

Paddy procurement is a testing time for the government given the record paddy harvest. We request rice millers to support the government's efforts. Public representatives and officials must play a proactive role in making Telangana's largest-ever paddy procurement initiative a success.

Delays or negligence will not be tolerated under any circumstance

- Uttam Kumar Reddy, Minister

www.dailypioneer.com
 Published From: HYDERABAD DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR CHANDIGARH BHUBANESWAR RANCHI DEHRADUN VIJAYAWADA

'India and China await de-escalation'
 5

BIG INDUSTRY
 NEEDS TO TAKE PLUNGE IN SPACE SECTOR: ISRO
 8

Rahasyam Idham Jagath is based on Sri Chakra:
 KOMAL R BHARADWAJ
 P11

DON'T MISS...

HYDRAA holds survey ...

HYDRAA, under the directives of Commissioner AV Ranganath, conducted a comprehensive survey in Ameenpur on Tuesday in response to allegations of illegal encroachments on parks and roads. Complaints from residents of Venkataramana Colony accused Golden Key Ventures of encroaching on over an acre of park land as well as roads, prompting this investigation. Officials ...

-PAGE: 3

Tension grips Nirmal over ...

Tension gripped Nirmal town after a student of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School died on Tuesday morning. A statement by the officials said that a tragic incident occurred on Tuesday morning at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School in Nirmal district when a Class 9 student, Fayaz Hussain (14), fell ill while playing baseball. The teachers immediately took him to the government hospital, where the doctors ...

-PAGE: 4

'Festive consumption...

Japanese brokerage Nomura on Wednesday said the growth rate in festive consumption halved to 15 per cent in the current year. Analysts at the brokerage attributed their findings to 'rough estimates' and added that the same growth had stood at 32 per cent in 2023 and 88 per cent in 2022. "Anecdotal data suggests retail sales (offline and online) rose during this festive season, but overall growth rates are slower," they said in ...

-PAGE: 8

Aussie quick Boland looks to...

Australian pacer Scott Boland wants to extend the barren run of KL Rahul and keep him under pressure ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy when he faces the Indian batter in the four-day A-Team match here from Thursday. Rahul along with wicketkeeper batter Dhruv Jurel flew early to Australia, and will appear for India A in the second four-day game at the MCG. "I was lucky to bowl to him in a Test over in India a couple of years ago but it'll be nice to play against him in our backyard," Boland ...

-SPORTS

HARRIS OR TRUMP

Who will triumph?



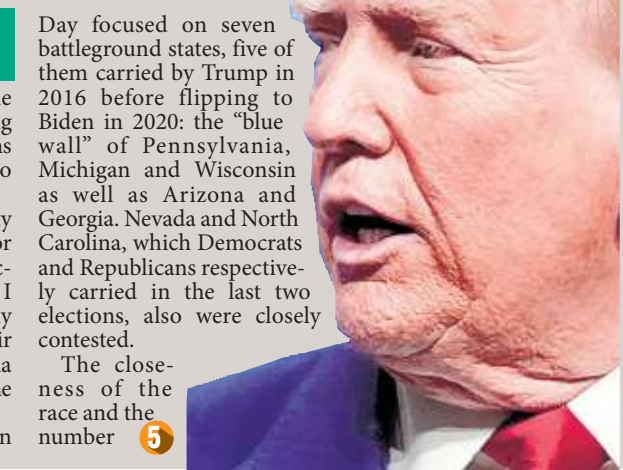
PNS ■ WASHINGTON

A presidential campaign marked by upheaval and rancor approached its finale on Election Day as Americans decided whether to send Donald Trump back to the White House or elevate Kamala Harris to the Oval Office. Polls opened across the nation on Tuesday morning as voters faced a stark choice between two candidates who have offered drastically different temperaments and visions for the world's largest economy and dominant military power. Harris, the Democratic vice president, stands to be the first

Locked in close battle in presidential election

female president if elected. She has promised to work across the aisle to tackle economic worries and other issues without radically departing from the course set by President Joe Biden. Trump, the Republican former president, has vowed to replace thousands of federal workers with loyalists, impose sweeping tariffs on allies and foes alike, and stage the largest deportation operation in US history. The two candidates spent the waning hours of the campaign overlapping in Pennsylvania, the biggest battleground state. They were trying to energise their bases as well as Americans still on the fence or debating whether to vote at all. "It's important, it's my civic duty and it's important that I vote for myself and I vote for the democracy and the country which I supported for 22 years of my life," said Ron Kessler, 54, an Air Force veteran from Pennsylvania who said he was voting for just the second time. Harris and Trump entered Election

Day focused on seven battleground states, five of them carried by Trump in 2016 before flipping to Biden in 2020: the "blue wall" of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin as well as Arizona and Georgia, Nevada and North Carolina, which Democrats and Republicans respectively carried in the last two elections, also were closely contested. The closeness of the race and the number



'Committed to caste census'

Will make TG role model for nation: Rahul

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the caste census in Telangana would be a role model for the nation, the Leader of the Opposition (LOP) in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, said that bureaucrats should not prepare questions for the caste census. The questions should be prepared according to 'people's thoughts', he said. Addressing the meeting held on 'Consultations on Caste Census' at

the Bowenpally Gandhi Ideology Centre on Tuesday, Rahul said that inequalities would increase if there is caste discrimination and the caste system. He said that he had stated in Parliament that the Congress would launch a caste census and remove the cap on reservations. Rahul said that a caste census should be carried out across the country. He said that justice will be done to those who

Continued on Page 5

One needs guts to decide on caste census: CM

States not empowered to take over all private properties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a majority 7:2 ruling, the Supreme Court on Tuesday held that states are not empowered under the Constitution to take over all privately-owned resources for distribution to serve the "common good".

A nine-judge bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, however, said states can stake claim over private properties in certain cases.

The majority verdict pronounced by the CJ overruled Justice Krishna Iyer's previous ruling that all privately owned resources can be acquired by the State for distribution under Article 39(b) of the Constitution.

The CJ wrote for himself and six other judges on the bench which decided the vexed legal question on whether private properties can be considered "material resources of

SC holds in majority decision

The majority verdict pronounced by the CJ overruled Justice Krishna Iyer's previous ruling that all privately owned resources can be acquired by the State for distribution under Article 39(b) of the Constitution



the community" under Article 39(b) and taken over by State authorities for distribution to subserve the "common good".

It overturned several verdicts that had adopted the socialist theme and ruled that states can take over all private properties for common good.

Justice BV Nagarathna partially disagreed with the majority judgment penned by the CJ, while Justice Sudhanshu Dhulia dissented on all aspects.

The pronouncement of judgments is underway.

The top court had, in the Minerva Mills case of 1980, declared two provisions of the 42nd Amendment, which prevented any constitutional amendment from being "called in question in any court on any ground" and accorded precedence to the Directive Principles of State Policy over the fundamental

Continued on Page 5

Why is real estate crashing if state is in autopilot mode: KTR

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"Why is the real estate industry in bad shape this year compared to last year if the state is in autopilot mode," BRS MLA KT Rama Rao

asked while addressing a gathering of the Telangana Realtors Forum at the Srinagar Colony here on Tuesday. KTR voiced his opinions on the struggles facing the real estate sector under the Congress-led government. He highlighted how Telangana, during BRS's tenure, had transformed into a hub of development, emphasizing the contrast with

Continued on Page 5



'Pledges support to auto drivers'

At a mass protest organised by auto drivers near Indira Park, BRS working president KT Rama Rao (KTR) delivered a powerful speech, emphasising the plight of the State's auto drivers under the current Congress government.

He expressed shock at the rising trend of auto drivers considering extreme steps due to economic hardships, a situation he said was unimaginable just a decade ago under KCR's leadership. He called for stronger enforcement and proactive measures to protect national icons from similar incidents in future.

Continued on Page 5

A 'testing time' for TG
 Uttam on paddy purchase



PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy described paddy procurement as a 'testing time' for the government due to the record paddy yield and called on public representatives to ensure smooth procurement operations. He called on public representatives and officials to play a proactive

role to make Telangana's largest-ever paddy procurement drive a success. Uttam also stressed adherence to Central guidelines on the paddy's moisture content and said that farmers must be educated about these standards. Expecting disruptions like unseasonal rains, Uttam directed the Civil Supplies Commissioner, DS Chauhan, to ensure prompt

Continued on Page 5

HC to hear case seeking disqualification of defectors today

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana High Court on Tuesday took up the case regarding the disqualification of MLAs who defected from the BRS to join the Congress.

After the Congress came to power in the state, some BRS MLAs crossed over to the Congress, resulting in a petition for their disqualification filed by BRS MLAs KP Vivekananda Goud and Padi Kaushik Reddy. A single bench judge of the High Court had earlier issued an order directing the Assembly Speaker to disqualify the defected MLAs within four weeks.

Continued on Page 5

Govt going ahead with Gandhi statue

NAVEENA GHANATE
 naveena.ghanate@gmail.com
 ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana Government is proceeding with the installation of the tallest statue of Mahatma Gandhi, despite opposition from Mahatma Gandhi's family.

Tushar Gandhi, a great-grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, voiced his concern, questioning the necessity of installing another statue of the leader. Meanwhile, a high-level review meeting reportedly chaired by the Chief Minister on Tuesday focused on the "Gandhi Sarovar" project.

The initiative, which is being executed by Meinhardt, will feature not only the towering statue but also the transformed Babu Ghat, envisioned as an immersive tribute to Gandhi's

But, Babu's kin opposes move



The initiative, which is being executed by Meinhardt, will feature not only the towering statue but also the transformed Babu Ghat, envisioned as an immersive tribute to Gandhi's legacy and is also part of the Musi Project. During the meeting, officials reportedly discussed the project's scope, including design elements that would represent Gandhi's ideals and life. Reacting to the attack on the Gandhi statue in Pragathi Nagar, Tushar said, "This is also a reason why I am against more Babu statues."

In the Pragathi Nagar area of Cyberabad a statue of Mahatma Gandhi was reportedly vandalised for a second time. Local activist Sai Teja, commenting on the incident on social media, said that such acts are becoming increasingly frequent. He expressed frustration at the lack of safety measures, pointing out the absence of streetlights and CCTVs in the area, which he said is the root cause of the repeated vandalism. "This is the second incident in the same location," Teja said, emphasizing that such acts are punishable under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1957. He called for stronger enforcement and proactive measures to protect national icons from similar incidents in future.

'Cong wasting TG funds'

Sanjay says Cong giving full-page ads in Maha about its six guarantees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Congress is giving full-page advertisements in Maharashtra claiming that it has implemented all its six guarantees in Telangana and has waived farm loans in full, Union Minister of State for Home Sanjay said.

This is similar to how KCR spent Telangana's funds on Maharashtra elections and distributed money in Punjab, leaving Telangana farmers in distress, he pointed out and added that the Congress is misusing TG funds for Maharashtra elections. "Do you want to put flowers in the ears of the people of Maharashtra? It is a shame that Congress leaders



are now ready to deceive the people of Maharashtra just as they came to power with false promises and deceived the people of Karnataka and Telangana. The Telangana people must realise the lies and deceptions of the Congress," Sanjay said.

Speaking to the media during the inauguration of development projects in Rudrangi in Vemulawada on Tuesday, Sanjay asked whether Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has the guts to answer about the six guarantees he promised.

Continued on Page 5

BRS may not be able to maintain equidistance from BJP & Cong

One may have enemies in politics. But when it comes to handling enemies, one needs capability to ensure success. Survival in politics requires defeating the enemy by any means. Those who extend or seek help to defeat the enemy may not be like-minded in politics. These parties might have ideological differences, but they may secretly join hands to achieve common goals. The element of common political purpose would make them join hands behind the screen to tackle the enemy. The approaching local body polls might be a litmus test for the ruling Congress and would give it an opportunity to assess its status among the public. The Congress which promised to bring the Moon to the people was given a chance to rule. At present, the



Congress government is trying hard to wriggle out of the cobweb of its election promises due to the state's bad fiscal health. Now it is fighting against its arch-rival, the BJP, and the BRS. The people of Telangana know the role played by the BRS during the Telangana movement. BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao (KCR) strategically secured early polls to minimise Modi's influence in Telangana. KCR managed to sway people by painting the alliance between the Congress and the TDP as unholy and detrimental to the interests of Telangana. He said that voting for the Congress means inviting 'Andhra rule' due to the presence of the TDP and its supremo Chandrababu Naidu in the alliance. As expected by KCR,

The arrest of KCR's daughter K Kavitha for her alleged involvement in the Delhi liquor scam, has badly affected the BRS. There is an opinion that help from the BRS enabled the BJP to win eight Lok Sabha seats for the first time. During the 1999 elections, the BJP could win only seven Lok Sabha seats in United AP even though it had an alliance with the TDP



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

people fell for this argument and voted for him. After winning a second consecutive election, KCR's dictatorial tendencies came out and the anti-incumbency factor became the deciding factor in the 2023 TG Assembly elections. This led to the BRS suffering a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Congress. Now, the BRS is recouping. The arrest of KCR's daughter K Kavitha for her alleged

involvement in the Delhi liquor scam, has badly affected the BRS. There is an opinion that help from the BRS enabled the BJP to win eight Lok Sabha seats for the first time. During the 1999 elections, the BJP could win only seven Lok Sabha seats in United AP even though it had an alliance with the TDP. In the 1998 elections, the BJP had bagged four Lok Sabha seats on its own. Now in

Telangana. Incidentally, Kavitha got bail shortly which even the AAP couldn't manage for its leaders. The series of incidents that culminated in the defeat of the BRS created the impression that the BRS was focused on defeating the Congress both at the Centre and in TG. The BRS's image was badly affected by its crushing defeat. But surprisingly, the voters of Hyderabad rallied behind KCR. This surprised even BRS leaders as the Congress failed to win even a single LS seat in Hyderabad. The BRS has to defeat the Congress to regain its lost glory and for that sometimes the BJP's help might be necessary. BJP leaders might brush this aside and boast that their party would come to power in the next Assembly elections. But as the ruling party at the Centre, the BJP would natural-

ly try to focus on the Centre by acquiring support during the Lok Sabha polls from states like Telangana. The party is not in a position to win power in Telangana as it still has no presence in the state's rural areas. But the leaders and cadres of both the Congress and the BJP are engaged in a war of words accusing the BRS of acting as the B-team of the latter. The results of the last Lok Sabha polls indicate that the BRS had a hand in the BJP's upsurge. Political pundits say that the politics of compromise might have forced the BRS to help the BJP. HYDRABAD operations are also getting a political colour due to demolitions in some areas. The BRS's options before the 2028 Assembly polls must be viewed in the context of the current political situation. When it comes to survival, it

has to choose between the BJP and the Congress if both the national parties seek support to form a government. Both Telangana and the BRS are not new things for the BJP and the Congress. The requirements of national parties change from state to state. Regional parties also change their priorities depending on their needs. In South India, some parties like the DMK and the Janata Dal (Secular) have changed their priorities for political gains. Both parties have shifted their loyalties from the NDA and UPA depending on circumstances. When it comes to politics all parties including the BRS have to act according to circumstances. Maintaining equidistance from both the Congress and the BJP may not be possible for the BRS as it has to go a long way to regain lost ground.

One needs guts to decide on caste census: CM

Caste census is Govt's responsibility: CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that the social, economic, political, educational, employment and caste census survey was considered the responsibility of the government. Revanth said that it is great that Rahul came here to take suggestions from civil society. One needs the courage to take this decision. Rahul came here with the idea of social responsibility and equal opportunities, he said. Addressing the meeting on consultations on caste census held at the Gandhi Ideology Centre at Bowenpally on Tuesday, the CM said that Rahul's idea is to show with action, not words. Rahul has taken a step forward to

provide education, healthcare, employment and social justice to the people. "We must fulfil the promise given by Rahul Gandhi. In the recently conducted Group 1 examination, 31,383 candidates were selected for Mains.

Out of which, OCS-3076 (9.8%), EWS-2774 (8.8%), OBCs-17,921 (57.11%), SCs-4828 (15.3%), STs-2783 (8.8%). This is proof of our sincerity. We are Rising Telangana. We must implement Rahul Gandhi's promise to the

nation," the CM said. The CM said that after completing the caste census, we will provide the BCs with due reservation. We are passing a resolution on this platform to consider the caste census in the 2025 national census.

Rahul & Congress will keep their word: Mahesh

TPCC President B. Mahesh Kumar Goud said that at a time when a caste census is being conducted in Telangana, we feel fortunate that AICC leader Rahul Gandhi is taking part in this programme organised by the Congress. He said that if Rahul and the Congress give their word,

they will do it. Rahul had promised to conduct a caste census before the elections. He met many intellectuals, caste associations and social workers during his Bharat Jodo Yatra. Rahul Gandhi took their opinion and promised to conduct a caste census, he said.

Mahesh said that representatives of all communities and castes have participated in the Congress function. Rahul said the caste census is like an X-ray. The Telangana Government has started work on the caste census and has set an example for the country, he added.

Govt sincere about conducting caste census: Uttam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy said the state government is working with utmost sincerity to launch the caste census. He said that Rahul promised to launch the caste census on the occasion of his visit to Telangana and during the elections. The government is working hard to fulfil that promise, he added. Addressing the meeting on consultations regarding the caste census on Tuesday, Uttam said, "We have said in our manifesto that a caste census will be conducted. We are conducting the caste census as per our word. For enumerating castes, we have done a field study in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. During local body elections, we are increasing reservations for BCs as per the census."

Sridhar hurls 10 unanswered questions at BRS

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Minister for IT and Industries, Duddilla Sridhar Babu, has issued an open letter containing 10 questions demanding accountability from BRS leaders. Responding to the recent accusations against the Congress and Rahul Gandhi, Sridhar defended Congress's track record of 'championing' social justice and 'improving' the lives of marginalised communities. He asserted that the Congress, in both ruling and opposition roles, has remained 'committed to underprivileged communities, a commitment he claims the BRS has failed to uphold. Sridhar's questions focus on

what he described as unkept promises and inconsistencies in BRS's governance. He asked why BRS leaders have ignored the families of the 1,200 students and youth who sacrificed their lives during the second phase of the Telangana movement. He demanded answers on why these families, who deserved recognition and support, have been sidelined. Referring to a 2014 Assembly resolution by the then Chief Minister KCR, which acknowledged the 1,200 martyrs, Sridhar accused the BRS of reducing the official count to 585 in later GOs. He called for accountability on the missing 615 martyrs during the BRS's decade-long tenure. Highlighting the promises

made to martyrs' families, including financial aid, housing, jobs and free healthcare, he said that BRS leaders have failed to deliver on these commitments, leaving many families unsupported. Sridhar criticised the BRS for breaking its promise to appoint a Dalit as the Chief Minister and for abandoning the commitment to provide three acres to Dalit families. He criticised BRS leaders for the shift in their attitude towards Sonia Gandhi, once hailed as the 'Mother of Telangana.' Sridhar accused the BRS of turning against Sonia and Rahul and asked if this change was driven by their fear of political irrelevance.

Caste census may be intended to cancel quotas: BJP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The BJP said that it thinks that the survey being held from Wednesday in the name of the caste census is intended to cancel the reservations available to BCs, SCs and STs and the benefits of social welfare schemes run by the government available to the above groups. The BJP said the Congress government is conducting a social, economic, educational, employment, political and caste survey in the name of caste census to backstab BCs. Speaking to the media at the State BJP office here on Tuesday, Telangana BJP General Secretary Kasam Venkateshwarlu lashed out at the survey's proforma seeking peoples' personal details. He said that the Congress government is acting against Supreme Court directions. "When elections are going on in neighbouring states,



Rahul came to Telangana and conducted a meeting named intellectuals' conference. It seems to be another drama to deceive the people of Telangana. If Rahul has any sincerity about BCs, then as per the Udaipur Declaration two Assembly seats should be given to BCs in all parliament constituencies. The Congress government has promised to give preference to BCs in the appointment of corporation chairmen. How many chairmen are BCs? Rahul should answer," he said. Venkateshwarlu recalled that

before the Assembly elections, Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjuna Kharge and Priyanka Gandhi announced six guarantees and 66 schemes in the name of the Warangal Declaration, Kamareddy Declaration and Jagtial Declaration. "One year of Congress rule in Telangana is coming to an end. Rahul should reveal the extent to which the guarantees and assurances given have been met. Moreover, the drama in the name of the caste census should be stopped," he added.

Harish visits students at NIMS after food poisoning, Ministers follow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The recent food poisoning incident at the Wankidi Tribal Girls' Residential School has stirred political tension in Telangana, with over 60 students hospitalised following severe symptoms. Former minister Harish Rao visited NIMS Hospital, where some of the affected students, including 8th grader Mahalakshmi and 9th graders Jyothi and Shailaja, are receiving treatment. Shailaja, in particular, remains in critical condition, fighting for her life on a ventilator. During his visit, Harish Rao condemned the Congress government's handling of Gurukul schools, claiming that their negligence has led to an alarming deterioration in conditions. He pointed to recent incidents of food poisoning, snake bites, rat infestations and even electric shocks, asserting that Congress has allowed these once-revered



institutions to fall into disrepair. "This government's neglect has turned KCR's legacy of Gurukul schools into a symbol of crisis. Over the last 10 months, 36 students have lost their lives due to various causes, and around 600 students have suffered from food poisoning. If an average of three students are dying each month, this is no small matter. The government must address this with utmost urgency," Harish Rao stated, calling for accountability and immediate action to protect Telangana's students. In response to these allegations, Telangana Forest, Environment, and Endowments Minister Konda Sureka, along with Minister

Ponnam Prabhakar visited NIMS Hospital to meet the affected students and their families. Minister Sureka offered assurance to the parents, stating that the government is committed to supporting the students until their recovery. She also clarified that the affected students had consumed food brought from their homes, not the food served at the Wankidi Welfare Hostel, where other students reportedly remain healthy. "We are closely monitoring the situation and awaiting reports from the food safety team. Once we receive the report, necessary action will be taken," she announced, emphasising the government's commitment to addressing the incident thoroughly. Minister Sureka dismissed the political criticism from Harish Rao and other BRS members, calling it an attempt to exploit the incident for political gain.

FGG calls for urgent police reforms in TG

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Forum for Good Governance (FGG) has submitted a detailed appeal to the Telangana Chief Minister, highlighting the need for comprehensive police reforms in the State to address growing concerns of misconduct and accountability within the force. This move follows repeated instances of unauthorised phone-tapping, illegal land acquisitions and cases of alleged police intimidation. FGG, led by M Padmanabha Reddy, emphasised the failure of the State to fully implement the Supreme Court's directives from the landmark 2006 Prakash Singh case. This judgment mandated states to establish independent oversight bodies, namely the State Security Commission (SSC) and Police Complaints Authorities (PCAs), both at the State and district levels. According to Reddy, these bodies were meant to be functional, independent enti-

ties that would allow citizens to report and seek redress for police misconduct. However, in Telangana, the SSC and PCAs largely remain "on paper," he noted. FGG urged the State to either enact a new Police Act or amend the existing laws, in alignment with the model bill. It cited examples from other states, including Karnataka, Kerala and Maharashtra, which have enacted or updated their Police Acts. Telangana currently operates under outdated laws, including the Telangana District Police Act and the Hyderabad City Police Act, both of which need revision to reflect current governance needs. While Telangana has established these bodies through executive orders, FGG noted that the absence of formal procedural rules has limited their operational effectiveness. These rules are necessary for clear guidelines on complaint handling and operational jurisdiction.

Deepa Das Munshi, Prabhakar appear in court

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

AICC in-charge General Secretary Deepa Das Munshi and Telangana BJP Vice-President NVSS Prabhakar appeared in the Nampally Court on Tuesday in connection with Deepa Das Munshi's defamation case against NVSS Prabhakar. However, the court postponed the next hearing to December 5. It may be recalled that the court was angry with Prabhakar during the last hearing for abstaining from the hearing and directed that Prabhakar should attend the hearing on November 5. As per the court's directions, Prabhakar appeared in court on Tuesday. It may be recalled that Deepa Das Munshi had filed a defamation case against Prabhakar for saying that she took bribes to give LS election tickets during the Lok Sabha elections.

Flies on suspect's clothes help police crack murder case in MP's Jabalpur

PNS ■ JABALPUR (MP)

The flies stuck on the clothes worn by a 19-year-old suspect have led the police to solve a murder case in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur district, officials said on Tuesday. The suspect, identified as Dharam Thakur, has been arrested for allegedly killing his uncle Manoj Thakur alias Mannu (26) after a dispute over money. Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Sonali Dubey told reporters on Monday. The victim left home on October 30 morning for work but did not return till night. The body was found lying at an agriculture field in Deori Tapria village on October 31, she said. Dubey said the accused was the last person spotted with the victim at a market in Chargawan area. The accused, who was pre-

sent in the crowd at the murder scene, had reddened eyes and some marks were visible on his chest, Chargawan police station in-charge Abhishek Pyasi told on Tuesday. "While questioning regarding the person's whereabouts, I spotted that flies kept sticking to some of his clothes, which led to a suspicion about blood stains. Since he was wearing dark clothes, the blood stains were not visible," he said. The official said he got clothes of the accused examined by a forensic team present at the spot and it was ascertained that there were blood stains on them. The accused initially claimed innocence but later admitted to the crime, he said. The forensic lab team also found some blood stains on small pieces of wood lying close to the body, Dubey said.

TODAY ALMANAC

Month & Paksham: Sukla Paksha
Tithi: Panchami: Nov 06 12:17 AM to Nov 07 12:41 AM
Shashthi: Nov 07 12:41 AM to Nov 08 12:35 AM

Nakshatram:
Moola: Nov 05 09:45 AM to Nov 06 11:00 AM
Purva Ashadha: Nov 06 11:00 AM to Nov 07 11:47 AM

Rahukalam: 11:59 AM to 1:24 PM
Yamagandam: 7:45 AM to 9:10 AM
Varjyam: 08:55 PM to 10:34 PM
Gulika: 10:34 AM to 11:59 AM
Amritakalam: None
Abhijit Muhurtham: Nil

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Sunny
Temp: 32°
Humidity: 50%
Sunrise: 6:17 AM
Sunset: 5:42 PM
Updated: November 5, 2024 5:00 PM

JHARKHAND ELECTION MANIFESTO INDIA bloc promises 10 lakh jobs, Rs 15 lakh health cover for poor

PNS ■ RANCHI

The INDIA bloc on Tuesday unveiled its manifesto for the upcoming Jharkhand assembly elections, promising 10 lakh jobs for youth and health insurance coverage of up to Rs 15 lakh for the poor. The '7 guarantees', the election manifesto of the INDIA bloc, includes social justice by enhancing reservations for STs to 28 per cent, SCs to 12 per cent and OBCs to 27 per cent from 26 per cent, 10 per cent and 14 per cent, respectively. "INDIA bloc will ensure 10 lakh jobs for youth and Rs 15 lakh health cover for the poor," Congress president Mallikarjuna Kharge said while jointly releasing the manifesto with Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren and RJD's JP Yadav. Kharge said, "Whenever we talk about any guarantees, Prime Minister Narendra Modi immediately criticises it... PM Modi came here and during his speech, he mentioned my name and said that there is no reliability of Congress's guarantees... Congress fulfills all its guarantees but Modi's guarantees never get fulfilled."

Over three dozen Indian Americans running for state legislatures, local bodies

PNS ■ WASHINGTON

Over three dozen Indian Americans are running for local bodies and state legislatures across the country reflecting the growing interest among this small ethnic community to be part of political mainstream. "If you are not at the table, you are on the menu," Indian American Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi comments at various Indian American gatherings motivating and encouraging community members to run for elections at all levels. Probably the largest number of Indian Americans running for local offices are in the state of California, which sends two members to the House of Representatives - Ro Khanna and Dr Ami Bera - in addition

to Vice President Kamala Harris whose mother was from India. Those include Adlah Chisti who is running for County Supervisor for District 11, Aliya Chisti for City College Board San Francisco, Darshana Patel for State Assembly, Nicole Fernandez for San Mateo City Council, Nithya Raman for Los Angeles City Council, Richa Awasthi for Foster City Council and Sukhdeep Kaur for Emeryville City Council. Tara Sreekrishnan is seeking to enter California's State Assembly from District 26 in Silicon Valley. With close to 900,000 Indian Americans residents, California boasts the largest Indian American population in the entire country.

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.

CITY EVENTS

Prateek Kuhad

Silhouettes tour.

Venue

Hyderabad international convention centre
November 8

66th Annual Art Festival of SICA-2024

South Indian Cultural Association presents:
November 6: Vocal by Sankaran Nambudhiri
November 7: Violin concert by A Kanyakumari
November 8: Dance ballet by Deepika Reddy

Venue

Main Hall, Ravindra Bharati, Hyderabad
6.30 pm on all days

Silhouettes Tour

Artist: Prateek Kuhad.

Venue

Hitec Exhibition Centre, Hitec Road, Izzathnagar, Kothaguda, Hyderabad
November 8, 6.00 pm onwards. Ticket Price: Starting from Rs 1,799

Flea Market Book Fair

"Fantasy" showcases some of Bakali's masterpieces through print, augmented reality and immersive art

Venue

Second Floor, Ashoka One Mall, Kukatpally
November 6 to 9.

Standup Comedy

Vivek Muralidharan brings in his signature show "Death by Laughter", where he brings his newest material to stage.

Venue

Multiple venues. till
November 24

Arijit Singh Live in concert

HSBC presale is live for now. General sale on October 23, 1 pm. Get tickets only on insider.in and paytm.

Venue

Concert in Hyderabad on December 7.

Texture art workshop

This workshop is suitable for artists of all levels, from beginners looking to explore new artistic horizons to seasoned artists seeking to enhance their skills and repertoire.

Venue

Multiple venues in Hyderabad till December 8

Parents, relatives protest over child's death in govt school

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Parents, relatives and local leaders protested over the child's death from the collapsed government school gate.

The child's father expressed grief saying, "I am working with GHMC sanitation department and I collect garbage in my van. I have hired an auto to drop my son to school. I was informed on Monday that he fell from the school gate. My child was being taken to hospital as he was bleeding from the wound. My question is why was there no teacher in the school when the incident occurred. If the situation so bad in government schools, how can we trust them," he asked.

Another family member of the child questioned, "The kid is six years old and we lost him. The school management must have repaired the gate or else ask the students to sit inside the school."

District Education Officer and District Collector Narayan Reddy has announced an ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh from the government to the family of the deceased along with a double bedroom house.

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD WEDNESDAY | NOVEMBER 6, 2024

03

OFFICERS TO MONITOR CASES TO BE INCREASED

Special cells to handle food safety complaints

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha announced that steps are being taken to have more number of food safety officers in Telangana. A special cell will be established in all collectorates to handle food safety complaints and their resolution.

The Minister attended the Food Safety Department's programme at the Indian Institute of Health and Family Welfare and distributed FSSAI licences and registration certificates to some food vendors.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister emphasised the importance of food safety. "Everyone must act responsibly when it comes to food safety. There should be no compromise on this matter. Businesses must maintain both food hygiene and environmental hygiene," he said.

"The government will support those who conduct business by following the rules. However, those who break the rules will not be spared. We will also take strict action against hostels that do not serve quality meals to children," he added.

To meet the demands of the growing population and the increasing number of hotels, the number of food safety officers will be increased.

The Nacharam Food Safety Lab is being modernised, and three new food testing labs will be set up in Warangal, Nizamabad and Mahabubnagar. Additionally, five new mobile food testing labs are being introduced, with the vehicle procurement process already underway. We aim to test at least 24,000 food samples



Health Minister Damodar Raja Narasimha addressing the Food Safety Department's programme at the Indian Institute of Health and Family Welfare in Hyderabad on Tuesday

annually with upgraded facilities, said the officers of the Food Safety Department.

"We Hyderabadis are food lovers. We don't mind travelling

a few kilometers for good food. However, as businesses grow, the quality in some hotels starts to decline. This should not happen," the Minister stated.

FIRST RCS-BASED TICKETING SYSTEM LAUNCHED

Metro Rail details vision for city-wide expansion plans

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Highlighting that the integration of Rich Communication Services (RCS) and Google Wallet marks a new turning point for digitising public services in India, MD & CEO, L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Ltd, KVB Reddy launched the country's first RCS-based ticketing system for Hyderabad Metro commuters, enabling easy travel.

Addressing the launch at the Hyderabad Radisson Blu on Tuesday, KVB Reddy announced that L&TMRHL is India's first Metro service to offer integrated technology services for commuters. He emphasised the company's commitment to improving travel experiences using innovative and accessible tech.

Reddy appreciated Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's vision for city-wide Metro expansion, detailing plans to extend routes from Miyapur to Patancheru, LB Nagar to Hayatnagar, and Raidurg to Kokapet. He shared that the Airport Metro will connect all



MD & CEO, L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Ltd, KVB Reddy launching India's first RCS-based ticketing system at Hyderabad Radisson Blu on Tuesday

junctions and add new stations, spanning 76.4 kilometers with five new lines. The project has a budget of Rs 24,269 crore and will be a joint effort by the Central and State governments.

Meanwhile, the Vice President of Route Mobile Ltd Sumit Zavar introduced the RCS-based ticketing system, noting that it allows ticket booking via the in-built text messaging app without needing third-party apps. He mentioned that commuters can simply scan a QR

code, send a 'Hi' message, select travel details and pay using UPI. The ticket is stored in Google Wallet, streamlining the process.

Zavar highlighted that the service is currently for Android users and will expand to iOS when Apple supports RCS in India.

He concluded that this initiative was launched by Route Mobile Limited, a top cloud communication service provider, in partnership with Billeasy, a Mumbai-based integration partner.

LAND TITLE DEED RECEIVED IN JUST 100 DAYS

1,031 grievance applications received at Prajavani meet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A land title deed for one acre of land that has been pending for 46 years has been resolved in just 100 days. A total of 1,031 grievance applications were submitted in Prajavani on Tuesday at the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan.

Kommanaboina Pitchaiah, a resident of Errasanigudem village in Kattangur mandal of Nakrekal constituency, said that he had been waiting for a land title deed for one acre of land for 46 years. He said that he had been going round various revenue offices to secure his land record but in vain. However, upon applying through the Prajavani programme, he received his title deed in just 100 days.

At Prajavani, Pitchaiah expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, Deputy Chairman of State Planning Commission Dr G Chinna Reddy and State Nodal

Officer D Divya. Pitchaiah attended the programme with his sons, Narasimha and Swami Yadav and received the title deed.

Pitchaiah shared his appreciation, stating that the Prajavani programme is providing hope to the people by resolving their issues quickly.

According to officials, 580 applications were received for Minority



Pitchaiah receiving a title deed from Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Commission Dr G Chinna Reddy and State Nodal Officer D Divya at the Prajavani on Tuesday

Welfare department, 172 for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development department, 81 for the Electricity department, two for the Pravasi Prajavani programme and 196 related to other departments.

One held for vandalising temple idols in Shamshabad

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A suspect has been taken into custody by the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) Police on Tuesday following vandalisation of idols at Hanuman temple in the Airport Colony of Shamshabad.

The Shamshabad Police have detailed that the incident was reported at 6 am on Tuesday, saying that idols (navagrahas) were damaged in a Hanuman temple at the Airport Colony of Shamshabad.

K Srinivas Rao, ACP, Shamshabad, speaking to The Pioneer said, "A man has been taken into custody and he does not belong to the colony. After the complaint was raised we responded immediately with the clues team, crime and

CCTV team who have interacted with the locals and identified the suspect."

"We will register a case with relevant sections and the temple committee is also cooperating with us for the investigation. The CCTV footage is being verified by the police teams. The situation is peaceful and additional crime teams have been deployed on ground," he added. However the Hindu organisations have held protests for the repeated vandalising idols of Hindu gods in temples.

The last attack has occurred in Muthyalamma temple of Secunderabad where large-scale protests lead to Police lathi-charge on the protestors and residents of the colony.

Marut Drones secures \$6.2 m in series A funding from Lok Capital

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad-based Marut Dronetech Pvt Ltd, a top drone technology company certified by DGCA for manufacturing and training, has secured \$ 6.2 million in Series A funding from Lok Capital. Marut Drones is known for its innovative solutions, driving drone adoption across multiple sectors in India. Lok Capital's investment emphasises its dedication to supporting tech-enabled food and agriculture businesses.

CEO and Co-Founder of Marut Drones, Prem Kumar Vislavath said that Marut Drones plans to use the funds to develop advanced agricultural drones, expand its network of service centres in Tier 2 and 3 cities, and establish drone service hubs. He also noted that the company will recruit new professionals, promote drone entrepreneurship, open 17 drone academies for training and boost research in partnership with top Indian institutions. These initiatives aim to support rural economic growth and entrepreneurship.

TG recovers 50,000 mobile devices, ranks second

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana State Police successfully recovered 50,788 mobile devices between April 20, 2023 and November 3, 2024, ranking second in the country for mobile recovery using the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) Portal.

Developed by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), CEIR helps combat mobile theft and counterfeit devices. Telangana's pilot programme began on April 19, 2023, before the portal was launched nationwide on May 17, 2023. Guided by Director TG



Cyber Security Bureau, Shikha Goel, the CEIR system operates in all 780 police stations in Telangana. With effective monitoring, the State achieved 50,000 recoveries by October 29, 2024, and reached 50,788

recoveries in just 557 days, 172 days faster than Karnataka. The recovery rate has increased to 91 devices per day from 87 in July 2024.

During a crime review meeting on Tuesday, the DGP of Telangana awarded appreciation certificates to top-performing units and police stations. The Telangana Police have integrated the CEIR portal with their Citizen Portal for easy reporting of lost devices. Senior officers, including DG CID, also participated in the meeting. Meanwhile, Dr Lavanya NJP, SP, Cyber Crime CID, and DoT officials continue to support the CEIR's implementation state-wide.

Employee from city falls for cyber scam, loses Rs 8,99,070

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A 23-year-old female private employee from Hyderabad lost Rs 8,99,070 in a WhatsApp scam. According to the victim, she received a WhatsApp message about a part-time job offer, which involved subscribing to a YouTube channel and sharing screenshots. The scammer instructed her to join a Telegram channel and later guided her on trading through a website. When she tried to withdraw the money, the option was unavailable, leading to her

financial loss. The public is advised to be cautious about part-time jobs and investment scams like "Work from Home" and "Click & Rate to Earn." Verify offers before sharing personal or financial details. Scammers often use platforms like Telegram, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, and Facebook to promote fake investment apps and schemes. It is advised to report cyber fraud by calling 1930 or visiting cybercrime.gov.in. For emergencies, contact 8712665171.



HYDRAA holds survey following encroachment

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

HYDRAA, under the directives of Commissioner AV Ranganath, conducted a comprehensive survey in Ameenpur on Tuesday in response to allegations of illegal encroachments on parks and roads. Complaints from residents of Venkataramana Colony accused Golden Key Ventures of encroaching on over an acre of park land as well as roads, prompting this investigation.

Officials from the JD Survey office, alongside HYDRAA personnel, led



the extensive survey, which covered over 150 acres across five survey numbers. The survey took place with the participation of residents from Venkataramana and Chakrapuri colonies, representatives from Golden Key Ventures, and

nearby community members.

The HYDRAA team examined layouts and, based on survey numbers, worked to safeguard designated park areas and roadways. They identified land boundaries using survey numbers and boundary stones, with a focus on clarifying any unauthorised extensions into public spaces. The operation saw active involvement from HYDRAA, HMDA, municipality, revenue and survey department officials, all collaborating to determine and secure rightful land demarcations.

Kidnapper arrested; Baby boy rescued within 12 hrs

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Afzalgunj Police have apprehended a kidnapper and rescued a four-year-old boy within 12 hours of the reported abduction.

The accused identified as Shaik Rafeeq (35), a labourer residing on the Osmania General Hospital footpath in Afzalgunj, was detained at Dabeerpura railway station while attempting to flee with the child.

The incident unfolded on November 4, when Rubena Begum, the boy's mother reported to the police that her husband, who has been struggling with alcohol dependency and recently attempted self-harm, had left with their son for a visit to Osmania General Hospital.

When she went to check on them in the evening, she found her husband intoxicated at the hospital, with no sign of her son. After searching the vicinity, she filed a complaint with the Police.

Acting promptly, the Afzalgunj Police team tracked down the missing child.

They analysed CCTV footage from key locations, including Nampally railway station, Public Garden and various Metro stations, until they identified the suspect with the child near the Dabeerpura Flyover.

The team swiftly moved to the railway station, where they intercepted Rafeeq just before he attempted to board a train with the child.

The boy was safely reunited with his family.



Adilabad MP Godem Nagesh offers lemon juice to MLA Palvai Harish Babu to mark the end of his fast at Sirpur on Tuesday

Palvai Harish calls off stir following assurance by IT Minister

PNS ■ SIRPUR

Sirpur MLA Palvai Harish Babu called off his indefinite fast on Tuesday following an assurance given to him by Minister for Information Technology D Sridhar Babu and the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. Harish Babu had been protesting in front of the forest range office for the past two days. Adilabad MP Godem Nagesh made Harish Babu call of his stir by offering him lemon juice. Addressing the gathering after calling off his stir, he warned the Forest official of dire consequences if they displayed overenthusiasm. If the officials turned anti-people in spite of drawing salaries from the taxes that people paid to government, they would have to face serious consequences, he warned. If the victims were to revolted against the forest officials, the situation would slip out of hand, he

warned. He said that he called off his agitation following an assurance by Minister Sridhar Babu. It may be recalled that the Minister assured Harish Babu to take action against Forest officials. Meanwhile, a department inquiry is underway in Asifabad and Kagaznagar Forest divisions. Similarly, the inquiry is under progress in various forest ranges. No official who has indulged in irregularities would be spared, he said. Teakwood smuggling, started in Sirpur constituency by former MLA Konappa, has been continued by the forest officials, he said. BJP leaders K Satyanarayana, OBC Morcha leaders G Venkatesh, D Srisailem, Sirpur Assembly convener Veerabhadrachary, district Mahila Morcha president V Sridevi, district secretary Bandi Rajender Goud and other took part in the event.

Tension grips Nirmal over student's death

Minister for Backward Classes Ponnam Prabhakar spoke to the family members of the student and assured them of action against the guilty

PNS ■ NIRMAL

Tension gripped Nirmal town after a student of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School died on Tuesday morning. A statement by the officials said that a tragic incident occurred on Tuesday morning at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School in Nirmal district when a Class 9 student, Fayaz Hussain (14), fell ill while playing baseball. The teachers immediately took him to the government hospital, where the doctors declared him dead. The student's parents raised suspicions of foul play in the student's death. The parents, along with their relatives, staged a protest in front of the school, creating a tense situation. To manage the situation, heavy police deployment was made, and later, the protestors moved to the Mini Tank area to continue their demonstration. Police arrived to handle the crowd and ensure peace. Later, the family members of the deceased student staged a

protest on the national highway in front of the Ambedkar statue in the district centre. They accused the school staff of being responsible for the student's death and shouted slogans against the school staff. They insisted that they would not move until the District Collector and school authorities addressed their concerns. This caused a traffic jam on both sides of the highway. Later, the Revenue Divisional Officer Ratna Kalyani and District Education Officer Ravinder Reddy visited the site of the protest and assured the family that justice would be served, which led to the end of the protest. Meanwhile, District Congress Committee president Srihari Rao, upon learning about the incident, contacted the Collector over the phone and urged that justice be done for the affected family. Backward Classes Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar expressed his deep sorrow over the death of student Fayaz



Family members of a student, who died while playing, staging a protest at Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Residential School in Nirmal on Tuesday

Hussain due to seizures early in the morning at the Residential School in Nirmal. The minister announced that the family would receive an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh to the family of the stu-

dent. The minister promised that action would be taken against the guilty. He advised the authorities to inform the parents of students in hostels if they are

unwell and send them home. Gurukul Schools Principal Secretary Tirupathi visited the school and said that action would be taken against those responsible for negligence.

Bandi offers prayers at Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple

PNS ■ RAJANNA SIRCILLA

Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar visited the Mamidipalli Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple. After visiting the temple, Bandi Sanjay was warmly welcomed by the temple priests with Vedic hymns. The priests blessed him with Vedic chants. The temple's Executive Officer K Vinod Reddy offered him the sacred cloth and prasadam. In the event, senior BJP leaders including E Rajesh, EO B Srinivas, Pratap



Union Minister of State for Home Bandi Sanjay Kumar at Sri Sita Ramachandra Swamy temple in Rajanna Sircilla district. Ramakrishna, and Chennamaneni Vikas were also present.

Officials told to speed up paddy procurement

PNS ■ NIRMAL

The paddy procurement process should be carried out in the most systematic manner, District Special Officer Krishna Aditya told the officials. On Tuesday, he, along with District Collector Abhilasha Abhinav, visited the paddy procurement centre in Soan mandal and reviewed the procurement process. He advised the officials to provide all necessary facilities at the procurement centres to avoid any inconvenience to farmers. He suggested that drinking water, tents, weighing scales, mois-

ture testing machines, gunny bags, and tarpaulins should be made available. He further instructed the officials that once the paddy is procured, it should be immediately transported to the allocated mills, and the tab entry process should be completed. He emphasised the need to speed up the procurement process and ensuring that all registers are properly maintained. In this programme, Additional Collector Kishore Kumar, Tahsildar Mallesh, DSO Kiran Kumar, DM Civil Supplies Venugopal, farmers, and other officials and staff participated.



Special officer Krishna Aditya, along with Nirmal Collector Abhilasha Abhinav, speaking to officials at a procurement centre in Nirmal district on Tuesday

Principal Secretary assures paddy farmers of swift procurement



Principal Secretary and Commissioner of Civil Supplies DS Chauhan speaking to the media in Nalgonda on Tuesday

PNS ■ NALGONDA

Principal Secretary and Commissioner of Civil Supplies Commissioner DS Chauhan has urged farmers to bring their harvested paddy to the State government-established procurement centres. He advised farmers not to fall prey to middlemen's tactics and assured them that paddy, free from impurities like weeds, moisture, or other issues, would be purchased at the centres swiftly. Furthermore, he promised that the money for the paddy sold would be credited to the farmers' accounts within three to four days. Speaking to the media after conducting a surprise inspection of a paddy procurement centre in Nalgonda district, he stated that the State is expected to procure 143 metric tonnes of paddy this year, with 80

lakh metric tonnes being of fine quality. He also mentioned that the Telangana State's rice has a strong international market presence and that efforts are being made to establish a brand for Telangana rice. Chauhan emphasised that the government has decided to supply fine rice to every ration cardholder in the state. Fine rice is offered a Rs 500 bonus per quintal. He highlighted that about 2.8 crore ration cardholders would benefit from this initiative. He praised the officials and centre in-charges for their dedication and called upon millers and farmers to cooperate in making the new policy successful. Chauhan further explained that the state needs 36 lakh metric tonnes of fine rice. He reassured farmers that procurement

was happening swiftly, and payments were being made without delay, advising them not to trust middlemen and not sell paddy to private parties. There are 7,000 procurement centres in the state, with separate centres for different rice varieties. In Nalgonda district there are 340 procurement centres have been set up, including 80 for fine rice. So far, 15,000 metric tonnes of paddy have been procured, and more is expected this month. Chauhan also warned that any fraudulent activities at procurement centres would be dealt with sternly and that 10 advanced cleaners and dryers have been set up in Nalgonda, with 100 high-speed dryers being procured statewide. Secretary of Rural Development Anita Ramachandran and District Collector Ila Tripathi were also present.

Overzealous Municipality officials deprive people of water

PNS ■ MANCHERIAL

In Chennur town in Mancherial district, residents are facing severe difficulties as municipal authorities have locked the water motor boxes and thus depriving water to people. For the past two days, the people have been struggling due to the lack of water supply. The newly appointed Municipal Commissioner has locked the meter boxes of the local bore wells. As a result, the residents are facing significant hardships. Previously, the municipal authorities used to provide

drinking water, but now, by locking the water facilities, they have caused anger among the people. Now, locals are forced to walk miles to fetch water. Schoolchildren, office-goers, and daily wage earners are all experiencing severe difficulties due to this situation. People are urging the higher authorities to resolve the water issue in Chennur as soon as possible. Despite the Godavari River being nearby, locals are struggling with lack of water, causing widespread concern.

Ashram school students assured of special healthcare

PNS ■ KUMRAM BHEEM ASIFABAD

Khushboo Gupta, Uttoor Project Officer of the Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITFA) stated in a media statement on Tuesday that special attention is being

paid to the health of Tribal Ashram school students in the Wankidi mandal district. Among the students who fell ill, three have been admitted to NIMS Hospital in Hyderabad for treatment, while 10 others are being treated at various hospitals. They are expected to

be discharged soon. The cost of the students' treatment and their parents' food expenses would be covered by the Integrated Tribal Development Agency, she mentioned. She further stated that the health of the students is being closely monitored by Chief

Minister Revanth Reddy, District In-charge Minister Dansari Anasuya (Seethakka), the Integrated Tribal Development Agency and the district administration. So far, a total of Rs 7 lakh has been spent on their treatment and the best medical care

and facilities are being provided. Regarding the students' illness, samples of the water and food were sent for testing. The drinking water sample showed no signs of contamination, and the results for the food sample are still awaited, she added.

MLA pledges support to caste survey

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar has lent his support for a caste survey for enumeration of Backward Classes, emphasising its potential to drive societal change and bring justice to people across all sections. Shankar, along with a large delegation from the Rangareddy district, travelled from Shadnagar to attend a comprehensive caste census meeting with intellectuals, civil rights advocates, student leaders, and representatives of

caste-based unions. During his address, MLA Shankar highlighted the fact that the caste survey would not only promote social equity but would also ensure fair representation in political, economic, educational, and employment sectors. He explained that the survey would align with the vision of Rahul Gandhi. It was the fulfilment of a promise mentioned in the election manifesto. As part of this initiative, enrolment officers are set to conduct house-to-house visits,



Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar leading a delegation to the caste census meeting in Hyderabad on Tuesday

providing citizens with detailed insights into the objectives and structure of the survey. Shankar announced that many leaders from various caste associations and intellectual communities had sought guidance from AICC leader Rahul Gandhi on the caste enumeration, viewing it as a significant move toward social reform. The meeting was marked by a large turnout, with a convoy of approximately 200 vehicles departing Shadnagar to participate.

FOOD POISONING

Woman dies, 12 others hospitalised in Nirmal

PNS ■ NIRMAL

A 19-year-old woman, Phul Kali Baiga, died on Tuesday while undergoing treatment for suspected food poisoning at a government hospital in Boath on Tuesday. She was one of the 13 people who took ill after eating at a hotel in Nirmal town on Sunday night. Baiga, a cook at a private school in Pochera village, was among a group of school staff members who ate chicken curry and rice at the hotel after shopping in Nirmal. Several individuals in the group experienced symptoms of food poisoning, including diarrhoea and vomiting, and were admitted to hospital. One of the individuals had been hospitalised on Sunday, while the rest were admitted to hospital on



Two men, who took ill after eating at a hotel, undergoing treatment in hospital in Nirmal on Tuesday

Monday. Doctors confirmed the cause of the illness as food poisoning, and most of the patients were said to be in stable condition. The deceased, identified as Phul Kali Baiga, used to work in

a school. The police registered a case based on the complaint by the school's principal, Smitha. Police said that action would be taken against the hotelier concerned after receiving the post-mortem report.

ACROSS THE STATES



Abhishekam, archana at Kamala's ancestral village temple in TN

PNS ■ TIRUVARUR (TAMIL NADU)

A special 'abhishekam' of sandalwood and turmeric, besides a special 'archana' was performed on Tuesday at a temple in the village of ancestors of Democrat Kamala Harris as the villagers prayed that she becomes the next US president. If she wins, the village leaders are prepared to provide 'annadhanam' (free food/community lunch), local councillor

Arulmozhi told reporters. Meanwhile, three fans of Harris visited the native place of the American leader's maternal family near here and joined the prayers. While one is from the UK, two others are from the US and their arrival at Thulasendrapuram, which is about 350 kms from Chennai, was a matter of surprise for the local people. They met the village elders and also took part in a puja held at the temple for



Harris's win. One of the fans said she was from Las Vegas and told PTI Videos: "I came here to Kamala's great grandparents' village to support her because I happen to be in India." She said they are hopeful of her win. The foreigners touched the garlands brought by the priest before it was offered to the deity, as part of the puja and prayers, in keeping with the tradition. The villagers performed

prayers at the Sri Dharma Sastha temple in her ancestral village expecting her to trounce former president and Republican Donald Trump, and emerge victorious as Americans vote to elect their next president. Thulasendrapuram is the ancestral village of Kamala's maternal grandfather P V Gopalan, who was in British government civil service. Her mother Shyamala was Gopalan's daughter.

Delhi Police ASI held for accepting Rs 10,000 bribe

The vigilance unit of Delhi Police has arrested an assistant sub-inspector (ASI) posted at Krishna Nagar police station for accepting a bribe of Rs 10,000, officials said on Tuesday. The ASI identified as Pramod Kumar was reportedly forcing a Rohtak-based man to settle a financial dispute, police said in a statement. On November 4, the complainant approached the vigilance unit claiming that ASI Kumar was demanding bribe from him to settle a matter related to a financial dispute, the statement read. The complainant also alleged that he was being threatened that if he didn't settle the matter in favour of the other party, he would be arrested in a criminal case, it said. The complainant alleged that Kumar demanded Rs 2 lakh as bribe to close the matter, which was reduced to Rs 50,000 following his pleading.



Court issues bailable warrant against Pragya

A special NIA court here on Tuesday issued a bailable warrant against BJP leader Pragya Singh Thakur, an accused in the 2008 Malegaon blast case, for failing to attend the proceedings. Final arguments were going on and the presence of the accused is necessary, special judge A K Lahoti noted as he issued a bailable warrant of Rs 10,000 against Thakur. The warrant is 'returnable' by November 13 which means Thakur will have to appear before the court by then and get it cancelled. The BJP leader's lawyer cited her health problems while requesting the special court for National Investigation Agency cases to grant her reasonable time to remain present. But the court noted that Thakur, the accused number 1, had not attended the proceedings since June 4.



Delhi hospitals see spike in respiratory issues

Amid worsening air quality in Delhi, hospitals across the city are witnessing a spike in the number of patients with respiratory issues. While those with pre-existing conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or asthma are the worst hit, numerous people with no prior medical history are experiencing symptoms like chest congestion, headaches, and discomfort, doctors said. "It's a tough time especially for those with lung and chest conditions as the air quality is putting additional strain on their health," said Dr. Amitesh Aggarwal, Director and Professor, Department of Medicine. "Most of the patients coming in have pre-existing lung conditions like COPD or asthma," he added. Aggarwal said such patients are experiencing a drop in oxygen saturation and breathing difficulties due to the rising pollution levels.

A 'testing time' for...

Continued from page 1

readiness among officials to tackle problems. "Delays or negligence will not be tolerated under any circumstance," he warned. Uttam also called on rice millers to support the government's efforts, reaffirming the administration's commitment to backing the milling industry. He cited the Congress government's recent increase in milling charges - Rs 50 for fine rice and Rs 40 for other grades - and urged millers to cooperate fully. He also emphasised the need for bank guarantees as required by rules to manage operations effectively.

He asked officials to maintain accountability in transporting paddy from procurement centres to mills, so that high-quality rice can be delivered to beneficiaries in Telangana. He said that Sanna paddy, being sensitive to moisture, could suffer discolouration or an increase in broken grains. So procurement centres must be equipped with dryers and cleaners to maintain quality, he said. Public representatives were encouraged to coordinate closely with Collectors to establish procurement centres as needed. He assured that the government would meet the costs of providing additional centres. He said that PPCs have been set up to ensure accurate classification between fine and coarse paddy, with agriculture officers certifying produce according to established regulations. As prescribed by the Centre, Fair Average Quality (FAQ) norms must be strictly followed, he added. He also called for vigilance to prevent rice from other states from entering Telangana which would harm local farmers. Due to stringent quality measures, Telangana rice is now in demand in states like Bihar and West Bengal.

'India and China await de-escalation'

PNS ■ CANBERRA

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said the agreement on disengagement of Indian and Chinese troops in eastern Ladakh will be implemented in the coming days "to everybody's satisfaction." Jaishankar was speaking at the inaugural session of a think tank here in conversation with Justin Bassi, the executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) when he was asked a question about the India-China relationship after the seeming breakthrough. India on October 21 announced it had reached an agreement with China on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh, ending the over four-year-long military standoff between the two armies. In Canberra on Tuesday, Jaishankar: "The immediate part which awaits us is what we call the de-escalation, which is the build up of forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)." Both the countries have bigger troop deployment than existed along the LAC before 2020, "so we have negotiations ahead of us," the External Affairs



In Canberra on Tuesday, Jaishankar: "The immediate part which awaits us is what we call the de-escalation, which is the build up of forces along the Line of Actual Control (LAC)." Both the countries have bigger troop deployment than existed along the LAC before 2020, "so we have negotiations ahead of us," the External Affairs

Minister said. The ties between the two Asian giants nosedived significantly following the fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. "What India and China negotiated on October 21 was the last set of what we call disengagement agreements, which essen-

tially means that after the summer of 2020, Chinese and Indian troops have been deployed along the LAC in distances which were extremely concerning," he said. "The priority has been to find ways of separating the troops, which is why the word disengagement." He listed "having them (the two armies) go back to their normal operating basis as far as possible" and also resuming patrol "in the way in which it used to be done in 2020," were the last set of agreement and said, the expectation is that the patrolling would resume there, which in fact, "is happening as we speak." The disengagement chapter is done, its implementation "will happen in the coming days to everybody's satisfaction." During this period (post 2020), India-China relationship was also "very profoundly affected," because it has always been an assumption on India's side that peace and tranquillity in the border areas is a prerequisite for the development of bilateral ties, he mentioned. He also drew attention to what was agreed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in their first

bilateral meeting after five years, that the foreign minister and the National Security Advisor would meet their counterparts and find ways to normalise the relationship. "And how do you establish an equilibrium between yourselves at the border, border areas, which happens to be disputed as well, as well as establish a working relationship in on other issues," he said and termed them as "a very complex set of issues" that require a "lot of thinking and management." Jaishankar also spoke about how India balances its position as a member of both the BRICS bloc, which he explained is non-west but not anti-west, and QUAD. Highlighting the importance of the Indian diaspora, the Indian minister said the change in India-US relations can be almost completely correlated with the growth of the diaspora in the United States and asked Australia to learn from it. The more the diaspora is made comfortable, the more they are seen as equal partners in Australia, the more they are likely to serve, actually, almost as the ballast of the growing relationship, Jaishankar added.



India has always been strong votary of human rights: Birla

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Tuesday said India has always respected international laws and has been a strong votary of human rights and the statutes brought to ensure the dignity of women are a fine example of the country's commitment in this regard. He also said three new criminal laws were passed after extensive deliberations in the House and at the standing committee, along with public participation. Birla's remarks came amid a charge by opposition parties that their views on the three laws were not included in the final draft placed before Parliament.

Who will triumph?...

Continued from page 1

of states in play raised the likelihood that once again a victor might not be known on election night. There was one early harbinger from the New Hampshire hamlet of Dixville Notch, which by tradition votes after midnight on Election Day. Dixville Notch split between Trump and Harris, with three votes for each. In the 2020 presidential race it took four days to declare a winner. Regardless, Trump has baselessly claimed that if he lost, it would be due to fraud. Harris' campaign was preparing for him to try to declare victory before a winner is known on Tuesday night or to try to contest the result if she wins. Four years ago, Trump launched an effort to overturn the voters' will that ended in the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol. Trump planned to vote in his adopted home state of Florida on Tuesday, then spend the day at

his Mar-a-Lago estate in advance of a party at a nearby convention center. Harris already voted by mail in her home state of California. She'll have a watch party at her alma mater, Howard University in Washington. Each candidate would take the country into new terrain. Harris, 60, would be the first woman, Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve as president. She also would be the first sitting vice president to win the White House in 32 years. A victory would cap a whirlwind campaign unlike any other in American history. Harris ascended to the top of the Democratic ticket less than four months ago after Biden, facing massive pressure from his party after a disastrous debate performance, ended his reelection bid. Trump, 78, would be the oldest president ever elected. He would also be the first defeated president in 132 years to win another term in the

White House, and the first person convicted of a felony to take over the Oval Office. Having left Washington abandoned by some allies after January 6, Trump defeated younger rivals in the Republican primary and consolidated the support of long-time allies and harsh critics within his party. He survived one assassination attempt by millimetres at a July rally. Secret Service agents foiled a second attempt in September. A victory for Trump would affirm that enough voters put aside warnings from many of Trump's former aides or instead prioritized concerns about Biden and Harris' stewardship of the economy or the US-Mexico border. It would all but ensure he avoids going to prison after being found guilty of his role in hiding hush-money payments to an adult film actress during his first run for president in 2016. His sentencing in that case could occur later this month. And upon taking office, Trump could end the federal investigation into his effort to overturn the 2020 election results.

States not..

Continued from page 1

rights of individuals, as unconstitutional. Article 31C protects a law made under Articles 39(b) and (c) empowering the State to take over material resources of the community, including private properties, for distribution to subservise the common good. The top court had heard 16 petitions, including the lead petition filed by the Mumbai-based Property Owners' Association (POA) in 1992. The POA has opposed Chapter VIII-A of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority (MHADA) Act. Inserted in 1986, the chapter empowers State authorities to acquire cessed buildings and the land on which those are built if 70 per cent of the occupants make such a request for restoration purposes. The MHADA Act was enacted in pursuance of Article 39(b), which is part of the Directive Principles of State Policy and makes it obligatory for the State to create a policy towards securing "that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subservise the common good".

Pledges support to...

Continued from page 1

KTR highlighted that during KCR's administration, auto drivers could earn nearly Rs 2,000 daily, but under the Congress, this has drastically fallen, leaving many struggling to make even Rs 200 to Rs 300. "Congress has created conditions where auto drivers are pushed to suicide," he said, pointing out that around 600,000 auto drivers face dire situations across Telangana. Referring to Rahul Gandhi's previous visit, KTR reminded the audience of his promises to address the issues of auto drivers, including offering monthly aid of Rs 1,000 and establishing a welfare board. However, he questioned the Congress government's commitment, saying, "In the past 11 months, there's been a huge gap between what they promised and what they delivered. I urge auto drivers to think about the lack of real change." KTR also addressed the spate of suicides among farmers, weavers and now auto drivers, blaming the Congress government for failing to prevent such tragedies. He demanded the immediate implementation

of an additional Rs 5,000 monthly support for auto drivers, along with the establishment of a welfare board in the upcoming legislative session. Auto drivers have also sought third-party insurance, a demand KTR urged the government to fulfill, criticising any attempt to undo existing insurance provisions put in place by the previous administration. KTR further accused the Central government of introducing laws that burden auto drivers, demanding their repeal. Highlighting the Congress's history of unkept promises, KTR reminded auto drivers of Rahul Gandhi's 'sweet words' that had proved hollow. "Remember, the Congress, which promised you the world, ended up betraying you," he stated, expressing disappointment over police actions that allegedly aimed to prevent more auto drivers from joining the protest. Calling on the police to act with compassion toward the poor, KTR warned of growing public anger against Congress leaders like Revanth Reddy, stating, "If Revanth ventures out without security, there's a risk of backlash from the people."

Committed to...

Continued from page 1

have been suffering for years through the caste census in Telangana. He expressed the hope that the caste census would give adequate representation to those who have been suffering for generations. Rahul said the caste system exists in all fields and expressed concern that the caste system is damaging the self-confidence of some people. He said that due to this, conditions are being created where youth cannot move forward. Rahul said that he can understand how much trouble there is due to caste discrimination and that if the country wants to grow there is a need to eliminate caste discrimination. "We have to accept that there is a caste system and caste discrimination exists. However, there are allegations against me that I am trying to divide the nation. Is telling the truth about the country dividing it? Caste census will reveal the number of the Dalits and OBCs. Let's find out who and how much financial resources they have after the caste census," Rahul said. He said that caste discrimination runs deep in society and that its pain is known to people who face caste discrimination. "We want to conduct tests to find out about the disease of caste discrimination in the country. That is why the caste census is very important. If we conduct a caste census, we need to know how many people belong to which caste. Who is poor and who has what? If you want to know about any disease, you need to do an X-ray."

Why is real estate...

Continued from page 1

the current situation, which he said has become challenging for real estate developers and property owners. Reflecting on Telangana's past, KTR recalled the region's historical land struggles, where the very concept of Telangana's potential was often underestimated. "Back then, people were sceptical, spreading rumours that Telangana's land values would plummet post-statehood. But the reality is different today, with an acre of land now valued at around Rs 15 lakh even in the remotest areas," he said and credited BRS supreme KCR for the progress. The state's agricultural community, too, has found stability, KTR said, with assured irrigation and 24-hour electricity. "Every farmer today is secure and hopeful, thanks to KCR's leadership. However, Congress, which now chants change, has only disrupted Telangana's progress," he said. In sharp contrast to KCR's policies, KTR accused the current government of making real estate a risky venture. "Even for permits, developers are struggling," he said, citing the plight of a leading builder who recently approached him, expressing fears for small builders if the situation doesn't improve within a year. "Builders have invested beyond their capacity. Yet properties aren't selling because this government has killed people's purchasing power," KTR said. He also criticized the Congress's HYDRAA

(Hyderabad Disaster Response and Management Authority) initiative, calling it a tool for "mindless demolitions" and "blackmail." He said that obtaining permissions for projects has become an ordeal with developers hesitant to even use terms like 'Lake View' due to bureaucratic hurdles. Questioning the state's commitment to real estate, KTR urged the Telangana Realtors Forum to seek legal opinion on the challenges brought by the Congress government. He criticized decisions like cancelling registrations in the HMDA zone, which he said harms the middle class. KTR cited recent controversies, such as registrations conducted in FTL zones, calling it an example of governmental disarray. "One hand of the government doesn't know what the other is doing," he remarked and encouraged real estate agents to question the government's decisions publicly. In his closing remarks, KTR supported the real estate community and pledged the BRS's commitment to advocate for builders' rights in the Assembly. He promised to continue their fight against unjust policies, especially HYDRAA's demolitions which he said have disrupted lives. "If the government changes its ways and prioritizes public welfare, we will cooperate as a constructive opposition. But if they continue to ignore public interest, the BRS will keep up the fight as the main opposition," he concluded, urging builders to strengthen their voice for change.

Cong wasting TG...

Continued from page 1

He challenged Rahul Gandhi, who boasts of his nationwide padayatra, to conduct a padayatra in Telangana if he has the guts to speak about these guarantees. He accused the Congress of misleading the people of Karnataka and Telangana with its lies and empty promises and of attempting to get votes in Maharashtra with false assurances and bogus advertisements. "How can Congress leader Rahul Gandhi come to Telangana? Rahul promised to implement six guarantees within 100 days and deceived the

people. Does he have the guts to answer about the six guarantees regarding these promises? He should come to Telangana only after addressing this issue," Sanjay said. "During my padayatra, I visited the Musi River area and saw its toxic waters. The people of Yadadri district suffer terribly due to this and are struggling for drinking water. The BJP has long demanded cleansing of the Musi, but without demolishing poor people's homes. The Congress, however, is using the project as an excuse to increase its budget to 21.5 lakh crore and pocket kickbacks."

HC to hear case...

Continued from page 1

The court warned that if action was not taken within this period it would take suo motu action to disqualify the MLAs. In response, the Assembly Secretary appealed against the single bench's judgement, bringing the matter before a division bench. During Tuesday's hearing, the Advocate General argued that the court does not possess the authority to issue disqualification orders to the Speaker. After this, the division bench judge decided to adjourn the case and scheduled it on Wednesday.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

Cowardly attack

The temple attack in Canada raises concerns over the safety and rights of the Indian diaspora in Canada

The recent attack on the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton, Canada, has once again brought to light the tense diplomatic situation between India and Canada, with both nations navigating an increasingly complex web of domestic and international issues. The incident, marked by violent clashes involving pro-Khalistani extremists outside the temple, was swiftly condemned by both Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, the response from each leader underscores the stark differences in their approach, further straining bilateral ties. Prime Minister Modi's condemnation of the attack was resolute and pointed. Taking to social media, he expressed his disappointment over the attack, calling it a "deliberate" act against Hindu religious sentiments and stressing that "such acts of violence will never weaken India's resolve." PM Modi did not hold back from calling on the Canadian government to ensure justice and uphold the rule of law, sending a clear message that India expects Ottawa to take decisive action to protect its diaspora.



While Trudeau also condemned the temple attack, his statement notably avoided any direct mention of the pro-Khalistani extremists involved. This omission reflects a recurring issue in Trudeau's handling of India-related tensions within Canada, where a vocal pro-Khalistani community has been implicated in acts perceived as hostile by India. Trudeau's hesitance to directly address this faction has been a persistent irritant in India-Canada relations, amplifying concerns in New Delhi about Ottawa's stance on issues impacting Indian diaspora and the wider Hindu community in Canada. The attack also comes at a time when broader diplomatic relations between the two countries are under significant strain, with recent allegations and counter-allegations creating a sense of mutual mistrust. Last September, Trudeau alleged that India might have been involved in the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a known Khalistani activist, who was killed under mysterious circumstances in Canada. Although the Canadian Prime Minister has yet to provide concrete evidence for this claim, the accusation has deepened divisions between the two nations, prompting India to refute any such involvement and criticise the Canadian government's stance. Modi's recent comments have also touched on an additional point of contention: the alleged surveillance of Indian consular staff in Canada. This has not only raised security concerns but has also highlighted the increasing difficulty Indian diplomats face within Canadian borders. The presence of surveillance, paired with incidents like the temple attack, fuels a perception that pro-Khalistani extremists are becoming emboldened, even as Trudeau's administration appears reluctant to fully confront these groups. With each new incident - whether it be a temple attack or allegations of state-backed assassination plots - the divide only seems to grow wider, testing the resilience of both countries' commitments to a constructive relationship.

While Trudeau also condemned the temple attack, his statement notably avoided any direct mention of the pro-Khalistani extremists involved. This omission reflects a recurring issue in Trudeau's handling of India-related tensions within Canada, where a vocal pro-Khalistani community has been implicated in acts perceived as hostile by India. Trudeau's hesitance to directly address this faction has been a persistent irritant in India-Canada relations, amplifying concerns in New Delhi about Ottawa's stance on issues impacting Indian diaspora and the wider Hindu community in Canada. The attack also comes at a time when broader diplomatic relations between the two countries are under significant strain, with recent allegations and counter-allegations creating a sense of mutual mistrust. Last September, Trudeau alleged that India might have been involved in the death of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a known Khalistani activist, who was killed under mysterious circumstances in Canada. Although the Canadian Prime Minister has yet to provide concrete evidence for this claim, the accusation has deepened divisions between the two nations, prompting India to refute any such involvement and criticise the Canadian government's stance. Modi's recent comments have also touched on an additional point of contention: the alleged surveillance of Indian consular staff in Canada. This has not only raised security concerns but has also highlighted the increasing difficulty Indian diplomats face within Canadian borders. The presence of surveillance, paired with incidents like the temple attack, fuels a perception that pro-Khalistani extremists are becoming emboldened, even as Trudeau's administration appears reluctant to fully confront these groups. With each new incident - whether it be a temple attack or allegations of state-backed assassination plots - the divide only seems to grow wider, testing the resilience of both countries' commitments to a constructive relationship.

PICTALK



A girl collects newly plucked saffron flowers during the harvesting season, in Pulwama

India's tribute to the architect of unity



ANIRBAN GANGULY

In a historic tribute to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the Government has announced sesquicentennial celebration to honour Patel's unyielding legacy in unifying India

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has announced that to honour Sardar Patel's 'monumental contributions', to commemorate, his 'enduring legacy as the visionary behind the establishment of one of the world's most robust democracies and his pivotal role in unifying India from Kashmir to Lakshwadeep' which 'remains indelible', the government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, will celebrate his sesquicentennial from 2024 to 2026. After the nationwide movement to erect the Statue of Unity, this is another watershed occasion, when the legacy of Sardar Patel would be commemorated and cherished. This honour was long due and is richly deserved. The Sardar's centenary in 1975, was a given a short-shrift. It was deliberate. The Indira-led Congress, busy enforcing an unethical and draconian 'Emergency', had little time to commemorate Sardar Patel.

A commemoration would have certainly raised hard questions. Moreover, could Sardar's democratic legacy be commemorated, with the entire Opposition, minus the crooning communists, behind bars? One of Patel's foremost biographers, Rajmohan Gandhi, writing in 1991, spoke of how acknowledgements in the case of Nehru were 'fulsome' and in the case of Gandhi 'dutiful', but in the case of Patel, were 'niggardly'. Speaking of the Nehru centenary celebrations in 1989, Gandhi writes, that it 'found expression on a thousand billboards, in commemorative TV serials, in festivals and in numerous other platforms'. While Patel's centenary on October 31, 1975, four months after Emergency was clamped, 'was by contrast, wholly neglected by official India and the rest of the Establishment.'

In a long interview with Harry Hodson, British economist and editor, Patel's shadow and trouble-shooter-in-chief, VP Menon, recalled a day when the usually tolerant and absorbing Patel chose to talk back to Nehru. 'You think you made the Congress?', he snapped, 'We are all co-builders in it. You think I want your position? If that was the case, I would not have resigned my Presidency and asked Gandhiji that you should take over. I told him that I would stand down.' 'There was rare emotion in the Sardar's voice,' writes Narayani Basu in her biography of Menon citing that particularly acerbic encounter. The post Sardar Patel Congress was made to believe that it was Nehru alone who made it and therefore only he and his political progeny were worthy of commemoration and remembrance. VP was saddened to 'see that under the veil of idealism and greatness Nehru wrapped himself in, there existed a vindictive and petty man.' For someone who saw Patel so closely for many intense years, VP told Hodson, how Sardar 'died as a very, very bitter and sad man', and 'Panditji should never have treated him the way he did.' That propensity of negating Patel and his contribution to our national march percolated through Nehru's dynasty and the Congress that he shepherded post-Patel. In his biographical opus, LK Advani has rightly described the Congress's dégringolade, after Patel, arguing that 'after Sardar Patel passed away, there was no one left in the Congress Party to counterbalance Nehru's negative views on various important issues.' As an



PATEL'S BIOGRAPHER RAJMOHAN GANDHI ARGUES THAT 'IN THE POLITICALLY SIGNIFICANT SELECTION OF AMBEDKAR AND MOOKERJEE, PATEL'S WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE DECISIVE ROLE'

acolyte of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee and belonging to his intellectual and political lineage, the occasion of Sardar Patel's sesquicentennial commemoration also brings to my mind the special bond that they shared in free India's first cabinet. Patel's biographer Rajmohan Gandhi argues that 'in the politically significant selection of Ambedkar and Mookerjee, Patel's was undoubtedly the decisive role.' While Sardar had his eyes on Babasaheb Ambedkar from the 'summer of 1946', Dr Mookerjee, who then represented the Hindu Mahasabha, had earned Sardar's plaudits by calling for and advocating the partition of Bengal in March 1947 and 'by refusing to join an abortive bid for a united and independent sovereign Bengal that Sarat Bose' and the then Muslim League premier of Bengal, mastermind of the bloody 1946 'Direct Action', H S Suhrawardy, had floated. It was a clever ploy by Suhrawardy to try and wean away the whole of Bengal from India and to toss it eventually into his master Jinnah's Pakistan cauldron. Both, Dr Mookerjee's bold advocacy and Sardar Patel's support to his demand, saved Bengal and ensured that a portion of it remained an integral part of India. It was a moment,

like a few more to follow in the coming years, in which both Sardar Patel and Dr Mookerjee worked closely. In his voluminous memoirs, 'Living an Era', veteran Congressman DP Mishra, recalls that, when Suhrawardy realised his nefarious plan of snatching away Bengal was falling through, 'he took to making veiled threats about Calcutta being destroyed as a result of communal warfare' and told Mountbatten that he 'feared serious riots and damage' in Calcutta and 'wanted six-months joint control' of the city. Mishra writes that when Mountbatten sought Patel's reaction to the proposal, Patel replied, 'not even for six hours.' These are all worth remembering, commemorating and revisiting. The nationwide Statue of Unity movement from 2013 to 2104, the humongous mission of erecting and unveiling the Statue of Unity, and the commemoration of 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas', have all been milestones in the last decade. A long and deliberately neglected legacy is being mainstreamed.

The nationwide Statue of Unity movement from 2013 to 2104, the humongous mission of erecting and unveiling the Statue of Unity, and the commemoration of 'Rashtriya Ekta Diwas', have all been milestones in the last decade. A long and deliberately neglected legacy is being mainstreamed.

(The author is chairman of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation and National Executive Committee member of the BJP; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AVOID RELIGIOUS POLITICS

Madam — This refers to the editorial dated 4-11-24. The students' movement that started against 30 per cent reservation announced for the Mukti Bahini martyrs was only a spark and all those who were waiting for an opportunity to throw out the dictatorial regime and the religious fundamentalists joined hands with the agitating students and made the situation worse, ultimately forcing the government head to flee the country. But during the course of the movement, students were pushed behind and the religious fundamentalists took the dominating role and used the agitating students to push forward their tactical goals. The demands of the students were, after all, ending the reservation, but subsequently it took political and religious turns plunging the country into further social and economic crisis. History is clear with its message. Wherever religion and religious heads are allowed to dominate the agenda it leads to dictatorship and ends up with chaotic scenes on the social and economic front. Religion is an innate affair and politics is a public affair. Mixing these incongruent ingredients will have its inevitable and serious adverse effects. It is the responsibility of every citizen to keep religion and religious fundamentalists at a distance to ensure them not to indulge in politics.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

ELECTION DRAMA CONTINUES

Madam — As the 2024 US presidential elections gather momentum, we must be perplexed at the nation's free-wheeling ethos in its various forms. Tirades and misinformation are freely used by parties. While it takes the Supreme Court to reveal funds received by our political parties but not the nexus to a specific donor, Elon Musk, the US multimillionaire, openly donates millions to the Trump campaign, and even censures anti-Trump tweets on his X outlet. States in the US have their own laws on elections that cover not only voting procedure but their

Violence against Indians in Canada



The deplorable violence at the Hindu Sabha Mandir in Brampton has laid bare Canada's inept handling of a sensitive situation. This is a new low for the Justin Trudeau government, which has been recklessly burning bridges with India following the murder of Khalistan activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. The allegation that the police targeted Hindu devotees and tried to protect Khalistan supporters has added fuel to the fire. Canadian Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister David Morrison's allegation that Home Minister Amit

Shah ordered a campaign of violence, intimidation and intelligence-gathering targeting Sikh separatists in that country has raised India's hackles. Khalistanis' anti-India protests have put them on a collision course with Indian-origin Canadian citizens who wear the Tricolour on their sleeve. Canada, which proudly regards itself as a peace-loving land of opportunities, needs to deal firmly with those who threaten communal harmony and public order. It must crack down on troublemakers and rabble-rousers, no matter which community they belong to. Allowing the misuse of Canadian territory to spew venom against India - all in the name of freedom of expression - is undermining the Trudeau government's diplomatic and democratic credentials. Meanwhile, Trudeau owes an explanation for letting anti-India elements have their way with impunity.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Washington

counting too. They are seldom bound by the Federal Election Commission, whose remit to call the elections has long been usurped by the media. The dominance of the fifth estate in the US seems to be a wart that has come to be its beauty spot. The irony is that Donald Trump, who lost to Biden by 7 million votes in 2020, has not conceded his defeat even today. And despite all these aberrations, the outcome is keenly awaited globally. Transparency is a virtue in US politics, embellished by no-holds-barred campaigns and a media splurge in millions of dollars.

R Narayanan | Mumbai

SHINDE'S WINNING STRATEGY

Madam — It is an advantage for Shinde Sena, as they have had a whip hand in providing a clean administration for over 30 months and won the hearts of the people. Moreover, the bow and arrow symbol he inherited as the real Sena is a magic wand for victory. He is carrying our government schemes to reach out to the people in the best way possible and

it is a victory sign for success. Chief Minister Eknath Shinde launched Shiv Sena's campaign for the upcoming Assembly elections with promises of affordable housing for the poor, increasing the monthly installment of the Ladki Bahin Yojana and making Mumbai slum-free. In the past two years, we have worked to give to people but those who were in power in Mumbai for 25 years did nothing but corruption and scams. They indulged in Rs 3,500 crore corruption in various spheres. The road for victory is well laid with CM also provided updates on the welfare programme, including the increased insurance coverage of Rs 5 lakh under the Mahatma Phule Jan Arogya Yojana, targeted support for youth employment with the 'Ladka Bhau Yojana', and expanded access to free higher education for girls statewide. It is indeed a win-win situation.

Jayanthi Maniam | Vashi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

A robust EV Infra can support sustainable mobility



HITESH GUPTA

As India races toward a sustainable mobility future, electric vehicles have emerged as key drivers in reducing emissions and lowering fossil fuel dependence

Sustainable mobility is the future of transportation, focusing on reducing our reliance on fossil fuels and minimising harmful emissions. In this context, Electric Vehicles (EVs) have emerged as a game-changer, offering lower emissions and a reduced carbon footprint compared to traditional gasoline vehicles. Governments worldwide are encouraging the adoption of EVs to address climate change, and India is no exception. India's Push for Electric Mobility:



peak demand and ensuring grid stability remain key issues. **Technological Constraints:** Current charging methods, including conductive, inductive, and battery swapping, all present unique challenges in cost, efficiency, and scalability. **Regulatory and Policy Barriers:** Compared to global EV leaders like Singapore, India's regulatory framework is still evolving, and better coordination between the government and private sector is essential to build a robust charging infrastructure. To achieve its EV goals, India needs to significantly expand and upgrade its EV charging network. Sustainable EV infrastructure in both urban and rural areas is essential for widespread adoption. Here are key strategies for success: **Expansion to Rural Areas:** Addressing the rural-urban disparity with solar-powered and mobile charging stations can help bring sustainable mobility to remote regions. **Partnerships:** Public-private partnerships will be crucial in scaling up the infrastructure. Stakeholders such as

over 15 million in 2023. This momentum is further fueled by the Government's aim to make 100 per cent of EV production local, contributing to both sustainability and economic growth. Challenges in EV Charging Infrastructure While EV adoption is on the rise, India's progress is hindered by gaps in charging infrastructure. Sustainable EV infrastructure, especially charging stations, is critical to supporting the EV ecosystem. However, several challenges remain: **Unequal Distribution of Charging Stations:** Most of India's 1,742 charging stations are located in urban areas, leaving rural regions underserved. **Limited Grid Capacity:** Although EVs will only account for 1.3% to 4.8% of India's overall electricity demand by 2030, managing

automakers, technology companies, and the government must work together to establish a reliable and accessible network of charging points. **Technological Innovations:** Standardizing charging systems and investing in advanced technologies like smart grids and energy storage solutions can make EV infrastructure more efficient and user-friendly. **Supportive Policies:** Financial incentives, tax breaks, and clearer regulations on EV infrastructure development can help catalyze faster growth in the sector. As India continues its journey toward sustainable mobility, developing a robust EV charging infrastructure is critical to ensuring the success of its electric mobility mission. With the government's ambitious targets and contributions from key players, India is poised to make substantial progress in transforming its transportation sector. With collective effort, India can achieve its vision of a greener, cleaner future while fostering economic growth. (The author is CTO & Co-Founder, Park+, views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN LIFE BEYOND THE GRAVE

Rebirth is not only a source of spiritual continuity but also a foundation for the pursuit of higher consciousness



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

Every time we see death or attend a funeral, we experience something like cemetery-induced reclusion which makes our mind & body numb. This makes us question the very purpose of our life. We start thinking that if death is the be-all and end-all of it-all, and it can kill anyone, anytime, then why should we bother about doing good deeds and fear punishment for our sins? There are mainly two kinds of people who have two different beliefs in this regard.

The first kind of people believe in the rebirth of human beings and strongly feel that the account of our good and bad deeds will be settled on the day of judgment when the dead rise from their graves, and then there are the second kinds of people who not only believe that human souls are reborn, but they also feel that humans transmigrate into 8.4 million species before getting a human birth again. However, there is very little knowledge about the third kind of people who believe that human souls take rebirth and are always in the human body.

Let us suppose that humans are not reborn. In that case what reason would there be to perform good deeds and desist from bad ones? Also, if there were no rebirth there would be no fear of punishment for one's bad deeds either, and little to stop people from doing as they pleased as long as they could evade the law. We should understand that if there is no future after death, people would also not amass wealth right up to their death, or build houses in their old age. These efforts would be futile, in the absence of rebirth. Thus, our hopes



of eternal prosperity and happiness, desire to earn merit by performing good deeds, fear of punishment in future births and feelings of eternal love and patriotism, would not arise at all if rebirth were not a reality. According to Hindu Mythology, a soul never dies, it is the body that dies & immediately after death, the soul changes body as we change clothes. With modern techniques like Past Life Regression, there are lots of cases around us where we see a child claiming to be experiencing visions of his/her previous births. Many of these cases have been verified by experts and psychologists who have recorded the testimonies of people recalling their previous birth and then cross-checked the facts with official records and the people mentioned by them.

Another simple fact that points to the reality of rebirth is that a soul cannot function without a body. If there were no rebirth, where does the soul go after a person has died? As human beings, nearly all our interactions are with fellow humans. Thus, we create karmic accounts with humans, to which we have to take birth in human form again. The analogy of the seed also illustrates this point. Just as a mango seed brings forth a mango tree, which then produces mangoes, which again provide mango seeds, the human soul possesses human qualities, feelings and experiences, and is the seed of human life. Hence it cannot function in any other living creature's body. Scepticism about the existence of souls and facts like rebirth is widespread because of the lack of an experience of soul consciousness. Such an experience requires spiritual effort for which one has to focus the mind and the intellect inward and then contemplate on it in silence. Slowly one begins to sense the existence of a sentient entity within, which is the soul. Such an experience, repeated over time, brings soul-consciousness, or the belief that one is a soul. It is this experience of reality that removes the shroud of ignorance from all other facts of the subtle world of souls, which we usually dismiss in disbelief for lack of material proof. So let us practice remaining in soul consciousness and enjoy being an enlightened soul without any botheration.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & a popular columnist; views are personal)

Punjab's MSMEs: Poised to compete on the global stage



A S MITTAL

With tailored state-specific export policies and enhanced trade routes, Punjab's MSMEs are poised to overcome geographical disadvantages and harness lucrative global markets

In a decisive step to enhance industrial growth in Punjab, the NITI Aayog in partnership with the Punjab Government, has sought feedback from stakeholders to explore the potential of MSMEs as a driver of export growth. This initiative is essential for identifying and promptly resolving industry challenges. To meet the objective of boosting Punjab's exports, MSMEs must be equipped with a comprehensive State Export Promotion Policy, linking them to sustainable growth and significant employment generation.

Exports are a fundamental pillar of a state's development, and a strategic geographical location is vital for ensuring global competitiveness and job creation factors for robust economic growth. For instance, Haryana once a barren expanse, has emerged as one of the top five states for export value, thanks to its advantageous proximity to the National Capital Region (NCR). Currently, Haryana outpaces Punjab with five times more exports. Coastal states with access to seaports are a step ahead in engaging in international trade, while landlocked regions like Punjab endure higher trade costs and transit challenges. It is unacceptable that policymakers have not prioritised Punjab's geographical disadvantages as a landlocked border state. The remoteness from seaports, inadequate connectivity, and frequent protests have created significant barriers to investment, resulting in a concerning decline in the industrial sector—a crisis that Punjab can no longer afford to ignore. The non-competitive environment for Punjab's MSMEs, stemming from their distance from seaports, must be addressed head-on.

These challenges are surmountable, and it is crucial to focus on empowering Punjab's vital MSMEs, which have the potential to become an "Export Engine" and deserve a fair platform to compete on equal terms. According to NITI Aayog's latest Export Preparedness Index (EPI), Punjab ranks a disappointing 10th with a score of 58.95, while Haryana leads in 5th place with a score of 63.65. Notably, Gujarat has the highest number of districts among the top 25 in the country for export share (54 per cent), followed by Maharashtra with five districts, Haryana with one, and Punjab with none—only a meagre 2 per cent of the country's exports.

Therefore, it is essential for Punjab to actively engage in export promotion initiatives for every potential MSME to dramatically increase its export figures. Why a State-Specific Policy Needed: The Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) for 2023-2028 has set an ambitious target of achieving \$2 trillion in exports by 2030. However, with 766 districts across the country, it is unacceptable that only 43 cities designated as centres of export excellence receive crucial financial incentives for global market surveys, brand promotions, warehouse establishment, and zero customs duty on capital goods for export-oriented production.

This glaring disparity in the distribution of incentives underscores the urgent need for a more inclusive, state-specific policy. The current focus on a handful of "Towns of Export Excellence" severely undermines the principles of 'One District, One Product' and 'Sabka Saath,



WHILE INDIA CURRENTLY LAGS BEHIND CHINA IN BICYCLE EXPORTS, WE HAVE A CLEAR AND COMPELLING OPPORTUNITY TO ELEVATE OUR GLOBAL EXPORT TARGETS BY AT LEAST 10 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS, PARTICULARLY IN UNTAPPED MARKETS IN THE US, EUROPE, AND AFRICA

Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas.' Punjab must decisively shift towards 'Industries of Export Excellence' (IEE). This strategy will empower the identification and promotion of key sectors, such as textiles and apparel, bicycles, auto parts, tractors, engineering goods, hand and machine tools, sports goods, footwear, and leather products.

Furthermore, the Foreign Trade Policy is resolutely committed to enhancing decentralised export promotion. The introduction of districts as export hubs is a non-negotiable strategy within the MSMEs Export Promotion Policy. This initiative will systematically identify potential export products and services in every district, establishing institutional mechanisms for their promotion—a critical step toward realising the policy's objectives. Every district in Punjab possesses significant untapped potential.

It is essential to identify additional districts for bolstering export operations, aligning with the imperative 'Vocal for Local' and 'Make in India' initiatives. India's vision of transforming each district into an export hub demands the active engagement of MSMEs from all districts. The time for action is now. MSMEs Export Potential: Punjab boasts an impressive 14.65 lakh MSMEs, which are the backbone of the state's industrial growth and are primed for global expansion.

These MSMEs are powerful hubs, excelling in industries such as textiles and apparel, bicycles, hosiery, tractors, automobile components, hand tools, machine tools, sports goods, engineering goods, footwear, and leather goods. They constitute a staggering 99.7 per cent of all MSMEs in the region, employing 65 per cent of the industrial workforce and generating 78 per cent of the state's total industrial output. These industrial clusters possess immense poten-

tial and can be fostered further. Ludhiana stands as a powerhouse, ranking first (Rs 20,140 Crore export business) among the top ten exporting districts with an export business valued at Rs 55,844 Crore for 2023-24. It leads the nation by producing 92 per cent of India's bicycle parts and 75 per cent of all bicycles, commanding an 80 per cent share in bicycle exports from India.

While India currently lags behind China in bicycle exports, we have a clear and compelling opportunity to elevate our global export targets by at least 10 per cent over the next two to three years, particularly in untapped markets in the US, Europe, and Africa. As the foremost producer of blended yarn and hosiery, Ludhiana holds its ground as the second-largest producer of polyester silk, fibre, and cotton yarn. It dominates woollen knitwear (95 per cent) and hosiery (65 per cent) exports, showcasing unparalleled strength in the global market. While China captures a commanding 37 per cent share in textiles apparel and hosiery, India needs to aggressively increase its mere 5 per cent share in the worldwide market. The opportunity for growth is vast, particularly in lucrative export markets such as the USA, UAE, UK, Germany, France, and Australia.

In the farm equipment sector, Punjab is a force to be reckoned with, hosting one-third of the total original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and standing as the leading tractor manufacturer. With a commanding 34.3 per cent share in exports, Sonalika IITL stands as the largest tractor exporter (Rs 3000 Cr) in 2023-24. Despite India's current 2.2 per cent share in the global market, the potential for over 2 lakh tractors to be exported in the next 2-3 years to burgeoning markets such as Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, SAARC, and African nations is undeniable. Jalandhar dominates the sports goods sector,

producing 45 per cent of the nation's total and contributing to 75 per cent of the country's sports goods exports. While China currently leads with a 42.2 per cent share, India's scant 0.56 per cent share of global exports highlights the tremendous untapped potential for growth. The time is ripe for Punjab to seize lucrative opportunities in markets like the USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Colombia, and Argentina, and make a formidable mark on the global stage. The Way Forward: To enhance the competitive edge of MSMEs in foreign trade, it's crucial to allow the flow of bilateral trade from Punjab through the Wagah Border of Pakistan to Middle Eastern countries, CIS nations, Europe, and the US. Establishing a Directorate of Exports in the state is vital for aligning the state and central government's export promotion policies.

One of the most pressing issues is the high borrowing cost of 10-12 per cent. It is essential to introduce interest subvention to create a level playing field for MSMEs, especially when compared to leading global players like China (3.1 per cent), Vietnam (4.5 per cent), Malaysia (3 per cent), and Thailand (3 per cent). Competitive and efficient logistics are foundational for export growth. Therefore, policy-backed support for state-owned wagons in landlocked border states like Punjab is essential.

This will help alleviate the burden of over-freight and provide a more equitable environment for driving export growth.

The Author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika IITL Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council and President of Tractor and Mechanization Association (TMA); Views expressed are personal.

How mobile video conferencing is bridging the digital divide in Bihar

The Bihar Government has taken a bold step toward real-time governance with the launch of a mobile outdoor video conferencing system

In a time when digital communication is essential for efficient government, resolving infrastructural and geographic obstacles is vital to making decisions in real time. This need is especially acute in large states like Bihar, where there are major connectivity challenges due to the expansive rural environment.



VARINDER SINGH JAWANDA

To narrow this gap, a major project was started by Bihar State Electronics Development Corporation (BELTRON) along with Millenium Automation as a system integrator, to establish a mobile outdoor video conferencing system that would improve communication challenges and enhance the state's governance. Because of this initiative, the administra-

tion can now function smoothly throughout Bihar by introducing an inventive, stronger video conferencing system.

Improving Governance With the use of the new outdoor video conferencing technology, authorities in Bihar can now hold virtual meetings and communicate with other officials directly from almost anywhere in the

state. This technology allows government officials to communicate in real-time, independent of their actual location, providing a much-needed degree of flexibility. This solution's robust, continuous connectivity and high-quality video streaming facilitate quicker decision-making, effective governance, and a more open line of contact with rural residents.

Recognising the Challenge In places remote from urban networks, ensuring reliable, fast communication was crucial but challenging. To prevent interruptions, a smooth interface between the new mobile video conferencing system and the Bihar State Wide Area Network (BSWAN) was required.

Sustaining steady uptime was essential since government communications are so vital. To maintain system functionality and quickly address any technological problems, comprehensive maintenance assistance was also necessary, guaranteeing dependability and continuity throughout the state.

A Comprehensive Solution With portable video conferencing devices that have high-quality audio and video components in cases that are easy to move, a specially designed solution was developed to meet these demands. Even in remote locations, the system's smooth integration with the current Bihar State Wide Area Network (BSWAN) guaranteed reliable service quality.



Advanced networking equipment allowed for seamless data transfer, particularly in areas with limited bandwidth. Disruptions during crucial meetings were minimised by optimising bandwidth in locations far away. Prompt technical assistance, and on-site maintenance guaranteed continuous strong system operation across the state. Key Outcomes of the Project

This initiative empowered Bihar's government to conduct mobile, outdoor video conferences statewide, enabling officials to make real-time decisions from any location, thus streamlining operations and improving emergency response.

As a technological advancement, it highlights how mobile technology can bridge the digital divide, aligning with the "Digital India" vision by enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement.

With scalability for future needs, the system can expand into public services and disaster management, offering a sustainable, resilient model for evolving governance demands, and setting an inspiring precedent for other

states. Future Prospects and Potential for Growth. This outdoor video conferencing solution has the potential to revolutionise governance in Bihar and other similar states. As Bihar continues to advance, the system can be further expanded to incorporate additional features and applications, including new e-governance initiatives. Emerging technologies like IoT, advanced bandwidth optimisation, and real-time analytics are being explored to enhance communication efficiency even further.

The success of this project opens doors for expansion into other government sectors, allowing more departments to benefit from mobile video conferencing. In conclusion, this outdoor video

conferencing initiative has enabled the Bihar government to communicate and make decisions effectively, regardless of officials' physical locations.

It has solved an immediate challenge while laying the foundation for future technological advancements in government communication. By bridging the digital divide, this solution is enhancing governance in Bihar, helping to build a more inclusive, connected, and prosperous state. The collaboration with BELTRON demonstrates that strategic digital initiatives can empower state governments to deliver on the promise of accessible, efficient governance for all.

(The writer is CEO at MAPL World; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Gold rises Rs 200 to Rs 81,300 per 10 grams

Gold prices rose Rs 200 to Rs 81,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid fresh buying by local jewellers and retailers and strong global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity retreated from a record high in the national capital on Monday, declining Rs 1,300 to Rs 81,100 per 10 grams. Silver jumped Rs 1,800 to Rs 96,700 per kg on Tuesday. In the previous session, it had closed at Rs 94,900 per kg. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 200 to Rs 80,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 80,700 per 10 grams on Monday. Traders attributed the rise in yellow metal prices to a pick-up in demand by local jewellers and retailers in the domestic markets. Meanwhile, in futures trade on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX), gold contracts for December delivery slipped Rs 18 or 0.02 per cent to trade at Rs 78,404 per 10 grams.



Dr Reddy's PAT dips to Rs 1342 cr

Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd on Tuesday said its consolidated profit after tax for the quarter, ended September 30, was down by nine percent to Rs 1,342 crore (before non-controlling interest) compared to the same period last fiscal. The drugmaker reported a profit after tax of Rs 1,480 crore in the second quarter of FY24. A press release from the company stated that consolidated revenues during the quarter under discussion were up by 17 percent to Rs 8,016 crore compared to Rs 6,880 crore in Q2 FY24. DRL co-chairman and managing director said the company delivered another strong quarter and maintained growth momentum across its businesses. "We made progress on our future growth drivers, operationalised our venture with Nestlé, and completed the acquisition of Nicotinell and related brands. We will continue to drive efficiency, strengthen our core businesses, and positively impact patient lives through science and innovation," he said.



Renewable energy investment to touch \$3.1 trillion mark

The renewable energy investment globally is likely to register 29 per cent growth to touch USD 3.1 trillion in 2024 against USD 2.4 trillion in 2018, a report said Tuesday. The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), in a statement, said that as per the World Investment Report, the solar segment leads the renewable energy investments, accounting for 59 per cent of the total, driven by lower costs, with APAC (Asia Pacific region) emerging as the top investing region. "The latest report highlights a global shift toward sustainable energy, with energy investments rising from USD 2.4 trillion in 2018 to USD 3.1 trillion by 2024," the report said. The report was released by MNRE Minister and ISA President Pralhad Joshi at the ongoing assembly of the International Solar Alliance held in the national capital. Joshi also launched three other reports, namely the World Solar Market Report, World Technology Report, and Green Hydrogen Readiness Assessment for African Countries, the statement said.

Govt pegs record 119.93 MT rice output for kharif season

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's rice production is likely to touch a record 119.93 million tonne (MT) in the 2024-25 kharif season on good monsoon, according to the agriculture ministry's first advance estimate released on Tuesday.

The record estimate comes amid surplus stocks in government godowns.

Rice production is projected 6.67 million tonne higher than the previous year's kharif season. The harvesting of the main kharif crop is underway across the country. Among coarse cereals, maize output is estimated at an all-time high of 24.54 MT for the 2024-25 kharif season (July-June), up from 22.24 MT last year.

While jowar production is estimated higher at 2.19 MT, bajra output is likely to decline to 9.37 MT. Total coarse cereals production is pegged lower at 37.81 MT against 56.93 million tonne in the year-ago period.

The ministry estimates total foodgrain production at 164.70 MT for the 2024-25 kharif season, higher than 155.76 MT last year.

Pulses output is expected to remain almost flat at 6.95 MT compared to 6.97 MT, while oilseeds production is likely to



increase to 25.74 MT from 24.16 MT. India relies on imports to meet domestic shortages of pulses and oilseeds. Among cash crops, sugarcane production is projected to decline to 439.93 MT from 453.15 MT last year.

Cotton output is estimated lower at 29.92 million bales (170 kg each) against 32.52 million bales, while jute/mesta production may fall to 8.45 million bales (180 kg each) from 9.69 million bales.

GAIL Q2 profit up 10% Rs 2,690 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned GAIL (India) Ltd on Tuesday reported 10 per cent rise in September quarter net profit after an increase in earnings from gas transmission business and turnaround in petrochemical business neutralised fall in marketing margin.

Consolidated net profit of Rs 2,689.67 crore in July-September FY25 compared with Rs 2,442.18 crore in the same period a year ago, according to a stock exchange filing by the company.

India's biggest natural gas transmission and marketing firm reported almost flat revenue from operations at Rs 33,981.33 crore.

Pre-tax earnings from gas transmission business was up 8 per cent to Rs 1,402.81

crore. The petchem business clocked an earning of Rs 146.19 crore as against a loss of Rs 160.94 crore in the year-ago period.

However, earnings from marketing business were down 27 per cent at Rs 1,253.64 crore.

Natural gas transmission volume stood at 13.63 million standard cubic metres per day in Q2 while gas marketing volume was 96.60 mmscmd, the firm said in a statement. GAIL Chairman and Managing Director Sandeep Kumar Gupta said the petrochemical segment is expected to be reasonably profitable in FY2024-25.

The company logged a capex of Rs 1,885 crore during the quarter, mainly on pipeline and petrochemicals, taking cumulative capex up to September 30 to Rs 3,544 crore.

Big industry needs to take plunge in space sector: ISRO

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

ISRO chairman S Somanath on Tuesday urged industry houses to invest in the space sector in a big way to build rockets and allied systems for India to emerge as a space power by 2047.

Addressing the Indian Space Conclave here, Somanath voiced concern over the "elusive" investments in the upstream sector of the space industry comprising launch vehicles, hardware and software for ground-based stations, telemetry, tracking and command stations.

He said the share of the Indian space economy in the global market was very low and there was a need to encourage and inspire the next generation of leaders to come into the sector and create a vibrant activity.

India's space economy is pegged at USD 8.4 billion and is projected to grow to USD 45 billion in the next ten years.

Somanath said investments were not forthcoming from big industry houses within the country for the upstream side of the business despite pursuing the matter with them.

"India is not devoid of big (industry) houses having



enough capability to invest and create as much as others in the world. But, they need to take the plunge, possibly alone or in a very cooperative mode with others," the ISRO chairman said addressing the conclave organised by the Indian Space Association.

He acknowledged the risks involved in the space sector where a longer time is required to develop complex systems which could prove to be unsuitable as technologies tend to change fast. "There are trends and start-ups happening, but their ability to scale up to a level, become competitive enough to

challenge established players remains to be seen," Somanath said. "It is here that the role of bigger industrial houses needs to come in. If you want to really scale up this domain, it has to be through a very high level of risk-sharing capability that has to be taken only by bigger industry houses," Somanath said. He said there was a need to create leading space companies in India, not just service-providing companies.

"Companies who have the capability to conceive, design, manufacture and put up cost competitive products in front of the world," he said.

Last year, ISRO's commercial arm NewSpace India Limited awarded a contract to a consortium of L&T and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to build five Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles.

The space agency has also offered to transfer its latest Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) to the industry for mass production.

The company or a consortium of technology for the SSLV can continue to build the rocket at ISRO facilities till it develops its own campus for manufacturing the launch vehicles.

India and Qatar FIU discuss IT systems, virtual digital assets

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India and Qatar's Financial Intelligence Units (FIU) discussed use of IT systems and tools, public and private partnerships, strategic analysis, and experience in virtual digital assets segment, the finance ministry said on Tuesday.

A nine-member delegation, headed by Sheikh Ahmed Al Thani, Head of FIU-Qatar, visited Financial Intelligence Unit-India (FIU-IND), on November 4-5, 2024, New Delhi. During the visit, FIU-IND head Vivek Aggarwal and Sheikh Ahmed Al Thani discussed current practices in Anti-money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) regime as well as possible areas of future collaboration between the two organisations.

Seven developers seek govt approval for full or partial cancelation of SEZs

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Seven developers, including Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure, have approached the government for the full or partial cancellation of their special economic zones (SEZs).

The inter-ministerial Board of Approval (BoA) chaired by the Commerce Secretary would take a decision on these applications in its meeting on November 8.

Of the seven zones, four are from the IT/ITeS sector. While other sectors include apparel and pharma, according to the BoA meeting agenda document.

Kerala State Information Technology Infrastructure Limited (KSITIL) has sought denotification of its two IT/ITeS proposed zones in Kerala.

The developer has requested to de-notify the entire area



of the two SEZs.

"As regards reasons, the developer has stated that due to lack of demand for SEZ space, their board has decided to transfer the land to the Industries Department for setting up an industrial park," the document said.

Arshiya Ltd has submitted an application for full de-notification of their FTWZ (free trade warehouse zone) at

Nagpur, Maharashtra. Qubix Business Park has asked for partial denotification of 1.47 Ha out of 10.17 Ha of their IT/ITeS SEZ at Rajiv Gandhi Infotech Park, Pune, Maharashtra.

The (Qubix) developer wishes to operate as a DTA (Domestic Tariff Area) without availing duty benefits and operate as an industrial IT park for non-SEZ clients," it said.

Stock markets stage spirited recovery; Sensex up 694 pts

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex recovered its early losses to close higher by 694 points on Tuesday on late buying in banking, steel and oil & gas shares amid firm trends in global equities ahead of the US presidential elections. Bouncing back from Monday's sharp fall, the BSE Sensex jumped 694.39 points or 0.88 per cent to settle at 79,476.63. During the day, it soared 740.89 points or 0.94 per cent to 79,523.13.

The NSE Nifty climbed 217.95 points or 0.91

per cent to settle at 24,213.30 as 39 of its constituents advanced and 11 declined. Stock markets opened on a weak note and traded in a range with a negative bias in the first half

as investors turned cautious ahead of the US presidential elections. Sensex hit a low of 78,296.70 while Nifty touched 23,842.75. Value buying in the afternoon session helped indices recover losses and closed in the green. "Markets witnessed a remarkable turnaround towards the closing hours as value buying in banking stocks along with gains in metals and oil & gas stocks aided broad market recovery."

"Optimism across Asian and European indices ahead of the US election outcome boosted local traders' confidence, although medium-term outlook still looks hazy due to scepticism over further rate cut by the Fed and subdued corporate earnings," Prashanth Tapse,

Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, JSW Steel

surged nearly 5 per cent while Tata Steel jumped nearly 4 per cent. Axis Bank, IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Kotak Mahindra Bank and UltraTech Cement were also among the big gainers.

Adani Ports, ITC, Bharti Airtel and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

"The domestic market experienced a sharp recovery, reclaiming most of the previous day's losses amid uncertainty surrounding the likely downgrade in Q2 GDP forecast and closely contested US presidential election," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

Tax officers detect Rs 25K cr GST evasion by 18,000 bogus firms

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tax officers have detected about 18,000 fake companies registered under GST which have been involved in tax evasion of about Rs 25,000 crore, an official said. In the recently concluded all-India drive against fake companies, GST officers had identified 73,000 companies which they suspected of being set up only to avail of input tax credit (ITC) without any actual sale of goods and thereby defraud the exchequer.

"We had identified around 73,000 GSTINs for verification in the second all-India drive against fake registrations. Of this, around 18,000 were found to be non-existent. They were involved in tax evasion of about Rs 24,550 crore," the official said.

Home textiles likely to witness 6-8 pc revenue growth

PNS ■ MUMBAI

India's home textile industry is expecting 6-8 per cent revenue growth this financial year driven by resilient demand from the key export destination like the US and expansion in the domestic market, a report said on Tuesday.

Following a 9-10 per cent rebound in revenue growth last fiscal, India's home textile industry is set to stitch 6-8 per cent growth this fiscal riding on resilient demand from the US and expansion in the domestic market - and notwithstanding some lingering logistical challenges, Crisil Ratings said in a report.

The credit profiles of home textile companies will remain stable, supported by healthy cash accrual and moderate capital expenditure (capex) plans on the back of deleverage balance sheets.

The home textile industry derives 70-75 per cent of its revenue from exports, of which the US alone accounts for 60 per cent, and the remaining from the domestic market.

"Three factors will drive growth of the home textiles industry this fiscal. One, resilient consumer spending



and normalised inventory levels at major retailers in the US will spur exports, though container availability bears watching. Two, the industry's continued focus on expanding domestic presence will aid growth," Crisil Ratings Senior Director Mohit Makhija said.

Third, he said, the domestic prices of cotton, the key raw material, are likely to remain close to international levels, resolutely retaining the competitiveness of domestic companies. "Therefore, for the home textiles exported by India, the country's share in US imports will remain steady this fiscal - in January-August 2024, it was 30 per cent, same as in calendar year 2023," he added.

International cotton prices had plummeted below the domestic prices between June and September 2024, driven by a surge in cotton supply from Brazil and the US, the report said.

'Festive consumption growth halved in 2024'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese brokerage Nomura on Wednesday said the growth rate in festive consumption halved to 15 per cent in the current year.

Analysts at the brokerage attributed their findings to "rough estimates" and added that the same growth had stood at 32 per cent in 2023 and 88 per cent in 2022.

"Anecdotal data suggests retail sales (offline and online) rose during this festive season, but overall growth rates are slower," they said in a note. It said while festive demand

remained steady in rural areas and tier-2 and tier-3 cities, metros and industrial demand was "mixed", leading to "mixed" overall festive consumption trends.

Last month, the Union Ministry of Finance had said urban demand was weak.

The Nomura analysts said weddings in December should provide a fillip to the festive sales.

"There are broadly two ways to assess the strength of festive demand. One is to sift through anecdotal evidence and compare trends with previous years. Another, in the



case of 'hard' conventional data, is to aggregate economic activity across the September-December period and compare across years, which helps to iron out the 'date effect' on growth rates," it explained.

Under anecdotal evidence, it cited The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) expectations on retail sales growth slowing down to 13.3 per cent in 2024 from 36.4 per cent in the year before, growth in e-commerce sales and gold volumes falling even though sales have picked up.

On the 'hard' data front, the

brokerage said incoming inputs are suggesting stability but there are fireworks.

It said retail auto sales are up 14 per cent adjusted for the period of shradh, but on the wholesale side, passenger vehicles and MHCV have fared poorly in 2024.

A "cyclical growth slowdown" is underway in the economy, it said, adding that the Reserve Bank of India's 7.2 per cent real GDP growth estimate for FY25 looks "overly optimistic" and there are "rising downside risks" to its own projections of 6.7 per cent growth.

GREATER HYDERABAD MUNICIPAL CORPORATION
'E' PROCUREMENT NOTICE
 Short NIT No.547 & 536/UBD/Soc-bad Zone/GHMC/2024-25 Dated: 05.11.2024
 No. of Works: 2 works, Estimated amount: Rs. 22.40 Lakhs. Bid Submission Start Date & Time: 06.11.2024 @ 11.00 AM. Bid Submission Closing Date & Time: 14.11.2024 @ 11.00 AM. Name & Address Officer Cell No.: Dy. Director, UBD, Soc-bad Zone, GHMC, Cell No. 7207923113. Further details can be seen at @ https://www.tender.telangana.gov.in
 Sd/- Dy. Director, UBD, Secunderabad Zone, GHMC
 P.O.No. 6251/PPCL/HTV/2024-25, Dt. 05-11-2024

KANIKA KAPOOR'S LATEST TRACK WILL MAKE YOU GO **MATAK MATAK**

SHIKHA DUGGAL
shikhaduggalwork@gmail.com

Renowned for her strong vocals and Bollywood blockbusters, Kanika Kapoor unveiled her international collaboration with Timi Boi, an Afro singer. This endeavour, which combines Indian vocals with international influences like afrobeats and modern music, is a major turning point in her career! What better moment to do an exclusive interview with one of today's most well-known singers?

"The goal for *Matak Matak* was to collaborate with Nigerian and Indian artists in a way that was authentic to both cultures and felt organic. Our goal was to blend the lively rhythms and beats of both cultures without sacrificing their distinctive sounds. Maintaining the authenticity of each culture's style was the most difficult task, but I believe that by striking the correct balance, we produced something novel and fascinating that brilliantly embodies both," Kanika expressed.

The song *Matak Matak* celebrates ethnic diversity with its lively, dance-driven blend of Indian and Afro-pop traditions. It was filmed in Lagos, Nigeria and emphasises joy, movement and cultural cohesion. "My music has evolved over time, moving from Bollywood hits to more indie and international collaborations. I enjoy collaborating with musicians from all around the world and experimenting with various sounds. I can now reach even more people with my voice thanks to this improvement," explains how Kanika is demonstrating her uniqueness and dedication to experimenting with new musical concepts!

Kanika continues to shatter stereotypes as the proprietor of her record label, Bajao, demonstrating her adaptability as a mother, artist and businesswoman. Her latest hit, which combines pop, Indian and Afrobeats sounds to create a genuinely global experience, represents another phase in her career. "The energy and style of Timi Boi's

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Bollywood's reigning songstress **Kanika Kapoor** opens up about her latest international collaboration, *Matak Matak*, a vibrant fusion of Indian and Afro-pop sounds with Nigerian sensation Timi Boi. With her unparalleled energy and passion, Kanika Kapoor talks music, cultural diversity and empowerment, offering a glimpse into her remarkable world



verse were fantastic. His influence really influenced the final version's tone, giving it a distinctive flavour. We had a great time writing and recording the song in Lagos. The main themes of *Matak Matak* include excitement, enjoyment and great energy. The song perfectly expresses how it feels to let go, have a good time and celebrate life with friends. I wanted to develop something that would inspire people to dance, let go of their anxieties and simply savour the present. I hope it connects with listeners on a happy and carefree level, giving them a rush of excitement and enjoyment and making it their go-to song for festivities," Kanika Kapoor says with hope!

Lagos was the ideal location for them to film the song because it was lively and full of activity. They wanted the images to depict a vibrant, dynamic world and to match the enthusiasm of the song. She continues

the exclusive conversation with well-known songs like *Baby Doll*, *Lovely*, *Chittiyaan Kalaiyaan*, *Beat Pe Booty*, *Premika*, *Desi Look* and more. "Great musicians from all over the world are joining together to create music because it has the ability to transcend cultural boundaries. It is my hope that *Matak Matak* will strike a chord with viewers in Nigeria and India. Without a doubt, music has the ability to unite individuals from all backgrounds."

Her remarkable talent and unwavering love for music are demonstrated by her path from her first success to becoming a household superstar! "I can't wait to continue collaborating with Afro artists! You can anticipate more tracks that combine African and Indian themes; however, I can't give away too much just yet. In addition to several Indian collabs, we have numerous foreign collabs in the works too. Managing my responsibilities as a mother, artist and businesswoman is difficult but immensely fulfilling. Every project is unique and I couldn't accomplish them without the love and support of my family, which inspires me to work harder. On the other side, becoming an entrepreneur helps me stay grounded and goal-focused. I am continuously inspired and driven by these various aspects of my life," added the one who is also creating waves on social media!

In the end, music speaks to everyone. It unites individuals, improves our understanding of one another and reveals that we are not all that different at our core. In reality, we are all the same and hearing this through music is a blessing. In this candid conversation, she also added, "My advice would be to stay true to yourself. Despite the difficulties in the independent music industry, you can reach listeners worldwide if you are committed and distinctive. I've discovered throughout the years that perseverance and enthusiasm are crucial for success in the music business. Although there are always highs and lows, remaining loyal to my music and objectives has aided in my development as an entrepreneur and musician. Women in India frequently have extra difficulties in this area as they attempt to balance their artistic endeavours with cultural norms and familial obligations. It has been a voyage of redefining boundaries and demonstrating my abilities. My goal as an entrepreneur is to push Bajao to the global scene while dispelling myths and removing obstacles for upcoming musicians. This collaboration is a step in that direction, encouraging women to think they can be successful in the global business and creative industries."

As a singer, the finest means for her to interact with her followers and loved ones are through live performances and public gatherings. For Kanika Kapoor, seeing it in person is unique and poignant! Having said that, they engage in a number of initiatives that provide their fans with social media insights. She enjoys sharing new projects, behind-the-scenes photos and even brief tidbits about her everyday life. Additionally, social media has developed into a potent medium for listening to and sharing new music. It's a great way to discover new products and artists from around the world.



INDIA'S CIBIL BLIND SPOT

Millions missing out on financial benefits

In a country where economic aspirations continue to soar, millions of Indians remain unaware of a powerful tool that could unlock their financial potential: the CIBIL score. The three-digit number, ranging from 300 to 900, serves as one of the most reliable indicators of one's credit health, allowing one to determine their ability to secure loans and credit cards.

A strong CIBIL score offers numerous advantages in financial transactions. It typically results in increased credit limits across various financial products, including credit cards and overdrafts. Financial institutions tend to extend more generous credit offerings to individuals with a proven history of reliable loan repayment. Moreover, those with favourable scores often experience expedited loan approval processes. Perhaps most importantly, a high CIBIL score significantly enhances the likelihood of loan approval, as banks view such individuals as lower-risk borrowers, making them more inclined to extend credit.

However, despite its substantial significance, the importance of a healthy CIBIL score remains amiss among the majority of the masses.

Overcoming financial barriers

A TransUnion CIBIL report published in 2022 noted that more than 160 million Indian consumers were considered to be underserved at the end of 2021. "Credit underserved" people refers to those who have some credit history, yet do not use traditional credit products. This revelation is astounding considering that India has now surpassed the 100 million mark for credit cards in February 2024.

A significant portion of the Indian population faces challenges in understanding fundamental credit and lending concepts due to limited financial literacy, further exacerbated by the widespread reliance on the informal economy, which keeps many individuals outside the formal banking system and limits their exposure to credit-related information.

Paving way for financial literacy

To bridge the awareness gap and ensure that more Indians understand the importance of maintaining a good CIBIL score, a multi-pronged approach involving the government, non-government agencies, and the corporate sector is the need of the hour. Recognising the need to improve

financial literacy, the Indian government has undertaken several initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the importance of CIBIL scores. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) annually observes Financial Literacy Week to enhance the public's knowledge of financial literacy. Additionally, the RBI has also mandated that all individuals are entitled to one free credit report annually from each of the four credit information companies, including CIBIL. Moreover, the government has integrated credit score awareness into broader financial inclusion programs such as the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), which seeks to bring more people into the formal banking system.

At the same time, WEP and TransUnion CIBIL launched *SEHER*, a program to boost financial literacy for women entrepreneurs. Part of WEP's Financing Women Collaborative, it aims to improve credit access and financial management skills for women-led businesses. Simultaneously, NGOs and corporations can play a significant role in enhancing financial literacy among individuals by collaborating on the development and implementation of educational programs tailored to different demographics via workshops and seminars. Utilising their expertise and the resources dedicated to their CSR projects, corporates can massively impact the reach of such programs across the lengths and breadths of the country, while NGOs play a crucial role in focusing on the outreach of the programs at the grassroots level, particularly in underserved communities to provide both theoretical and hands-on experiences in local dialects.

Such initiatives have made a gradual yet remarkable impact in recent years: a recent TransUnion study reported a 73% growth in Indian credit monitoring in 2023, with motives varying from monitoring pre-account opening (57%), and score improvement (23%), to managing debt (20%). As we embark on our journey to become a truly developed nation, it is essential to create a financially informed and capable society that recognises the significance of a healthy credit score necessary for financial stability – further facilitating a calmer, enhanced quality of life.

(The author, **Vikram Kumar**, is the Head of partnership & Communications, at NIFT Foundation.)

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Imagine taking a deep breath, only to feel your lungs struggle to expand. The sweet, buttery aroma of freshly popped popcorn turns toxic, hiding a dark secret: a debilitating condition that ravages the airways, leaving its victims gasping for air. Welcome to the alarming world of 'popcorn lung', a mysterious and irreversible disease that's silently spreading its reach, fuelled by the very substances meant to bring us pleasure.

As we delve into the world of popcorn lung, we'll explore the intricate web of causes, symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention strategies. We'll shed light on the high-risk groups, from factory workers to vapers, and examine the alarming rise of this disease in our communities.

Join us on this critical journey to uncover the truth about popcorn lung, a condition that demands attention, awareness, and action. Together, let's break the silence surrounding this silent killer and safeguard our respiratory health for a brighter, breathier tomorrow.

WHAT IS POPCORN LUNG?

Popcorn lung, medically known as bronchiolitis obliterans, is a serious and irreversible condition where the smallest airways of the lungs, the bronchioles, become inflamed and scarred. This scarring narrows the airways, making it increasingly difficult to breathe over time. Also known as Bronchiolitis Obliterans, popcorn lung is a chronic and progressive disease that silently inflames and scars the small airways, obstructing the flow of life-giving oxygen. This insidious condition is primarily triggered by prolonged exposure to harmful chemicals, particularly diacetyl, a seemingly innocuous flavoring agent used in microwave popcorn, e-cigarettes, and other vapor products.

SYMPTOMS

Dr. Ganesh Pratap, Consultant Pulmonologist, Allergy & Asthma Specialist, SPARSH Hospital, Yeshwanthpur, begins to take us a little bit into the flash from the past, as he shares, "Named after cases in workers in microwave popcorn factories who were exposed to a chemical called diacetyl, this condition has gained attention in recent years due to its association with vaping and e-cigarette usage."

In popcorn lung, symptoms often resemble those of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), including shortness of breath, a persistent dry cough, wheezing and fatigue. While these symptoms may initially seem mild,

Are you breathing trouble? Devastating reality of popcorn lung

In a special report, *The Pioneer* examines the growing concern of popcorn lung, a chronic and progressive disease affecting the lungs. Health experts with us share their insights on causes, symptoms and prevention strategies

they can worsen over time if exposure to harmful chemicals continues, ultimately leading to severe respiratory complications. "People who are particularly prone to popcorn lung include those working in environments with exposure to chemicals like diacetyl or other flavoring agents used in food processing. More recently, individuals who use e-cigarettes or vape products are also at risk. Many flavored vape liquids contain diacetyl, and repeated exposure can damage lung tissue over time," highlights Dr. Ganesh.

CAUSES

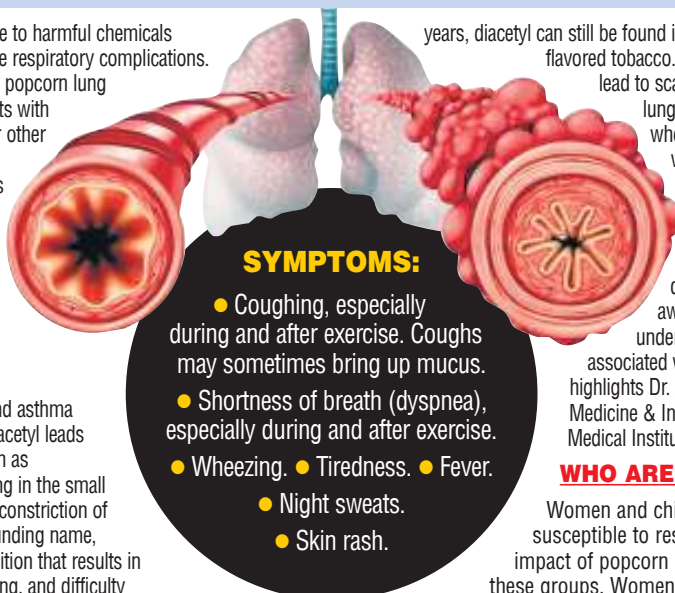
Dr. Swetha Nagalla, pulmonologist and asthma and allergic expert, says, "Inhaling diacetyl leads to bronchiolitis obliterans, also known as 'popcorn lung,' which causes scarring in the small air sacs of the lungs, resulting in the constriction of the airways. Despite its harmless-sounding name, 'popcorn lung' is a severe lung condition that results in symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing, reminiscent of those seen in COPD."

The primary cause of popcorn lung is exposure to diacetyl, a chemical that was once routinely used in microwave popcorn production to create that enticing buttery flavor. While the food industry has modified its use in recent

years, diacetyl can still be found in various vaping products and flavored tobacco. "Inhalation of this chemical can lead to scarring of the small airways in the lungs, resulting in chronic cough, wheezing, and shortness of breath, which can severely affect daily life. One lesser-known fact about popcorn lung is that the symptoms may take years to develop after initial exposure. This delay can result in a lack of awareness, leading individuals to underestimate the potential risks associated with certain substances," further highlights Dr. Ankit Bansal, Consultant, Internal Medicine & Infectious Diseases, Sri Balaji Action Medical Institute.

WHO ARE AT RISK?

Women and children are particularly susceptible to respiratory illnesses, and the impact of popcorn lung can manifest differently in these groups. Women, for example, may experience more pronounced respiratory symptoms due to hormonal influences on lung function. Children, whose lungs are still developing, may face debilitating long-term consequences if exposed to harmful chemicals like diacetyl during critical growth periods.



SYMPTOMS:

- Coughing, especially during and after exercise. Coughs may sometimes bring up mucus.
- Shortness of breath (dyspnea), especially during and after exercise.
- Wheezing. • Tiredness. • Fever.
- Night sweats.
- Skin rash.

RAISING AWARENESS—NEED OF THE HOUR

"Raising awareness about popcorn lung is crucial, as this condition is often misunderstood or misdiagnosed due to its similarity to other respiratory illnesses. People, especially younger individuals who might use vape products, need to understand that these products are not without risk," says Dr. Ganesh, adding that even with safety claims, certain chemicals used in vaping liquids may still have long-term, harmful effects on lung health. Furthermore, people who have had lung transplants are also susceptible to bronchiolitis obliterans as a form of rejection, emphasising the importance of post-transplant lung care.

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Currently, there is no cure for popcorn lung, but early diagnosis and treatment can help manage symptoms and slow the disease's progression. Treatment usually involves corticosteroids and immunosuppressive medications to reduce inflammation, and in severe cases, lung transplants may be considered. However, once lung tissue is scarred, it cannot be restored, making prevention and awareness critical.

"To protect oneself from the risks associated with popcorn lung, it's imperative for people to take self-precautions. Avoiding environments where diacetyl-containing products are prevalent—such as enclosed spaces where popcorn is frequently made or where e-cigarettes are heavily used—is crucial. Additionally, being aware of product ingredients and opting for safer alternatives can mitigate risks. The long-term impact of popcorn lung can be severe, as the damage to the airways is often irreversible," explains Dr. Bansal. In terms of prevention, avoiding exposure to known irritants is the best approach. For workers, Dr. Ganesh shares that appropriate workplace safety protocols and protective equipment can minimise risks. For the general population, staying away from vaping and e-cigarettes, especially flavoured products, can significantly reduce the likelihood of developing this irreversible condition. "Awareness and stricter regulations around the use of diacetyl and other harmful chemicals in consumer products can also help protect public health and prevent cases of popcorn lung in the future."

Dr. Nagalla further says besides popcorn lung, the damaging chemicals in the vapor could also lead to pneumonia or lung collapse. Certain vaping products may also result in cardiovascular issues. Patients diagnosed with this condition frequently require ongoing medical management, including pulmonary rehabilitation and medications to help manage symptoms. Thus, Dr. Bansal says that understanding the implications of our environment and the products we consume is essential not just for individual health but also for public health initiatives aimed at reducing exposure to dangerous substances.



Victor Rackets is now opening India's first Experience Centre in Kondapur, Hyderabad. The Victor Experience Centre showcases a one-of-its-kind showroom with a full badminton court inside the store. It was launched by badminton stars –Olympians Ashwini Ponnappa and HS Prannoy, along with popular Indian Actress Regina Cassandra, who is a badminton enthusiast herself.



Socialite Sushila Bokadia, inaugurated the 7-day D sons Patola Art Exhibition at Labels pop-up space, Banjara Hills road no: 1.



Posidex Technologies Pvt. Ltd., announced its plans for global expansion alongside the unveiling of a strategic rebrand. The new logo was revealed by PV Sindhu, who was joined by industry dignitaries and the Posidex leadership team.

LUXURY CRUISE EXPERIENCE

Antara Cruises is delighted to announce that it has won the prestigious Gold Magellan Award, presented by its pioneering expedition cruises at Bhitarkanika National Park in Odisha. The award recognises its commitment to excellence in quality and one-of-a-kind travel experience that blend culture, adventure, heritage and wonderful landscapes. The awards celebrated the best in travel across the globe, honouring the best professionals and organisations in the sectors including hospitality, travel destinations, cruise lines, airlines and airports, tour operators and others. The awards recognised exceptional achievements in travel design, marketing and services by the world's leading industry experts from Harvard Group International, The Travel

Institute, World Travel and Tourism Council, Crewe Associates, National Geographic Travel Media and other renowned industry-related organisations and groups. This win for Antara Cruises is a significant acknowledgment of its world class services and leadership in the river cruising industry. Raj Singh, Founder Chairman, Antara Cruises - Heritage River Journeys Pvt Ltd, expressed his heartfelt gratitude for receiving the Travel Weekly Gold Magellan Award. He remarked, "This recognition is a testament to our team's dedication and commitment to offering unique, luxury river cruising experiences that showcase India's natural beauty, inhabitants and cultural heritage. Our expedition cruises are particularly special, as they allow travellers to explore the stunning

areas of Bhitarkanika National Park, which takes you through the diverse wildlife and the rich life of local communities." Antara Cruises continues to set benchmarks in the industry with its carefully curated itineraries that emphasize sustainability, comfort and immersive experiences. It offers guests a chance to explore the lesser-known, pristine areas of the mangroves in Bhitarkanika National Park, renowned for its biodiversity, local community and scenic beauties. Bhitarkanika National Park is the second-largest mangrove ecosystem in India. Travellers can explore the estuarine regions of the Brahmani and Baitarani rivers, walk through mangrove forests and visit Habalikathi beach.



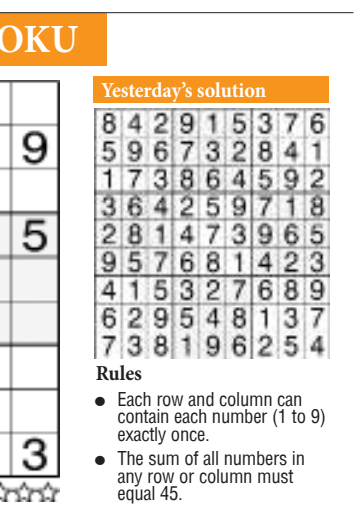
PARTY



Marking the beginning of the holiday season, The Golkonda Hotel hosted its annual traditional cake mixing ceremony with grandeur at the Mayfair Hall, Hyderabad. Veteran actor Shubhalekha Sudhakar, renowned singer S P Sailaja, among the other dignitaries marked their presence at the event.

Photos by - SV Chary

FUN



RAHASYAM IDHAM JAGATH IS BASED ON SRI CHAKRA: KOMAL R BHARADWAJ

SURESH KAVIRAYANI
sureshkavirayani@gmail.com

The Telugu film *Rahasyam Idham Jagath* is releasing on November 8. Directed by Komal R Bharadwaj, the film has been mostly shot in the USA. He is also introducing new talent with this film. The director talks about his film and what the inspiration behind it is. Having grown up in an artistic environment, he shared, "My parents are writers. It has come to me naturally. I also wanted to tell stories." He completed his masters in the USA and later joined a film school to learn filmmaking. "I made short films with US artists while I was in film school and also received many awards," said Komal. This further gave him confidence that he could also make a feature film. "Then I started to write this *Rahasyam Idham Jagath* in 2020 and started shooting in 2021," said the director. "I wanted to come with an unconventional story rather than come up with a regular love story or a drama. In 1990 in Oregon, America, people dug for *Sri Chakram* and the place is near where I stayed. So I got curious and did my kind of research and started to write my story based on that incident," said Komal. The news about *Sri Chakram* in America appeared in most of the media in the USA and even in India also. "I wanted to take that true incident and I took mythological inputs and added some cinematic liberty to narrate the story, which I think is completely new to the audience," he said. That's how he started the story and completed the film. He also used the Wormhole concept for



RAHASYAM IDHAM JAGATH IS HITTING THE SCREENS THIS WEEK AND THE DIRECTOR, KOMAL R BHARADWAJ, IS FROM THE USA. HE SHOT THE FILM IN THE USA. HE SPEAKS ABOUT THE INSPIRATION FOR THIS FILM AND WHAT HE WANTS TO DO IN THE FUTURE

this film. "According to the science predictions, one can travel to another time period using this Wormhole concept, so I used this in my film," he added. "Actually all these points are written in our *puranas* and I touched on all of them in my film, which I feel is interesting for the audience," he said. Though these stories are good to hear, when it comes on the big screen, it should be interesting. "Yes, I narrated it in a simple way and one can see these when revealing the characters one after another," he said.

Komal Bharadwaj left the software job and is now turning into direction, which he feels is a risk, but his passion about directing made it this way. "Many directors are now in the top position, but they all had taken a big risk at that time. I wanted to take a risk, because I believe in my story and my potential," he said. He added that he showed the film to many people and they appreciated his efforts and the film. Komal introduced many new artists with this film. "I wanted to go with newcomers because I feel that this kind of story needs new faces. Though they are new, they are proven actors and they have performed very well in my film," he said. About his future plans, he said that he has some new kinds of stories. "This film is a learning experience for me and if there are any mistakes, I want to correct them for my next film," said Komal.

GAME CHANGER PROMOTIONS KICKSTART IN LUCKNOW

Ram Charan and director Shankar's film *Game Changer* promotions are all set to start on November 9 in Lucknow. It is interesting to see the team's strategy that they want to launch not the regular cities like Hyderabad, Delhi, Mumbai, or Chennai, but they want to start in Lucknow. Kiara Advani is the female lead, while Dil Raju is the producer. The movie is hitting the screens on January 10, 2025, on the occasion of the coming Sankranti festival.

From the last few days onwards, the makers are under pressure as they didn't start the promotions because Ram Charan has a huge fan following. Now, the makers wanted to start with a teaser release event in Lucknow on November 9 and continue till the film release. The makers earlier released a couple of songs, *Raa Macha Macha* and *Jaragandi*, which were popular on the internet. Now, this upcoming teaser definitely boosts the excitement among the audience.

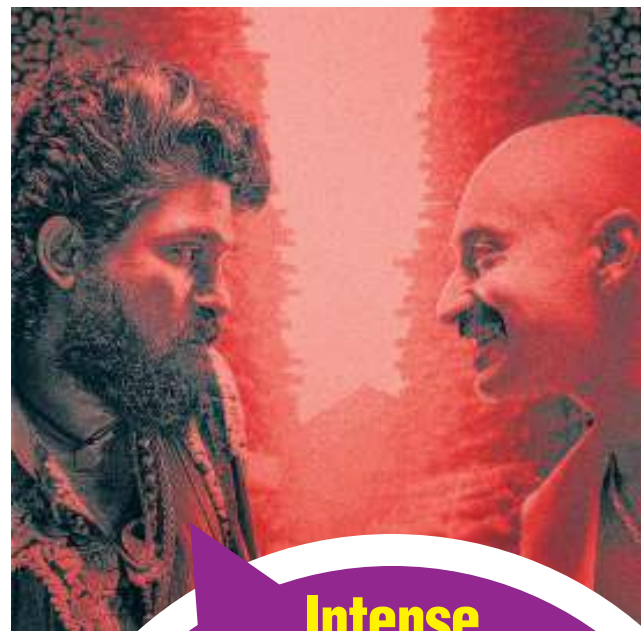
In this film, Ram Charan is essaying the role of an IAS officer who combats corrupt politicians by advocating for fair elections. Karthik Subbaraj is provided the story and written by SU Venkatesan and Vivek. S Thaman provides the music with dialogues by Sai Madhav Burra.



Naga Chaitanya's *Thandel* gets sizzling February 7 release

Finally, the release date of the much-awaited *Thandel* film is announced on Tuesday. Directed by Chandoo Mondeti, the film has Naga Chaitanya and Sai Pallavi as the lead pair. Allu Aravind is the presenter, while Bunny Vas is producing it. The film's story is based on a true incident that happened in Srikakulam district. The producer Allu Aravind announced that they are releasing the film on February 7. "Initially we wanted to release it on December 20 and then planned on Sankranti festival, but now, we have decided to release it on February 7," said Allu Aravind.

Both Sai Pallavi and Naga Chaitanya are presented at this release date announcement event. Few days back the director said that he almost completed the shoot and it is the producers to make an announcement on the release date. Though the makers wanted to release it in December, the Allu Arjun starrer *Pushpa 2* is releasing on December 6. Then they planned it on Sankranti, but again Ram Charan's *Game Changer* and few other films are hitting the screens for the coming Sankranti. With all the above, Allu Aravind decided to lock February 7 as the release date of *Thandel*.



Intense face-off b/w Allu Arjun & Fahadh Faasil

The wait is nearly over! Fans of *Pushpa* have been eagerly anticipating the next chapter in the saga and now the countdown for *Pushpa 2: The Rule* has officially begun. Following the massive success of *Pushpa: The Rise*, the sequel promises to take the action, drama, and intensity to even greater heights—and the newly released poster is already setting the tone for what's to come. Mythri Official have released a new poster along with the countdown, captioning it as One month to go for *Pushpa 2: The Rule*. The exploring trailer for the film is going to come out soon. As we bid adieu to the year 2024, *Pushpa 2: The Rule* will be an apt entertainer to end the year. Starring Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna and Fahadh Faasil, the film is directed by Sukumar and produced by Mythri Movie Makers and Sukumar. Writings, with music on T-Series.



'No vulgarity, only youthful entertainment in *Roti Kapda Romance*'

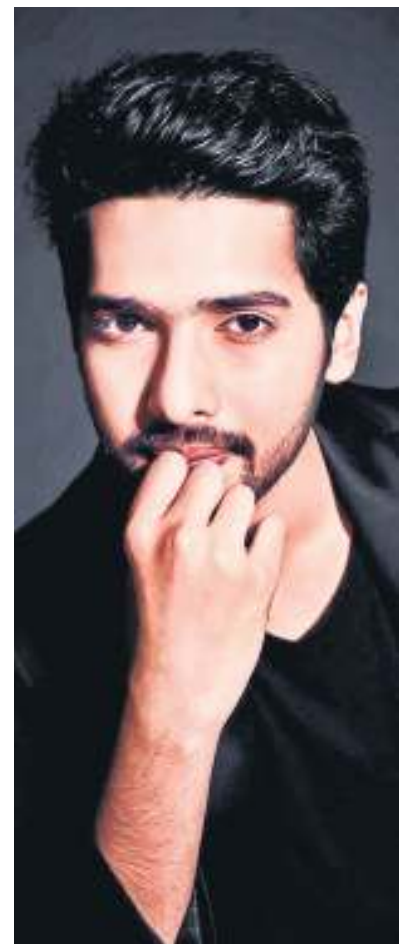
Vikram Reddy is making his debut as director with the film *Roti Kapda Romance*. The film's promotional event was released and there are a few words that were shown in the trailer that were objectionable. In the trailer there are few romantic scenes, and when asked the director about them, he said, "Whatever you see in the trailer, those are the few regular scenes and in the film there are no vulgarity or derogatory scenes or words," said the director Vikram Reddy.

The director said that it is a youthful entertainer, and the film's climax is very important. "The last fifteen minutes of the film are very emotional and everyone definitely feels about it," said the director. Bekkam Venu Gopal is the producer of this film. The film is releasing on November 22. The movie fea-

tures Harsh Narra, Sandeep Saroj, Tarun, Supraj Ranga, Sonu Thakur, Nuvvikesha, Meghaleka and Khushboo Chaudhary in lead roles.

"This film has been crafted as a youthful romantic family entertainer with themes that resonate with today's youth, along with a blend of family emotions. Every character in the movie is designed in a way that will connect with young audiences," said the producer, Bekkam Venugopal. He added that the film has all ingredients, like romance, entertainment, and emotions, which are the key strengths of this film. "We have shown the film to a select group of people that includes students, families, and young adults and the response has been overwhelming," said the producer. After seeing the content, popular OTT channel ETV Win bought the OTT streaming rights before this film release.

The producer said that they are planning the premieres of this film on November 21.



Armaan Malik nominated for MTV EMA

Known for pouring his heart into every song, Armaan has an incredible gift for making listeners feel seen and heard, and *Always* is a perfect example of that magic. With its tender lyrics and soothing melody, the song captures the beauty and vulnerability of love, striking a chord with fans across the globe.

It's proof that his journey, from singing in multiple languages to finding a global audience, is inspiring people everywhere. He's constantly bridging cultures through his music, bringing his roots to an international stage while staying true to himself. This isn't just another nomination; it's a reminder of how far he's come and how his music resonates with people around the world. With *Always*, Armaan captures a raw, beautiful vulnerability that's so relatable, and fans everywhere have been drawn to its honest simplicity and the way it speaks directly to the heart.

Aussie quick Boland looks to keep KL Rahul under pressure ahead of Border-Gavaskar Trophy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Australian pacer Scott Boland wants to extend the barren run of KL Rahul and keep him under pressure ahead of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy when he faces the Indian batter in the four-day A-Team match here from Thursday. Rahul along with wicketkeeper batter Dhruv Jurel flew early to Australia, and will appear for India A in the second four-day game at the MCG. "I was lucky to bowl to him in a Test over in India a couple of years ago but it'll be nice to play against him in our backyard," Boland was quoted saying by ESPNCricinfo. Rahul made a hundred on his



debut tour to Australia in 2015, a 110 at Sydney, but his overall performance Down Under remains scratchy, evidenced by an average of 20.77 across four Tests. Boland wants to heap more misery on the 32-year-old. "He's a world-class player but someone I think we can get on top of pretty early and hopefully stay on top of him for the majority of the summer," said Boland. Rahul was dropped from India's eleven after the first Test against New Zealand at Bengaluru where he made 0 and 12. It was a continuation of his modest run since cracking a hundred against South Africa at Centurion in December 2023. Since then, he made just two

fifties across nine innings against SA, England, Bangladesh and New Zealand. But the Bengaluru man could return to the eleven if skipper Rohit Sharma skips the first Test against the Aussies at Perth, starting from November 22, owing to personal reasons. Boland also remained cautious about the impact of India's recent 0-3 whitewash at home by the Kiwis. The 35-year-old said India has enough experience to make a comeback. "There's so much more bounce here, more seam. The way they'll structure their team (in Australia) will be completely different to what you see over in India," he noted.



Harmanpreet Kaur rises to ninth, Smriti Mandhana remains fourth in women's ODI rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur climbed to the joint ninth spot while opener Smriti Mandhana remained fourth in the latest ICC Women's ODI rankings, released here on Tuesday. Kaur, who played an important part in her team's six-wicket victory over New Zealand in the third ODI of their ICC Women's Championship series in Ahmedabad, had slipped three slots after the first two matches. However, her 59 not out off 63 balls pushed her back into the top 10. Left-hander Mandhana, who won the player of the match award for her knock of 100, added 23 rating points to reach a tally of 728, just five less than Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu in the list led by Natalie Sciver-Brunton of England with 760 rating points. Wicketkeeper Yastika Bhatia moved up from 48th to 45th after chipping in with 35 runs, while for New Zealand, Brooke Halliday's knock of 86

lifted her 12 spots to 24th position and Georgia Plimmer's 39 runs took her from 85th to 74th position. In the bowling chart, seasoned spinner Deepti Sharma gained important rating points after helping India win the series 2-1. Deepti, who had already attained a career-high 687 rating points last week while consolidating her second place among bowlers, added 16 more to reach 703 rating points after her haul of 3/39 to hold on to the second spot. England's left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone enjoys a huge lead at the top with 770 rating points. India pacer Renuka Singh was up four places to 32nd while Saima Thakor (up 20 places to joint-77th) and Priya Mishra (up six places to 83rd) also progressed. India are placed in third position in the ICC Women's Championship standings with 25 points while New Zealand are sixth with 20 from 21. Australia and England are at the top with 28 points each, from 18 and 21 matches, respectively.

Drubbing at the hands of NZ might awaken sleeping giant India, feels Hazlewood

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood believes India's confidence would have been shaken by the shocking series loss to New Zealand, but the "sleeping giant" can mount a strong comeback in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy starting later this month. India suffered a humiliating series whitewash after losing the third match by 25 runs to New Zealand in Mumbai on Sunday, the first time in their Test history, which goes back to

1933. "It might awaken a sleeping giant, so to speak. We'll see that when they come out," Hazlewood told 'Sydney Morning Herald'. Not only did the drubbing at home mark one of the darkest moments in India's Test cricket history, it has also significantly impacted the Rohit Sharma-led side's chances of qualifying for next year's World Test Championship (WTC) final. Three back-to-back losses meant that India have lost their top spot to



Australia in the WTC standings. India are now faced with a tough task to win four of their five matches against Australia to qualify for their third consecutive WTC final without relying on external results. "It's obviously better than losing 3-0 than winning 3-0, easily. The confidence might have taken a bit of a hit. A lot of them have been out here, but there are a few batters who haven't, so they'll be a bit unsure of what to expect," Hazlewood said. "I don't think you can read too much

into it. The results are obviously good for us in a way." Hazlewood, who is a part of Australia's three-pronged pace attack along with Mitchell Starc and skipper Pat Cummins, lauded his Trans-Tasman rivals for achieving something no other team has been able to do. "Credit to the Kiwi boys. They played outstanding cricket. To win 3-0 in India is unbelievable. It's hard enough to win one game there, let alone every match of the series," Hazlewood said.



Indian boxer Mandeep Jangra wins WBF's world title

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian professional boxer Mandeep Jangra won the World Boxing Federation's super featherweight world title after defeating Britain's Conor McIntosh in the Cayman Islands. The 31-year-old, who trains under former Olympic silver medallist Roy Jones Jr and has faced only one defeat in his professional career so far, had the upper hand in most rounds. He delivered powerful punches from the outset, maintaining his stamina throughout the 10 rounds, while the British boxer struggled to keep pace. Conor did try to make a comeback, but Jangra continued to maintain the upper hand in most rounds. "This is one of the biggest victories of my career. I am thankful to my sponsor Nash Built Construction, Chief Coach Roy Jones, Assistant Coach Asa Beard and Angel,"

Jangra said in a media release. "I have worked hard for years to achieve this. It is a matter of pride for me that I could bring glory to the country." The Haryana boxer, who made his professional boxing debut in 2021, hopes the title will inspire more Indian pugilists to turn professional. "I think this title will open the way for other boxers of the country and they will also decide to make a career in professional boxing. "Our boxers are good and there is no dearth of talent in them. If they get good promoters and managers, they can also become world champions," Jangra added. Jangra has won 11 out of his 12 fights in his pro career with seven being knockout victories. He had a decent run in the amateur circuit as well and won a Commonwealth Games silver medal in the 2014 Glasgow edition.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi SG Pipers will play Visakhapatnam franchise, Gonasika in the opening match of the men's competition of the revamped Hockey India League, starting December 28 in Rourkela. The franchise-based tournament is set to return after a hiatus of seven years in a new look with the event being organised for both men and women co-currently. While the men's competition will feature eight teams, the women's event will be played in Ranchi among four teams. The men's HIL will be conducted in two phases, with the opening phase witnessing all the eight sides playing against each other once

Delhi SG Pipers to play Gonasika in opening match of men's HIL on December 28

between December 28 and January 18. The second phase starts on January 19, where the eight teams will be clubbed into two groups of four each. While Pool A will feature Delhi SG Pipers, Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers, Soorma Hockey Club, and Vedanta Kalinga Lancers; Pool B consists of Gonasika, Hyderabad Toofans, Tamil Nadu Dragons and UP Rudras. Each team in phase 2 will compete against each other in their respective pools, with the



top four teams advancing to the semifinals, scheduled to be held on January 31. The third phase play-off and the final will be played on February 1. The women's HIL competition, to be conducted for the first time, will start on January 12 in Ranchi. In the women's tournament all four teams — Delhi SG Pipers, Odisha Warriors Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers and Soorma Hockey Club — will play against each other in two instances. The opening contest will be

between Delhi SG Pipers and Odisha Warriors. Following the league stage, the top two teams will progress to the final scheduled for February 1. "Both men and women teams will also play one of their matches at an alternate venue to bring HIL excitement to fans in multiple locations," the organisers said in a media release. Commenting on HIL's return, Hockey India president and HIL Governing Committee chairperson, Dilip Tirkey said: "We are thrilled to reintroduce the HIL after a seven-year hiatus. "This season promises high-calibre matches and intense competition, showcasing the best of Indian and international hockey talent."

PTI ■ BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA)

The Africa Cricket Association (ACA) has started dialogue with the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and other stakeholders to revive the once popular Afro-Asia Cup, a common meeting ground for players from the two continents, after nearly two decades. The Afro-Asia Cup has had only two editions to date -- 2005 in South Africa (draw) and 2007 in India (won by Asia).

A third edition of the event was scheduled to be held in Kenya in 2009 but it never happened. "The Afro-Asia Cup, apart from the cricket, brings the much-needed financial input to the organisation, and the appetite is huge from both ends," ACA interim chairman Tavengwa Mukhlanani, who is also Zimbabwe Cricket Chair, was quoted as saying by ESPNCricinfo. This tournament event gives players from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh a unique chance to be in

the same team. "We have had conversations with our counterparts within the Asia Cricket Council, and obviously our African contingents, they want the Afro-Asia Cup to be revived," said Mukhlanani. The ACC is yet to make any response on the matter. The 2005 Asia squad was captained by then Pakistan skipper Inzamam-ul-Haq and featured the likes of Rahul Dravid, Ashish Nehra and Anil Kumble. The 2007 Asia XI included MS Dhoni,

Sourav Ganguly, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Yuvraj Singh, Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar while Mohammed Asif, Mohammed Yousuf and Shoaib Akhtar represented Pakistan. ACA PLANNING IPL-STYLE LEAGUE: The ACA is also pondering over conducting the Africa Premier League, a mini version of the Indian Premier League (IPL). While the concept is still in the planning stages, ACA CEO Cassim Suliman said details will emerge once

the required approval is received from the respective African cricketing boards. "It's the mini vision of the IPL. So, we're taking that concept of the IPL and driving that concept to ensure that everybody benefits in that aspect," he revealed. "But the board will decide exactly who's hosting and from there, we'll take it to them from there. "It's going to be like the IPL format, but with a lower status and then we'll grow it from there," he added.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Currently, Agni Chopra's First-Class average stands at a box office 99.06 and it has attracted as much, may be even more, attention as some of the biggest Bollywood chartbusters his father has produced. In only nine games since his debut in the Ranji Trophy Plate league for Mizoram earlier this year, Agni, son of Bollywood filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra and film critic Anupama Chopra, has garnered 1585 runs with eight hundreds and four fifties. The beginning of this filmy sequence started in January this year when he debuted with a 166 against Sikkim at Nadiad, and from there on Agni has not stopped scoring runs in tons, literally. This season the 26-year-old left-hander has started from where he left and has already scored 218 and 238 against Arunachal and Manipur. So, what is the secret of his run rush? "It's all about hunger, right?" Agni told PTI in an exclusive interview. "Before this season started, I discussed it with my coach

Agni Chopra's dream: Playing Ranji Elite division after big start with Mizoram in Plate League

Khushpreet (Singh). The only thing he told me was, 'forget about the runs, you just have to focus on one thing - don't get out.'" "So I've not thought about anything else. My second goal was to score double hundreds because last year I didn't score a single double hundred," said Agni, adding that specific work on his fitness has also helped him pile up big scores. His domination of bowlers, which has seen his average touching Bradmanesque levels, has come in the Plate League so far, and Agni nourishes the dream of getting into Elite League with Mizoram. "I don't think too far into the future. Of course, in terms of the larger picture, I would love to be picked in the Duleep Trophy, or India A, to play in the IPL, to hopefully, one day, represent India," he said. "For me what works best is



(when) I always focus on the next game. I don't even think about the second game. I only think about what's next

because in order to play for India, I have to do well in the next game." But for it, Agni knows that, he

will have to play in the Elite segment of the Ranji Trophy. "I would love to represent an Elite division team, then

maybe play for IPL and India. But to do those things, I have to play well at the level I'm playing right now and to do

that, I also have to score runs in the next game. So, I genuinely think about only the next game," he said. Agni realises that he has to shoulder a major share of responsibility of carrying Mizoram into the Elite round. "Our Mizoram team's collective goal is to qualify for the Elite division. The goal is for us to finish on top and qualify... Then I'll be able to play in the Elite division against the top level of bowlers," he said. "Even last year, that was our goal but unfortunately, we fell short. We lost in the semifinals; we were one game away. If we had won, we would have qualified and I would have been playing there this year itself," he continued. "That's what I think my personal and team-wise goal is." For cricketers, on-field success and scrutiny go hand in hand and more so in case of

those who have famous parents. Agni has a simple way of tackling the situation. "I just think it is funny. I genuinely don't even take it seriously. There is my circle of people whose opinions I value and whose opinions I trust," he said. "Off the field, (it) is my parents and my sister. Anything related to off the field, I'll defer to them. They don't give me advice about cricket too much. I mean, I don't tell my dad how to make movies and he doesn't tell me how to play cricket," he said. "Khushpreet Singh, my coach, is my number one guy on and off the field. Shubman (Gill) is a close friend and with him, also on the field and off the field, we have discussions," he said. Agni had to endure disappointment during last year's IPL auction, but he hopes for better tidings in the upcoming mega auction. "Everybody wants to be a part of that, play in the IPL. A lot of the work that I have put in is with that in mind as well and that's a big motivating factor is to play in the IPL," said Agni, who idolises Yuvraj Singh and Brian Lara.