expectations makes us very happy. Very good collections have been made. Days later, a Telugu regional film filled with sentimental family moments arrived. The spectators are providing the anchor. Even though there was disagreement in some areas, it all subsided prior to the evening performances. A festive movie that the entire family can enjoy. A film perfect for a festival, complete with sentiment, combat scenes, and songs. We promise to keep everyone amused."

Meanwhile, producer Dil Raju wished everyone a happy Sankranti. "An eclectic conversation

Juntur Karam regards to the same, the show aired at one in the makers organised a press conference. According to the producer Naga Vamsi, Guntur theater. The character of Mahesh Babu is the basis for the film Guntur Karam. A family emotional movie between mother and son. The entire family can enjoy watching this movie together. The feeling that emerges in the end! The final mass song is being enjoyed by the audience. The amount of money the movie made after the festival is visible. There are still four days left in the festival.

An excellent film cannot be stopped. That's the past. There are little conflicts between the producers during Sankranti every year. This is the commercial world. Here, the only difficulties are commercial ones. They are unopposed."

getting a lot of good response to his recently released film *HanuMan*, has shared that his favourite homegrown superhero films are 'Koi Mil Gaya', it's sequel 'Krrish' and the Malayalam film 'Minnal Murali'.

Teja said that he is a "huge fan of Koi Mil Gaya". He may not have watched many super-heroes from international cinema but he takes

Khan sir collaborating with Atlee sir, and Prabhas sir collaborating with Prashanth Neel sir from Karnataka. They collaborated with Prithviraj Sukumaran sir from Malayalam as well."

"We have to give huge respect to both stars, Prithviraj sir in Malayalam, is a huge star. Prabhas sir, who is a huge star himself. There's *Kalki* coming up and *Thalaivar 170*. These are the kinds of collaborations that we are trying to launch because there are no more boundaries immense pride in the homegrown superheroes. languages, no more boundaries of



He said, "I've not watched many English superhero films. Marvel and DC never clicked with me because of the lack of cultural understanding. But I love Koi Mil Gaya. I love Minnal Murali also. The other day I was in Kochi talking about Minnal Murali. Tovino Thomas sir was also there, he said he also knew about HanuMan and he wants to do something for HanuMan. I hope we can do something together."

Talking about the unified force that Indian cin-

ema has become with the lines between different film industries in India blurring, the actor said that best is yet to come for Indian cinema.

"We are always better than yesterday.
Tomorrow will be brighter and better. That
is what we aspire for. It has just begun.
The biggest example is Shah Rukh



Varun Dhawan, Atlee perform devotional duties of VD 18 during Muhurat ceremony



♦ he glimpses from the muhurat pooja ceremony of the upcoming Varun Dhawan-starrer film, tentatively titled *VD18*, were unveiled on the occasion of Makar Sankranti and Pongal on Sunday. The movie also marks the debut of Keerthy Suresh in Hindi cinema.

The video shows the team of *VD* 18 attending the ceremony. Varun donned a Periwinkle shirt as he walked into the venue. He later changed into ethnic wear as he participated in the ceremony. The makers

and the cast took to their respective social handles commemorating the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti and Pongal to officially unveil the project by sharing glimpses of the ceremony which was held in Mumbai.

The film is directed by A. Kaleeswaran, and brings together a dynamic team of industry talents, promising audiences a solid cinematic experience.

Last month, Varun announced the wrap up of the Kerala sched-

of $VD\ 18$, dropping beautiful glimpses from 'God's own country'. Taking to Instagram, Varun, who enjoys $46.8\ \mathrm{mil}$ lion followers on Instagram, gave a sneak peek into beautiful Kerala.

In the picture, he was seen wearing a black T-shirt and matching shorts, posing against a picturesque backdrop with his arms spread wide open.

He wrote in the caption: "Thank u Kerala Sched wrap #VD18." Varun, who has been featured in Forbes India's Celebrity 100 list since 2014, was last seen on screen in *Bawaal* alongside Janhvi Kapoor. Other details of *VD 18* are still under wraps.

The film is presented by Jio Studios, and the Jawan director Atlee in association with A for Apple Studios and Cinel Studios. It is produced by Murad Khetani, Priya Atlee, and Jyoti Deshpande.

Maruthi's *Bhale Unnade* will feature Raj Tarun as the lead

irector and producer Maruthi, who created numerous successful blockbusters, has been helming some unusual films with modern themes. The filmmaker, who is currently working with rebel star Prabhas on a pan-Indian movie, revealed his newest production project. Presenting the film is Maruthi Team Product, with N.V. Kiran Kumar serving as Production No. 1 of Ravikiran Arts! Raj Tarun, a young hero who dabbled in many genres and subjects, will play the lead role in this family-friendly comedy, which will be helmed by J Sivasai Vardhan, a director making his directorial debut and known for his work on popular web series like Geetha Subramanyam, Pelli Gola 2, U&I Hello World, and others. In addition to wishing everyone a happy Bhogi and Sankranthi, the film's title and first look were revealed by the producers. Bhale Unnade is a fitting title for the

equipment and is a professional saree draper. He smiles endearingly as he goes, with flowers, his draped accessories, makeup, and other objects visible in the backdrop. The first look poster is captivating and exudes optimism. Presenting Manisha Kandkur as the leading heroine, Krishna, with the renowned director Singeetham Srinivas playing a key role. Abhirami, Ammu Abhirami (Narappa fame), and Leela Samson are the other important cast. Shekar Chandra is in charge of the music section, and Nagesh Banella controls the camera. The executive producers are Mukkara Muralidhar Reddy and B G Govinda Raju. Dasari Venkata Sathish is the line producer, B Ramakrishna Raju is the production controller, Srikanth Patnaik R is the editor, Suresh Bhimagani, aka "baby," is the art director, and Siva Kumar Macha is the production designer.

