



The Pioneer

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Global leaders descend on Delhi for Raisina Dialogue

INDIA, NEW ZEALAND ANNOUNCE RESUMPTION OF FTA TALKS



'If you have guts, come on stage,' Anasuya's bold response to HECKLER



QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

Harish Rao should tell whether it is family life if you do it, and adultery when it is done by others. When his uncle KCR speaks he is a moralist! If others speak the same thing, are they abusive? KCR holds the patent for vulgar language. Harish Rao, if you speak about morals it is like demons quoting the Vedas. There is no need to talk about Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's words. Revanth is a leader heading a people's government to ensure the welfare of the people. Harish Rao should look back before speaking about others. Then you will understand what you have done.

- Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, Bhongir Cong MP

DON'T MISS...

2,323 women secure Police jobs at Mega fair

A large-scale job fair aimed at empowering women was organised under the aegis of the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate in collaboration with the Rachakonda Security Council. The event provided employment opportunities to help women advance their careers and achieve financial independence. Addressing the gathering, Telangana DGP Dr Jitender outlined the importance of respecting women, who play crucial roles as homemakers, teachers, friends and daughters. He urged women to ...

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'Will kick anyone who talks about caste'

In strong remarks against caste-based politics, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said that nobody should be discriminated over caste, religion, language or sex. "Jo karega jaat ki baat, usko kaske marunga laot (I will kick hard anyone who talks about caste)," the senior BJP leader said, while addressing the convocation ceremony of Central India Group of Institutions in Nagpur on Saturday. Gadkari, 67, said he believes no person is big because of his caste, religion, language or creed but he is big...

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'AI has potential to enable collusion'

Artificial intelligence is a driving force in modern markets that also has the potential to enable collusion, including algorithmic discrimination under the garb of dynamic pricing, CCI chief Ravneet Kaur said on Sunday. She also emphasised the need to adopt a forward-looking approach as well as trust-based regulations. Delivering the special address at the 10th National Conference on Economics of Competition Law in the national capital, Kaur said Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a driving force in...

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Kiwis beat Pak by nine wickets

A new era for Pakistan white ball cricket got off to a rough start on Sunday with a nine wicket loss to New Zealand in the first of five Twenty20 internationals. First time captain Salman Ali Agha-led a new look team into the match which followed Pakistan's poor performance at home in the 50-overs Champions Trophy and began its buildup to the 2026 T20 World Cup. The Pakistan batting crumbled against the New Zealand pace attack and the tourists were all out for 91 in 18.4 overs, its fifth-lowest total in T20 ...

-SPORTS

How can KCR be called 'Father of Telangana', asks CM

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Taking exception to BRS leader Harish Rao describing the party president K Chandrasekhar Rao as 'Father of Telangana', Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Sunday asked how Rao can be compared with Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi.

Addressing a public meeting at Station Ghanpur after attending development programmes, Revanth Reddy referred to the comments of Harish Rao, a nephew of Chandrasekhar Rao.

While KCR made a name for himself as 'Father of Telangana' in view of his struggle for achieving Telangana statehood, Revanth Reddy came to be known as 'father of filthy language', Harish Rao said.

Harish Rao objected to the chief minister's attack against KCR in the Assembly on Saturday.

Lamproving Harish Rao's remarks,



CM Revanth Reddy addressing the public meeting in Station Ghanpur constituency on Sunday

Revanth Reddy said Mahatma Gandhi led a simple life, lived in ashrams and was the inspiration behind prohibition of liquor in Gujarat.

"Will this Father of Nation (KCR) wake up from sleep without the smell? Is there any comparison between that Father of the Nation and this Father of the Nation (KCR)," he asked. **Continued on Page 2**

Cong Govt brought airport, ring road & rail coach factory to Warangal: Revanth

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that the airport and ring road came to Warangal only after the Congress assumed power. The Kazipet Railway Coach Factory is also coming to Warangal, he said.

The CM said that it was his government that made Jayashankar Sir's village a revenue village.

"I assured during the Lok Sabha elections that I would bring an airport to Warangal. I am standing in front of you after securing an airport for Warangal as I promised," the CM said.

Addressing the Prajapalana-Pragathi Bata programme public meeting on Sunday at Shivunipally in Station Ghanpur, the CM said that 'Orugallu' is a vibrant area and that the people of the old Warangal

Continued on Page 2

KCR is father of TG but Revanth is father of vulgar language: Harish

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

"KCR is the father of Telangana but Chief Minister Revanth Reddy is the father of vulgar language," senior BRS MLA T. Harish Rao said.

Addressing the media at the Telangana Bhavan here on Sunday, Harish said the government suspended BRS MLA G. Jagdish Reddy from the Assembly unilaterally.

He said that KCR kept Telangana numero uno for 10 years and made it a role model for the nation. Hoping for the death of such a person (KCR) reflects the culture of the CM, he added.

He said that it is not proper for Revanth to say, "Send KCR to the mortuary" sitting on the Chief Minister's chair. KCR respected opposition leader K. Jana Reddy but it is respect which Revanth is



Former Minister T Harish Rao addressing the media at Telangana Bhavan on Sunday

giving to KCR, he added.

Harish said that Revanth is engaging in character assassination and demanded that the CM should withdraw his comments against KCR and apologise to him.

"The loans taken by the BRS government is Rs 4.17 lakh crore. If you

spread lies we will answer with figures. The actual loans during the last one-and-a-half-year rule of the Congress will be revealed on another occasion," he said. Harish said that when they were in the opposition Congress leaders asked the BRS government to allow LRS freely but the same Congress leaders have now changed their opinion and are collecting money for LRS.

"KCR got the name Telangana 'Jathi Pitha' (father of the nation) but Revanth got the name 'Telangana Boothu Pitha' (father of vulgar language). Revanth is also considered the brand ambassador of speaking lies," he said.

Harish said that Revanth Reddy adopted guru Chandrababu Naidu did not even give drinking water to Palamuru, however, KCR supplied irrigation water to 10 lakh acres.

Continued on Page 2

Committed to 42% BC quota, SC categorisation

Govt wedded to social justice, says Uttam

PNS ■ SURYAPET

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister Capt. N. Uttam Kumar Reddy reaffirmed the Congress Government's commitment to social justice and promised to categorise Scheduled Castes (SC) and provide 42% reservation for Backward Classes (BCs).

He said the TG government had received several demands to

late the Congress Government's decision to implement SC categorisation and introduce a Bill in the Assembly to provide 42% reservation for BCs in Telangana, based on the findings of the caste-based socio-economic survey.

The meeting was also addressed by district in-charge Minister Tummala Nageshwara Rao, former Minister R. Damodar Reddy, Suryapet DCC President Cheviti



increase the reservation percentage for SCs and assured that the quota would be enhanced based on the next census findings which is likely to be held in 2026.

Uttam was addressing the public meeting, 'Chalo Tungathurthi', at Tirumalagiri in Suryapet district on Sunday.

The event was held to congratu-

Venkanna Yadav, Tungathurthi MLA Mandula Samuel, MLAs Vemula Veeresham and Lakshminanth, MLC Shankar Naik and MPs Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy and Raghuviveera Reddy.

Uttam said that three key Bills would be introduced during the budget session of the Telangana Assembly. **Continued on Page 2**

BCs demand payment of overdue rent; buildings for govt hostels and gurukuls

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

National BC Association, led by its president R Krishnaiah, demanded the payment of overdue rent and urged the construction of dedicated facilities for government hostels and gurukuls. A massive protest

took place at Indira Park on Sunday.

During his speech, Krishnaiah criticised the government's negligence in managing hostels. He emphasised that public lands, meant for the welfare of the people, such as building homes for the poor, government offices, **Continued on Page 2**



National BC Association president R Krishnaiah, along with other members, in a protest on Sunday

No action so far in BRS leaders' corruption cases: Maheshwar

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BJLP leader Alleti Maheshwar Reddy said he did not understand Chief Minister Revanth Reddy's fantasy of stripping opposition leaders of their clothes and that he did not know what the CM was talking about.

He asked whether this is the language the Chief Minister uses in the Assembly and added that Revanth has become another KCR.

In a statement issued on Sunday, Maheshwar said, "During the Telangana Assembly elections, Revanth hurled corruption charges against the KCR family. The CM should give a date by which he will provide proof for these allegations. Action has not been taken regarding Kaleshwaram corruption, **Continued on Page 2**



Arya Vaishya Association meets Union Minister Bandi Sanjay on Sunday at Karimnagar objecting to removal of Potti Sriramulu's Name to Telugu University

Do you have guts to remove names of NTR, Kotla, Neelam & Kasu? Sanjay Pays tribute to Potti Sriramulu's statue

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, strongly condemned the resolution passed in the Assembly to remove the name of Potti Sriramulu from the Telugu University.

He hailed Potti Sriramulu as a great patriot, Gandhian and freedom fighter and is revered by the Arya Vaishya community. He also questioned the need for removing such a great leader's name.

Continued on Page 2

"The Congress Government removed Potti Sriramulu's name citing his AP roots. Do they have the guts to remove NTR's name from NTR Park? Will they remove the names of Kasu Brahmananda Reddy and Neelam Sanjiva Reddy from the parks named after them? Will they rename Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy Stadium? There are many statues of AP leaders on Tank Bund. Will they remove them as well," he said.

Sanjay demanded that the Congress **Continued on Page 2**

KCR trying to topple Cong Govt with looted money: Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that former Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao is trying to topple the Congress Government with the money he looted during his 10-year rule.



He said the BRS launched a campaign of lies saying that Congress MLAs are in touch with the BRS. He said that the state was facing a financial crisis due to KCR's rule as it was a surplus budget state when it was formed.

Ponguleti said that KCR is not coming to the Assembly as he fears that the truth will come out during debates and that BRS MLAs are speaking with extreme arrogance.

He said that cousins Harish Rao and KTR are campaigning outside giving an impression that they are telling the truth.

Ponguleti said that due to KCR's negligence crops are drying up in the state and farmers are facing problems.

TELANGANA TUNNEL COLLAPSE

Search ops underway to locate seven missing persons

PNS ■ NAGARKURNOOL

The search operation to locate seven persons trapped inside the partially collapsed Srisailem Left Bank Canal (SLBC) since February 22 gathered pace with teams and equipment going inside the tunnel on Sunday, official sources said.



An autonomous hydraulic-powered robot is being used to remove soil, along with equipment such as a 30 HP capacity liquid ring vacuum pump and a vacuum tank machine, which facilitate the quick removal of soil and other debris

inside the tunnel, accelerating the search operation, an official release said on Saturday.

Approximately 620 cubic meters of soil and muck can be removed from the tunnel per hour using a conveyer belt, it added. **Continued on Page 2**

Embrace life instead of fretting over death: PM Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Death is inevitable and what truly matters is how life is lived, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said in a podcast with Lex Fridman released on Sunday.

Modi said one must embrace life instead of fretting over death. Asked about whether he fears death, PM Modi said, "We know for a fact that life itself is a whisper promise of death and yet life is also destined to flourish."

"So again, in the dance of life and death, only death is certain, so why fear what is certain? That is why you must embrace life instead of fretting over death. That is how life will evolve and flourish, for it is uncertain"

death is certain, so why fear what is certain? That is why you must embrace life instead of fretting over death. That is how life will evolve and flourish, for it is uncertain," he said.

PM Modi urged people not to waste time worrying but to channel their energy into enriching their lives and contributing positively to the world. The prime minister stressed that since life is uncertain, every moment should be spent with purpose, learning and making a difference.

"You must commit to enriching, refining and elevating your life so you can live fully and with a purpose before death comes knocking... you must let go of the fear of death. "After all, death is inevitable and there is no use worrying about when it will arrive. It will arrive when it is meant to," he said.



AI is powerful but..

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Sunday asserted that while artificial intelligence is powerful, it may never be able to match the depth of human imagination, and no matter what the world does with AI, it will remain incomplete without India.

"It is true that in every era, a competitive atmosphere between technology and humanity was created. At times, it was even

portrayed as conflict. It was often portrayed as if technology would challenge human existence itself.

"But every time, as technology advanced, humans adapted and stayed a step ahead. It has always been the case. After all, it is humans who find the best ways to use technology to their advantage," the prime minister said.

'False narrative created over 2002 Gujarat riots'

2





CITY EVENTS

- Women's Icon Awards**
By Yamini Studio's Cultural Organization
Venue: Ravindra Bharathi, February 26, (9 am to 10 pm)
- Telangana Padyanatakotsavam**
By Abhinaya Theatre Group
Venue: Ravindra Bharathi, March 17, (6 pm)
- Live Musical Orchestra**
By Chandra Tejalaya Music Academy
Venue: Sri Thyagaraja Gana Sabha, March 17, (4 pm)

- SINTILLASHUNZ'25**
Cultural College Fest
Venue: V N R Vignana Jyothi Engineering College, March 17 to 18, (10 am)
- Ugadi & Ramzaan**
Special Shopping Exhibition
Venue: Taj Deccan, From March 17 to 19, (11 am)



Cyberabad Traffic Police conducting a drunk-driving operation

315 people arrested for drunk-driving

PNS ■ HYDERABAD
Cyberabad Traffic Police apprehended 315 offenders in a drunk-driving operation. In a statement the Traffic Police said that a total of 233 drivers of two-wheelers, five three-wheelers drivers, 71 drivers of four-wheelers and six of heavy vehicles were arrested. In all, 31 offenders were caught with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) ranging between 200 mg/100 ml and 500 and two offenders with blood alcohol concentrations (BAC) above 500/100 ml, the statement added. They were arrested under Section 105 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) for which maximum punishment is 10 years of jail and a fine. All those caught will be produced before the court.

INCREASE IN STUDENT SUICIDES

TGSWREIS to train Gurukul teachers in mental health support

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a bid to tackle rising psychological distress among students, the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) decided to train teachers, focused on early intervention and emotional support.

This initiative is in action as a recent survey conducted by the University of Melbourne, NIMHANS, and Indian medical colleges finds an increase in student suicides. Researchers analysed the behavioural patterns of 8,542 students from 30 universities across nine states. The findings indicate that: two per cent of students have contemplated suicide within a year; 5 per cent of students have attempted suicide; In a classroom of 40 students, at least four have lost hope in life, while two have attempted self-harm. In response, teachers with skills to recognise and address student distress, NLP Master Trainer Rafi, in collaboration



with Magic of Change, will conduct training sessions at the Marri Chenna Reddy Human Resource Development Institute, according to TGSWREIS Secretary Dr VS Alagu Varshini. The first phase of the training is on March 17-18 for 120 teachers and Second Phase is on March 19-20 for 118 teachers. The training will focus on understanding adolescent mental development, identifying emotional distress triggers, emotional mapping and behavioral analysis; Neuroscience-based emotional regulation techniques and creating an open and supportive learning environment.

2,323 women secure jobs at Police Mega Job fair

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A large-scale job fair aimed at empowering women was organised under the aegis of the Rachakonda Police Commissionerate in collaboration with the Rachakonda Security Council.

The event provided employment opportunities to help women advance their careers and achieve financial independence. Addressing the gathering, Telangana DGP Dr Jitender outlined the importance of respecting women, who play crucial roles as homemakers, teachers, friends and daughters. He urged women to pursue higher education, hone their skills and secure jobs that align with their abilities. Self-reliance boosts women's self-respect and confidence, and this job fair is a step in that direction, he added. Rachakonda Police Commissioner Sudheer Babu, who was the guest of honour, reiterated the significance of gender equality. "A society that respects women



Telangana DGP Dr Jitender issuing an employment letter to a woman

is a society that prospers. Providing equal opportunities to women is the best way to honour them," he said. He highlighted that the job fair saw an overwhelming response, with approximately 2,800 women registering for job opportunities. Out of them, 2,323 women successfully secured employment in various sectors. The Commissioner assured that those who secured jobs through the fair would continue to receive necessary support for their career growth.



Osmania University clarifies stand on student protests

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Osmania University has issued a clarification following concerns over a circular dated March 13, 2025, focusing that it does not impose a blanket ban on student protests but aims to prevent disruptions in academic and administrative spaces.

The university reaffirmed its commitment to democratic values and student rights, acknowledging the significant role student movements, including the Telangana agitation, have played in shaping social causes. It clarified that the circular only restricts protests within college departments and administrative offices, ensuring the smooth functioning of academic and institutional processes. The need for the

directive arose after recent incidents, including unauthorised occupation of the principal's room at Nizam College, disruptions at the University College of Arts and Social Sciences, and the forcible occupation of the Registrar's office for over four hours.

In one instance, students remained overnight at the Vice-Chancellor's office, severely impacting administrative operations. O s m a n i a University stressed that its objective is to maintain a conducive environment for learning and research while safeguarding institutional progress. It reassured students that their right to peaceful protest remains intact and encouraged them to use designated spaces for demonstrations.

Two priests held for attack on accountant at Saidabad temple

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Two priests have been arrested in connection with an attempted murder case at Bhulakshmi temple in Saidabad.

The accused, identified as Raikod Hariputhra (31) and Aripirala Raja Shekhar Sharma (41) allegedly conspired to attack Chintala Narsing Rao, a receptionist and accountant at the temple, by pouring a corrosive substance on him. On March 14, at around 7:30 pm, an unidentified man, wearing a yellow T-shirt, mask, and cap, approached Narsing Rao at the temple's reception. Introducing himself as Naresh, he enquired about the temple's annadanam (food donation)



programme. As Narsing Rao was writing a receipt, the suspect suddenly poured an unknown liquid on his head and fled, saying, 'Happy Holi', said Patil Kantilal Subhash, DCP, South East Zone. Narsing Rao suffered severe burns on his scalp, face and neck, with smoke visibly emanating from his skin. He was immediately rushed to Yashoda Hospital, Malakpet, for treatment. A special police team, along with the SEZ Task Force, launched an investigation, reviewing CCTV footage. The suspect was seen fleeing on a two-wheeler, moving through various locations.

Further analysis of call records led to the identification of Raikod Hariputhra, a priest residing in Shaikpet. He was apprehended at his residence, where he confessed to the crime. He revealed that he carried out the attack on the instructions of Aripirala Raja Shekhar Sharma, another priest at the Bhulakshmi temple. Raja Shekhar Sharma was arrested at the temple who admitted to orchestrating the attack over personal disputes with Narsing Rao. He allegedly paid Rs 2,000, with Rs 1,000 given in advance via PhonePe. Both have been booked under Sections 109, 124(2), and 333 read with 49 BNS.

INTERNATIONAL WORKING WOMEN'S DAY

Panels against sexual abuse in workplaces stressed at BEFI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Justice Dr Radha Rani of the Telangana High Court stressed the need for internal committees to prevent sexual abuse at workplaces. She was the chief guest at the Bank Employees Federation of India (BEFI) Telangana's International Working Women's Day-2025 event on Sunday.

On this occasion, Dr Radha Rani appreciated the large gathering of women bank employees on a holiday. She highlighted that job reservations have helped women excel in various fields, including the judiciary. She urged families to support women's career growth and noted the prevalence of domestic violence and workplace harassment. High Court lawyer Chethana spoke about the POSH Act (is a law that protects women from sexual harassment in the workplace)



BEFI Telangana celebrating International Working Women's Day-2025 on Sunday

while S Venkateswara Reddy, Secretary General of AIR-RBEA, recognised the increasing demands on bank staff due to staff shortages and encouraged women employees to actively engage in union activities. The Secretary of CITU Telangana, M.Padmasri, explained the history of International Women's Day and shared experiences where CITU and AIDWA contributed to the formation and

implementation of the POSH Act. She urged the formation of a 'Women Sub-Committee' to address women's issues in banking. The convention unanimously adopted a declaration for staff recruitment, regularisation of temporary employees, social security, crèche facilities, and separate restrooms. A "Sub-Committee of Women Employees" was formed, with R Divya as convener and 14 members from various banks.

Tourism Minister Jupally visits historical 'Mudumal Menhirs'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Tourism Minister Jupally Krishna Rao visited the 3,500-year-old 'Mudumal Menhirs', also called 'standing stones', after it was added to UNESCO's tentative list.

The Mudumal Menhirs are among India's largest and best-preserved megalithic observatory sites. They feature carefully arranged boulders, formations and stone circles. This



achievement highlights Telangana's rich cultural heritage and India's historical legacy. The Minister promised government support for the next

steps in the UNESCO nomination. Jupally appreciated and thanked Sundeep Makthala and the Jai Makthal Trust for their hard work in gaining national and international recognition for the site.

During the visit on Sunday, Jai Makthal Trust president Sundeep Kumar Makthala reflected on the hard work that brought global recognition to the site. He called it a proud moment for Makthal but

emphasised the challenge of securing final UNESCO World Heritage status. He urged locals to stay vigilant and protect the site. Meanwhile, Makthal MLA Vakkil Srihari appreciated the Trust's efforts in raising awareness and engaging the community in preserving Makthal's cultural heritage.

Jai Makthal Trust announced plans to form a dedicated committee to support the UNESCO nomination process.

IMD forecasts rise in temps, orange alert until Tuesday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Extremely dry air will hit the State, according to Telangana Weatherman. On Sunday, intense temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius was recorded in a few parts of Hyderabad, and temperatures, of nearly 43 degrees Celsius, was recorded in northern and eastern

Telangana. However, the morning weather is expected to become comfortable due to humidity, IMD Hyderabad has forecast summer temperatures in eight districts of Telangana to rise as high as 44 degrees Celsius until Tuesday and issued an orange alert for heatwave conditions likely in isolated pockets in Adilabad, Komaram

Bheem Asifabad, Mancherial and Jagtial districts. All other districts are expected to witness temperatures as high as 40 degrees Celsius in the next four days. For Hyderabad, IMD has forecast that summer heat will intensify and issued a yellow alert as temperatures are likely to rise to 40 degrees Celsius in the city.

'TGSRTC to promote glaucoma awareness'

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The TGSRTC management will actively promote glaucoma awareness at bus stands, inside buses and through staff to help people understand the risks and the need for timely eye check-ups, said VC Sajjanar, Managing Director of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC) and former ADGP, Telangana. He was the chief guest at the 'Glaucoma Awareness Walk 2025' hosted by L V Prasad Eye Institute (LVPEI) on Sunday.

Around 600 people joined the walk from the LVPEI Kallam Anji Reddy campus to KBR Park entrance in Jubilee Hills. A flash mob engaged park visitors, educating them about glaucoma and its treatment. On this occasion, Sajjanar appreciated LVPEI's efforts to create awareness about glaucoma, a 'silent thief of sight' that affects millions worldwide.

He stressed that over 10 million people in India and 80



TGSRTC MD V C Sajjanar participating in 'Glaucoma Awareness Walk 2025' in Hyderabad on Sunday

million globally suffer from glaucoma, often without realising it. He urged regular eye check-ups for early detection and prevention. Meanwhile, Dr Sirisha Senthil, Head of Glaucoma Services at LVPEI, highlighted that glaucoma progresses without symptoms and can lead to blindness. Regular check-ups are vital, especially for those over 40 or with a family history.

Infants from consanguineous marriages are also at risk. Early treatment can prevent blindness, while misuse of steroids can cause irreversible damage. The World Glaucoma Association recommends eye check-ups every 2 to 4 years for those under 40, every 2 to 3 years for those aged between 40 and 60, and every 1 or 2 years for those over 60.

DOCTORS SHORTAGE, RISING QUACKERY

Experts call for formation of TG Health Commission

DEEPIKA PASHAM deepikapasham2015@gmail.com ■ HYDERABAD

Experts gathered at Indian Medical Association's roundtable conference with a theme 'Debate on Public Health-Immediate need of the action against quackery', have said that there is a direct correlation to doctors shortage, junior doctors not willing to move to rural areas and rising quackery in Telangana. The experts have recommended the formation of a Health Commission with MLC M Kodandarama Reddy, who was present from the government side, as its chairman. However, Telangana Junior Doctors Associations, especially from Gandhi Hospital, have said that they do not agree with the perception that junior doctors are not willing to go to rural government hospitals.

Addressing the roundtable, Dr D Dwarakanatha Reddy, State President of Indian



Dr D Dwarakanatha Reddy, MLC M Kodandarama Reddy and other experts at a roundtable conference

Medical Association, said that there is an urgent necessity to tackle the increasing unqualified practitioners and as an association, they proposed the Health Commission like the Education Commission.

Responding to it, Kodandarama Reddy said, "For three hours, I have listened to all the opinions and requests from doctors. I am not qualified to speak as a health expert but when it comes to governance, I want to inform you all that if

State Medical Association and Medical Council come up with a concept for health commission, we request the government and also an expert committee to be formed so that associations and councils can submit their grievances to it."

Dr V Ashok Reddy, State Secretary, IMA, said on an average there are two medical colleges in all districts and 12,000 MBBS students qualify every year, 5,000 are specialists and 3,000 super specialists.

The other panelists opined that there must be a 6 to 8 per cent increase in the health budget. Dr G Srinivas, TGMC Vice-Chairman said, "Telangana Medical Council has said that 412 FIRs have been registered on unqualified persons in Telangana."

Detailing further, he said that the number of Medical Colleges are Private-29, Government-34. Total number of MBBS seats is 9,065. The total number of postgraduate (PG) medical seats is 2,905. The government-1,197, private-1,547. Number of Sub-Centres-4,200. Number of Primary Health Centres (PHCs)-594. Only 48 per cent are running 24/7. The required PHCs is 708 with a shortfall of 20 per cent.

The number of Community Health Centres (CHCs): 49, required CHCs: 177 and shortfall is 128 CHCs (60 per cent). The experts also explained that there is a 50 per cent shortage of doctors in Telangana.

ACROSS THE STATES



German national duped of Rs 30 lakh by cyber frauds

Cyber fraudsters allegedly duped a German national of Rs 30 lakh here by approaching him as suspect in a fake money-laundering case, police said on Sunday.



Delhi's air quality 'satisfactory' for 2nd day

Delhi saw the second consecutive 'satisfactory' air quality on Sunday, with an AQI reading of 99, according to the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM).



Man found charred in bed in outer Delhi

A 25-year-old man was found burnt to death under mysterious circumstances at his residence in Ratan Vihar area of outer Delhi, a police officer said on Sunday.

Let BJP make Christians, Muslims RS members or union ministers: Shivakumar

PNS ■ GADAG (KARNATAKA)

Defending the decision to introduce a 4 per cent reservation for Muslims in public contracts, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Sunday hit out at the BJP for opposing it and asserted that the Congress government thinks about all citizens.



Muslims in public contracts. Vijayendra said: "The BJP has always adhered to the principle of equality in share and livelihood for all, but the Congress government has decided to follow the policy of majority for Muslims, small share for others and has set fire to the concept of the state being a garden of peace for all races, as envisioned by Kuruvempu (in the state anthem)."

Global leaders descend on Delhi for Raisina Dialogue

MODI TO INAUGURATE THE CONFERENCE TODAY ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER TO BE CHIEF GUEST

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Monday throw open the three-day Raisina Dialogue, India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics that will be joined by delegates from 125 countries.

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybha are among those attending the 10th edition of the conclave.

In a first, a delegation, including a senior security official, from Taiwan is also attending the deliberations reflecting growing cooperation between the two sides in the last few years, people familiar with the matter said.

The Raisina Dialogue is being hosted by the leading think-tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). It will witness the participation of representatives from about 125 countries including ministers, former heads of state and heads of government, military commanders, captains of industry, technology leaders, academics, journalists, scholars on strategic affairs and



experts from leading think tanks, the MEA said on Sunday. Officials said foreign ministers from 20 countries are attending the deliberations. The visit to India of the Ukrainian foreign minister comes as the US is stepping up efforts towards a temporary ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia to end their conflict.

New Zealand PM Luxon will deliver the keynote address at the inaugural session on Monday. Foreign ministers of Slovenia, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Latvia, Moldova, Georgia, Sweden, Slovak

Republic, Bhutan, Maldives, Norway, Thailand, Antigua and Barbuda, Peru, Ghana, Hungary and Mauritius are among the attendees.

Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Martinez Diaz and Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines Enrique A Manalo are also attending the conference.

The theme of this edition of the Dialogue is "Kalachakra - People, Peace and Planet".

Over the course of three days, decision-makers and thought leaders of the world will engage each

other across conversations in various formats, over six thematic pillars.

The pillars are: Politics Interrupted: Shifting Sands and Rising Tides; Resolving the Green Trilemma: Who, Where, and How; Digital Planet: Agents, Agencies and Absences; Militant Mercantilism: Trade, Supply Chains and the Exchange Rate Addition; The Tiger's Tale: Rewriting Development with a New Plan; and Investing in Peace: Drivers, Institutions, and Leadership.

Maharana Pratap descendant Arvind Singh Mewar dies at 81

PNS ■ JAIPUR

Arvind Singh Mewar, a member of the erstwhile royal family of Mewar and chairman of the HRH Group of Hotels, died in Udaipur early on Sunday after prolonged illness, his family said.

He was 81. He is survived by wife Vijayraj Kumari, son Lakshyaraj Singh Mewar and daughters Bhargavi Kumari Mewar and Padmaja Kumari Parmar. A descendant of Rajput king Maharana Pratap, Mewar had been ill for a long time and under treatment at his residence in Udaipur's City Palace.

JYOTI BASU REJECTING PM POST NOT FACTOR

Support loss in WB, Tripura caused CPI(M) decline: Karat

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The decline of the CPI(M) was caused by the erosion of support in West Bengal and Tripura, veteran leader Prakash Karat has said and added a roadmap to rebuild the party's strength would be discussed during its upcoming all-India congress.

Karat further said he did not consider veteran leader Jyoti Basu declining the prime minister's post in 1996 as a reason behind the party's decline.

"It is a fact that the party's independent strength and influence have not grown... And that's primarily been due to the erosion in our base of support in West Bengal and

Tripura, two of the strong states that we have," Karat said in an interview.

"So, the focus of our forthcoming party congress is how we strengthen the party," the CPI(M) interim coordinator added.

The CPI(M) had 43 MPs in the 14th Lok Sabha from 2004 to 2009. Its tally declined to 16 in 2009, nine in 2014 and three in 2019. The party won four seats in the Lok Sabha in the 2024 elections.

In state assemblies, the CPI(M)-led Left Front was defeated by the TMC in West Bengal in 2011 after being in power for 34 years. It was defeated by the BJP in Tripura -- which the CPI(M)-led coalition had governed since 1993 -- in 2018.



Speaking about preparations for the party congress, Karat said political and organisational reviews during the past three years had been done. Shortcomings and weaknesses in political, ideological and organisational work would be identified during the meet.

"Keeping in mind that... Our political task or goal still remains how to isolate and defeat the BJP or the Modi government, for that you need wider unity. We recognise that. How to maintain this wider unity, a broader platform, that we will have to strive for," he said. "At the same time, we don't see this as separate. Strengthening of the CPI(M) will also help strengthen the overall opposition unity or strengthening of the Left. And we feel that the Left's alternative politics or policies need to be projected as a rallying point for the fight against the various policies of the Modi government," he added. He also disagreed with the

suggestion that the party's decision not to accept the prime minister's post offered to then-West Bengal chief minister Basu in 1996 as a reason for its gradual decline.

"We should not forget that our main strength in Parliament at that time came from West Bengal... And our party does not think being in government or in any position will help to increase the strength of the party," Karat said.

"What we had as (our) strength in West Bengal was decades of work, struggles of the different sections of people for their rights. And that led to the formation of the Left Front government there (in 1977)," he added.

Delimitation based on population will be injustice to southern states: Kharge

PNS ■ GADAG (KARNATAKA)

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said that if the delimitation exercise is based on population, it will be an injustice to the southern states as it would reduce their representation in the Lok Sabha and urged people to unite against this "injustice."

Speaking at the centenary celebrations of the late K H Patil, a former minister, he also criticised the central government, expressing concern over the alleged lack of emphasis on education and the large number of vacancies in educational institutions.

"The central government talks about cooperative federalism. If there is cooperative federalism, why are people not receiving the funds they are entitled to? Are cooperatives in Karnataka getting the money they should from the National Bank for Agriculture



and Rural Development (NABARD)? It has decreased by 58 per cent," Kharge said.

Addressing the gathering, he urged the people of Karnataka to unite and fight against the injustice being done to them.

"When the issue concerns Karnataka and its development, everyone should speak in unison," he said. "Delimitation based on population is being planned, through which efforts are being made to reduce the number of parliamentary and legislative assembly seats in South India," Kharge stated,

adding that in the northern states, representation is expected to increase by 30 per cent.

"Such reports are emerging, and we should wait and see. If this happens, it will be an injustice. We must unite against this injustice," he added.

Accusing the union government of interfering in various institutions, the AICC chief said that the education sector is not receiving the importance it deserves.

Alleging a reduction in central funding for education, he said, "The number of vacancies that should be filled, the number of teachers who need to be appointed—whether in Navodaya schools, Kendriya Vidyalayas, or universities—50 per cent of these posts remain vacant."

"If 50 per cent of positions are unfilled at central universities, IITs, IIMs, and Kendriya Vidyalayas, how will our children study and progress?" he asked.

Uttarakhand min Aggarwal resigns

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Uttarakhand minister Premchand Aggarwal resigned from the Cabinet on Sunday, weeks after his remark in the assembly on people from the state's hill regions had sparked protests.

Aggarwal, who held key portfolios, including finance and parliamentary affairs, submitted his resignation to Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami at his official residence, according to an official statement.

During the budget session in February, Aggarwal reacted angrily to a comment directed towards him by Congress MLA Madan Bisht and said he had not fought for Uttarakhand's statehood to see a day when a dichotomy would be made between 'pahadi' and 'desi'.

Aggarwal had also uttered an objectionable word during his argument with the opposition MLAs.

His remark sparked anger among the people, especially those from the state's hill areas.

Will kick anyone who talks about caste: Nitin Gadkari



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In strong remarks against caste-based politics, Union minister Nitin Gadkari has said that nobody should be discriminated over caste, religion, language or sex.

"Jo karega jaat ki baat, usko kaske marunga laot (I will kick hard anyone who talks about caste)," the senior BJP leader said, while addressing the convocation ceremony of Central India Group of Institutions in Nagpur on Saturday.

Gadkari, 67, said he believes no person is big because of his

caste, religion, language or creed but he is big because of his qualities. "Hence, we do not discriminate anyone based on his caste, religion, sex, or language," he added.

"I am in politics and lots of things take place, but I walk my way. If anyone wants to vote for me, he can and if someone does not want, he is free to do so," he said.

"My friends tell me why have you said this or taken such a stand. I tell them that one is not finished if he loses an election. I will not compromise with my principles and will follow them in my personal life," Gadkari said.

Gadkari also emphasized the importance of education for the development of society and the country.

He said that many years ago, when he was a legislator, he helped a Muslim education institute get an engineering college to promote education in the community.

India to host regional counter-terror conclave

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India will host a two-day conclave of 10-nation ASEAN grouping and some of its dialogue partners beginning Wednesday that will focus on firming up a comprehensive strategy to combat the threat of terrorism and extremism.

The conclave of the experts working group (EWG) on counter-terrorism under the framework of ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) mechanism is also expected to deliberate on the evolving regional security scenario, officials said.

The ADMM-Plus is a platform comprising 10-nation ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and its eight dialogue partners -- India, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Republic of Korea, Russia and the US.

The EWG conclave to be held in Delhi will be co-chaired by India and Malaysia.

The defence ministry said delegations from 10 ASEAN members and the bloc's eight dialogue partners along with Timor Leste and ASEAN Secretariat will be participating in the meeting.

India will co-chair the



EWG on counter-terrorism for the first time," it said. Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh will deliver the

keynote address at the opening ceremony of the conclave on Wednesday. It will be the first meeting

for activities planned for EWG on counter-terrorism for the ongoing cycle from 2024-2027.

"Discussions will focus on evolving a robust and comprehensive strategy designed to tackle the evolving threat of terrorism and extremism," the ministry said.

"The meeting aims to share the on-ground experience of the defence forces of ASEAN and its dialogue partners. It will lay the foundation for the activities/exercises/seminars/workshop planned for the cycle 2024-2027," it added in a statement.

The ADMM-Plus has been focusing on seven areas of practical cooperation such as countering terrorism, maritime security, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian mine action and cyber security. EWGs have been established to facilitate cooperation in these areas.

The EWGs are each co-chaired by one ASEAN member state and one dialogue partner following a three-year cycle. The task of the co-chairs is to lay down the objectives, policy guidelines and directions for the EWG for the three-year cycle.

Editor's TAKE

From SAGAR to MAHASAGAR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Mauritius bolsters Indo-Mauritius relations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent state visit to Mauritius marks a significant step in reinforcing the historical and strategic ties between the two nations. Received with warmth and enthusiasm by Mauritius' Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, Modi's visit underscores the mutual commitment to fostering greater collaboration in infrastructure, defence, economic growth, and cultural exchange.

India and Mauritius share a long-standing relationship shaped by cultural ties, historical connections, and strategic interests. As a major partner in India's Indian Ocean Region (IOR) strategy, Mauritius plays a crucial role in regional stability and economic cooperation. Modi's visit, which comes a decade after his previous trip in 2015, aligns with Mauritius's National Day celebrations, reinforcing the historical linkage between the two nations. Mauritius, strategically positioned in the southern Indian Ocean, has traditionally engaged with global powers such as France and the United States. However, with India's growing strategic influence in the region, New Delhi has solidified its role as Mauritius's leading development partner and security provider. While Mauritius has explored economic ties with China, India remains focused on ensuring fair competition for Indian businesses and safeguarding regional security. One of the most significant outcomes of Modi's visit was the announcement of an upgraded partnership framework—transitioning from the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine to MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions). This enhanced partnership is designed to promote trade-driven development, capacity-building for sustainable growth, and mutual security, benefiting both India and Mauritius while strengthening regional collaboration. Mauritius holds a key position as the host of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) Secretariat and is an active participant in the Indian Ocean Commission and the Colombo Security Conclave. This trilateral engagement ensures that Mauritius remains a pivotal player in the broader Indo-Pacific strategy, with India playing an instrumental role in its economic and strategic development. India views Mauritius as a vital neighbour with deep cultural and political ties. The recent political shift in Mauritius, with Ramgoolam's Alliance du Changement securing a decisive victory in the November 2024 general elections, necessitates a recalibration of bilateral relations. While former Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth's administration had closely aligned with India, Ramgoolam's previous tenure saw an exploration of other global partnerships, including closer economic engagements with China. Modi's swift visit following Ramgoolam's return to power signifies India's proactive approach in ensuring Mauritius remains within its strategic fold. This move is particularly important given the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Indian Ocean, where India has faced challenges from external players like China in neighboring Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

Modi's visit brought a renewed focus on several key areas of cooperation. India continues to support Mauritius through grants and concessional loans for major infrastructure projects, including the Metro Express, smart cities, and digital connectivity initiatives. The security partnership includes maritime surveillance, joint naval exercises, and enhanced intelligence-sharing to combat transnational threats in the Indian Ocean. Both nations are working on deepening trade relations through preferential trade agreements, investment in fintech, and capacity-building in key economic sectors. Given the significant Indian diaspora in Mauritius, cultural and educational collaborations remain a key pillar in bilateral relations, ensuring the preservation and promotion of shared heritage. Modi's visit to Mauritius marks a renewed commitment to strengthening Indo-Mauritian ties.

Religious supremacism in Pakistan

What began as a tool of political manoeuvring during the Zia-ul-Haq era has now morphed into an all-encompassing force, blurring the lines between faith and performance

Muhammad Ali Jinnah may have wished, "Religion should not be allowed to come into Politics....Religion is merely a matter between man and God", but reality proves that religion is not just allowed, but insisted, in everything that Pakistan does. It is an unleashed genie that is eating the sovereign from within. Hindsight suggests that it was perhaps inevitable given the dalliance with inherent supremacism in the sovereign idea that is predicated on the "land of the pure" ie, Pakistan, the only country in the world to be created in the name of religion.

Pakistan watchers would confirm that religion got truly valorised, accelerated, and institutionalised in the national bloodstream during the Shariaisation years of the Zia-ul-Haq dictatorship (1978-88). Geopolitics of the times (read, Afghanistan's Mujaheddin war) aided Zia's regressive project. The byproduct of creating the mujaheddin ecosystem in the '80s subsequently bred the phenomenon of the Taliban (and its various offshoots that were either India-facing or sectarian) and an accompanying air of religious extremism that was amplified by all subsequent governments. No so-called educated, moderate or well-travelled politicians could extricate themselves from the curse of invoking religion, and so even an Oxford-educated, married to a Westerner (Jewish to be precise), and self-proclaimed reformist, ultimately morphed to Taliban Khan ie, Imran Khan.

The surrender to religious fundamentalism was similarly mirrored in the realm of Pakistani cricket. Once the playing ground of flamboyant playboys who played hard and partied even harder with the likes of Imran Khan, Zaheer Abbas, Majid Khan, Asif Iqbal et al, took a U-turn to displayed piety and persona that reflected the nation's obsession with Puritanism. Beyond optics of sporting long beards, praying on pitches, and prefixing all public utterances with religious invocations like "bismillah rahman raheem" (In the name of Allah, the most gracious and the most merciful) and contextualising all situations with "inshaallah" (God willing) etc, — the postured fervour became highly religiously charged.

By itself, faith is perfectly healthy and can give the impetus for living life to the fullest, but when it spills out from a personal or private matter to a public insistence, the danger of enforced religiosity or even proselytisation is usually consequential. It could then distract from the task, in this case, cricket, to be secondary to religious pandering.

Like many of Jinnah's suggestions towards secularism (even if often contradictory), the invisibility of the same is mirrored in the



Pakistani dressing room. The '90s saw the sudden advent of Tableeghi Jamaat (Party of Preachers) stressing the 'authentic Islamic lifestyle' that went beyond a private/individual matter and became a matter of team routines. Pakistani cricket also got mired in embarrassing cricketing scandals (e.g., match-fixing), which led to the appropriation and demonstration of religiosity as a means of suggesting otherwise.

Soon accusations of only those who were visibly adherent getting selected saw the 'coincidental' conversion of Christian-born Yuusuf Youhana to a bearded and pious Mohammad Yousuf, diminishment of the career of Danish Kaneria (only Hindu in the squad) etc. But all this turn towards religiosity wasn't helping cricketing results (as was the case in the national narrative on all other fronts). In the moments of rare success against India, it took the Interior Minister to incredulously attribute the same as "Victory of Islam" and say that "Muslims all over the world are rejoicing".

In another instance a fast bowler, Waqar Yunis said that the sight of watching Rizwan kneeling in namaz "in front of Hindus was very special to him" —basically, the entire



BHOPIINDER SINGH

Muslim, no matter whatever you do in your life, straight to heaven" and after Dilshan's inaudible retort, Shezad responded, "Then be ready for hell fire" (incidentally, Pakistan lost the match).

Soon the depressing performances on the field led a slew of people like the then President Parvez Musharraf, PCB Chairman Shahryar Khan, coach Bob Woolmer to media manager PJ Mir all call out to curb overt religiosity as it was distracting and leading to poor performance. Recently, Danish Kaneria who was also

one of the many Pakistani players accused of spot-fixing reiterated the discrimination that he faced when he accused, "Shahid Afridi was the main person telling me to convert, and he did a lot of times".

While guilty of corruption, he perhaps was singled out for a harsher treatment vis-à-vis other players, even though he took 261 wickets in Test cricket to just 48 for Shahid Afridi. Danish's career was cut prematurely with no hope for a return. The fourth-highest wicket-taker was on a roll and as he said, "PCB didn't support me because I was Hindu, and I would break all the records. They could not drop me based on my performance. They knew I could break all the records, and Pakistan has never had a Hindu rising through the ranks".

The accusation does not seem unreasonable. To think that there is no excess space, consideration and toxic naturalness for religiosity in the Pakistani dressing room is to live under a rock, and the resultant performance is only collateral.

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

Leaderspeak

“ I do have tendencies to kind of go overboard. I have never shied away from that. For a lot of people, it might not have been something that they are able to process. But for me, it always comes from the right place. My competitiveness has not gone down. You can still be aggressive in your mind, but you do not necessarily need to express it out there every now and then out of frustration, which I have. I mean, in the recent past as well, I do not feel great about those things myself. ”

VI RAT KOHLI, INDIAN CRICKETER

AI-powered LASIK: The future of visio- correctio-

SECOND Opinion



MAHIPAL S SACHDEV

In an era where technology is reshaping healthcare, ophthalmology is experiencing a paradigm shift with artificial intelligence (AI)-driven advancements in vision correction. The latest milestone in this evolution is the integration of FORESIGHT technology with the AMARIS 1050RS laser system—ushering in a new era of unprecedented precision, safety, and speed in LASIK surgery. With the capability to correct vision in under 10 seconds per eye, this innovation is poised to redefine the treatment of refractive errors. Myopia (nearsightedness) is emerging as a global health concern, with projections indicating that nearly half of the world's population could be affected by 2050. As dependence on digital screens increases, the demand for precise, safe, and minimally invasive vision correction solutions has never been greater.

While traditional LASIK surgery remains highly effective, it has continued to evolve to meet these growing demands—leading to the development of AI-assisted laser vision correction. At the core of this breakthrough is FORESIGHT, an AI-driven predictive system that enhances surgical precision. By analysing thousands of data points unique to each eye, FORESIGHT customises laser correction plans, allowing surgeons to predict surgical outcomes before the procedure even begins. This AI integration ensures unmatched accuracy through real-

time eye tracking and adaptive treatment planning, minimising potential complications by adjusting treatment based on real-time corneal analysis. The result is a safer, more effective procedure with faster recovery and superior visual outcomes. For the first time in Asia, FORESIGHT is available in India, along with AMARIS 1050RS—the world's fastest and safest refractive surgery technology. With this advancement, cutting-edge vision correction solutions such as CustomEyes and SmartSurf ACE have also been launched.

CustomEyes offers a highly personalised approach to LASIK, tailoring treatment to the unique characteristics of each eye for superior results. Meanwhile, SmartSurf ACE provides a completely touch-free, blade-free LASIK experience, enhancing patient comfort and ensuring faster healing. These innovations mark a significant leap forward in refractive surgery, offering patients safer and more effective alternatives to traditional laser vision correction.

While LASIK remains the gold standard for refractive correction, AI-driven solutions are also revolutionising the management of complex corneal conditions like keratoconus. FORESIGHT-powered treatments such as Topography-Guided Removal of Epithelium for Keratoconus (TREK) and Topography-Guided Custom Ablation Treatment (TCAT) are bringing new hope to patients with irregular corneas. These techniques provide customised corneal reshaping for improved vision and reduced dependency on specialised contact lenses. Furthermore, their minimally invasive nature enhances safe-

ty and optimises patient outcomes, making them a game-changer in corneal treatment.

The continuous evolution of refractive surgery, driven by AI and next-generation laser technology, is setting new benchmarks in ophthalmology. Centre for Sight has been at the forefront of pioneering refractive techniques, from bringing Small Incision Lenticule Extraction (SMILE) to India to leading clinical trials for Smooth Incision Lenticule Keratomileusis (SILK). Today, with the adoption of AI-enhanced LASIK through FORESIGHT and AMARIS 1050RS, vision correction is entering an era of unparalleled precision and safety. The integration of AI into laser vision correction represents more than just technological progress—it signifies a commitment to patient-centric care. With faster procedures, enhanced safety, and optimised outcomes, individuals suffering from refractive errors now have access to the most advanced solutions available.

As technology continues to evolve, so does the promise of a future where perfect vision is within reach for all. The next decade will witness even greater strides in laser eye surgery, further solidifying technology's role in transforming lives through vision. With myopia on the rise, these advanced LASIK laser correction technologies are set to redefine vision correction by providing safer, faster, and more effective solutions to reduce dependence on glasses or contact lenses.

(The author is an eye surgeon, Chairman, and Medical Director of Centre for Sight. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Festival of Colours or Divisive Tool?

Madam — In a display of outright arrogance, Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Minister and Nirbal Indian Shoshit Hamara Aam Dal (NISHAD) party president Sanjay Nishad shot his mouth off when he said that "those who have a problem with Holi colours should leave the country." Such a calculated push to divide communities through religious festivals is being increasingly used by BJP leaders.

In fact, another BJP leader had gone a step further, saying that Muslim men should wear tarpaulin hijabs if they wished to avoid Holi colours. And it is all the more regrettable that UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath defended a police officer who told Muslims to stay indoors if they did not wish to be smeared with colours, rather than condemning such open communal bias.

His words further reinforced the idea that India's religious minorities are expected to either assimilate into the dominant narrative or be excluded from public spaces. Holi, the festival of colours, has always been a celebration of joy, togetherness, and the breaking down of social divisions.

However, in recent years, political rhetoric has sought to distort this spirit, turning moments of harmony into flashpoints of communal tension. The increasing use of festivals to push a divisive agenda has exposed the extent to which India's secular fabric is under threat.

Stuck in space no more

Madam—NASA and SpaceX have launched a joint mission to bring back veteran astronauts Sunita Williams and Barry Wilmore stranded in the international space station (ISS) and replace them with new crew. What has been originally scheduled to be an odyssey for eight days has now stretched past 285 days. The NASA duo (both 'Butch' and 'Suni' are now household names) has garnered a lot of sympathy around the world. It is a matter of great relief that the countdown to the splashdown off the Florida coast is all set to begin.

The saga of the expedition has shown the risks involved in space travel and exploration. Professional astronauts venture into space and push back the frontiers of science and the boundaries of human knowledge despite being conscious of the fact that human space flight is inherently risky. Technical glitches are always possibilities. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Findings from experiments and research help to broaden our horizons. Imagining ourselves as the astronauts stuck on the remote orbital outpost is an exercise in self-evaluation and an appreciation of their resilience, adaptability, grit, agility, will power and courage.

The pair has rejected the adjectives 'stranded' and 'stuck' to describe their state and maintained that it is all 'fun' for them and they have enjoyed their time in space.

Vote for transparency

Madam — Apropos of the headlines 'EPIC Aadhar link on cards' (March 16), the absolute transparency of voter list and complete linking of the remaining 33 Crore Voter ID-Aadhar linking are imperative at the earliest possible. The political controversy on fake voters should be set at rest by eliminating the fake voter IDs.

Rather, a step further, like banks and Income Tax Department, Voter ID should also be linked with the PAN and mobile numbers to rule out any possibility of fake voter ID even in future and new voters should be registered with the multiple linking of Aadhar, PAN and mobile numbers.

In fact, broad based roll reforms should be considered by the Government and the Election Commission barring culprits and corrupt from contesting elections, making it mandatory to exercise franchise to vote and incorporating facility to vote from remote and distant locations through online voting facility for the voters outside their constituencies on the voting day.

The EC should make necessary arrangements for online voting facility from all the district headquarters in the country. The Opposition politics is still around caste and religion divide in the society and is likely to remain so in the distant future too. The aspirational youth of the young country should decide the future of the country.

LINGUISTIC WAR: INDIA'S THREE LANGUAGE FORMULA UNDER FIRE

The question of language in India has never been limited to mere communication, it has always been an instrument of power, identity, and dominance. Once again, the debate has resurfaced this time over the central government's three-language formula, which is being perceived as an attempt to impose Hindi, sparking strong opposition from non-Hindi-speaking states, particularly Tamil Nadu. This controversy is not new, the same battle was fought in 1937, 1965, and again in 2020. The fundamental question remains: will India's linguistic diversity be respected, or will the imposition of a single language in the name of majority rule continue?

Tamil Nadu's Opposition is not just emotional but deeply historical. The first attempt to impose Hindi in the Madras Presidency in 1937 led to a fierce resistance spearheaded by leaders like C N Annadurai, who made it

clear that Tamil identity could not be suppressed. In 1965, when efforts were made to declare Hindi as the national language, the Dravidian movement labeled it as a manifestation of North Indian dominance, resulting in widespread and violent protests across the state. Today, with the three-language formula being pushed through the New Education Policy, the same old question arises — does India belong only to Hindi speakers? The Central government claims that no language is being imposed, but the reality tells a different story. When exams like UPSC favour Hindi-medium candidates, when Hindi becomes the primary language in Indian Railways and government offices, and when most Digital India portals are accessible only in Hindi and English, it is evident that a systematic strategy is being implemented to establish Hindi as a 'national identity.'

SACHIN TRIPATHI | SATNA

The global race for resources in the Arctic

The Arctic is emerging as a critical frontier in the race for mineral wealth, fossil fuels, and geopolitical dominance. As ice continues to melt at alarming rates, new trade routes are opening, intensifying competition among global powers

FIRST
Column

There has been increasing competition and conflict in the Arctic region for the exploitation of mineral wealth and fossil fuels. It has environmental consequences such as pollution, habitat destruction, impacts on wildlife and indigenous communities. In the warming world, the melting of ice in the Arctic Sea has been opening many new routes for trade in the region and the use of high-fuel oil in ship propulsion is becoming increasingly common. Diesel vehicles, open biomass burning and the use of high-fuel oil for engine propulsion in shipping are the largest global sources of black carbon, which consists of pure carbon in many linkages and is produced by incomplete combustion of fossil fuel and biomass by wildfires.

It can generate sufficient energy only next to carbon dioxide and its proximity around ice/snow sheets and glaciers of Arctic and Antarctica regions can extend the period of snow melting and can result in environmental catastrophes caused by the melting of glaciers and the rise in sea level. Eventually, it contributes to the warming of the planet.

South of the treeless Arctic region, we have the world's largest forests known as boreal forests covering large portions of Alaska, Canada, Scandinavia and Siberia. These forests have stored huge quantities of carbon and have protected the planet from further warming. Forests are rich in biodiversity and house numerous species of mammals, fish, plants of coniferous and broad leaved species, insects and birds. Studies have revealed that the warming of Arctic and Antarctic regions is three to four times higher than that of equatorial and tropical regions. Boreal forests are thus experiencing more warming than the global average, which in turn is adversely impacting its growth and regeneration.

The northern part of the forests is slowly expanding towards the Arctic region where ice has melted. Studies in Alaska's Brooks Range have also found that spruce trees have grown and established north of the tree line. Once inaccessible, the southern part has been kept open for commercial logging. The Anthropogenic pressure and wildfires have been causing the degradation of forests considerably. The gain in northern boreal forests is far too low as compared to the loss in the south.

Nearly 15 Million hectares of Canadian forests, constituting approximately four per cent of the geographical area of the country burned in 2023 and researchers found that it released 2371 megatons of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. This caused a jump in Canada's ranking of global emissions from 11th in 2022 to fourth in 2023, behind China, the US and India. The new trade routes due to melting ice in the Arctic are seen as an opportunity, which in turn boosts the use of high-fuel oil in ship propulsion causing further warming.

Portuguese-flagged Solong cargo ship collided



BK SINGH

recently with MV Stena Immaculate in the North Sea off eastern England setting both vessels ablaze and despite great firefighting efforts, it took two days to control the blaze. It caused oil leakage and such incidents have severe environmental consequences, especially threatening aquatic biodiversity.

Ever since February 24, 2022, Russian aggression in Ukraine began, decade-long cooperation between Russia and other Arctic countries on biology and nature conservation has been paused. The suspension of data across the boundary has made it difficult to understand how wildlife and ecosystems are changing during unprecedented warming. 2023 has been the warmest year recorded on the planet and 2024 has further broken this record and registered an average rise in global temperature by 1.56 degrees Celsius above the preindustrial temperature.

Data are also not available to find the impact of permafrost thaw that contains two and half times more carbon than what is already available in the atmosphere.

TRUMP ALSO REPEATEDLY BROUGHT OUT THAT THE US HAS PROVIDED \$350 BILLION WORTH OF DEFENCE EQUIPMENT DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS TO COUNTER RUSSIAN AGGRESSION, HOW UKRAINE WOULD PAY IT BACK?

The critical and rare earth minerals have applications in over 200 high-tech consumer products namely electric and hybrid vehicles, computer hard

drives, flat screen monitors and TVs, cellular telephones, and defence applications like electronic displays, guidance systems, lasers, submarines, radars sonar systems etc. The quantity used in some of the applications is insignificant, yet it is critical for the functioning of the technology. The magnets made have a relatively insignificant volume of the element as compared to the volume of the product but it is needed for the functioning of spindle motors, and voice coils of desktops and laptops.

Neodymium magnets are made of Neodymium, iron and boron which have the highest strength and can withstand 230 degrees Celsius temperature. Magnets are used in automobiles, computer hard disks and digital cameras. Lanthanum is used for digital and cell phone cameras and also in petroleum refining and steel making. Erbium is used in optical fibre and laser repeaters. Cerium is used in water purifiers and its alloys with other elements are useful for making catalytic converters. Europium, Terbium and Yttrium are used in phosphors that emit luminescence.

The traditional mining of these elements was labour-intensive; with lower wages and duly relaxed environmental laws, China proceeded and devel-

oped the infrastructure for extraction and processing of the minerals in a big way leaving the US far behind. China built mines to magnet industries and high-tech countries like the US and Japan had to depend on it. The territorial conflict between China and Japan in 2010 led to China using it as a weapon and putting an embargo on the sale of the minerals to Japan. China dominated the supply chain and even today major chunk of these elements mined outside China also continue to be shipped back to China for separation, refining and magnet production. To bring the US back to dominate the supply chain of rare and critical minerals Donald Trump in his second term as US President has moved to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the Gulf of America, expressed taking over the Panama Canal from Panama and purchasing Greenland from Denmark for strategic reasons.

He has also vowed to end Russian aggression in Ukraine and stop the years-old war early. US Vice President D Vance asked why Ukraine was not thanking the US for billions of dollars in tax-payer-funded aid. Trump also repeatedly brought out that the US has provided \$350 Billion worth of defence equipment during the last three years to counter Russian aggression, how Ukraine would pay it back? Though Ukraine President Zelensky was initially hesitant, he has come forward to sign the rare earth deal with the US to pay back the military aid already provided by the Biden administration. Greenland has voted for the central right democratic party vocal against Trump.

The Arctic island holds large reserves of critical and rare earth minerals. It is also home to a US air-base and straddles a strategic route to the North Atlantic. Though Greenland wants independence, Trump has been outspoken about his desire to control the island. In his address to Congress recently he said, "he thought US is going to get Greenland one way or the other."

In an exclusive conversation with NATO's Secretary General recently, Trump reiterated that Greenland would be annexed to the US. It is an island of 56,000 people, whose ancestors were colonized 300 years ago by Denmark. Since 2009, the island has been on the path to independence and Denmark controls only foreign and defence policies. Trump has an eye on Greenland's oil and rare earth resources.

All these moves in the Trump 2.0 regime are to gain the upper hand in supply chain dominance of rare earth minerals. Russia is also expanding exploration and extraction of oil and gas in Western Siberia and opening new trade routes by cutting the ice, yet to melt in the Ocean. The race in the Arctic region will surge greenhouse gas emissions at an unprecedented scale.

(Writer is a retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of forest force, Karnataka. Views expressed are personal)

Maha Kumbh: Sacred together-ess i- the world's largest gatheri-g

The Maha Kumbh Mela, a pilgrimage that draws over 450 Million people, is often hailed as the world's largest human gathering. Yet, beneath its spiritual significance lies a sociological marvel—a transient civilisation where hierarchies dissolve, altruism flourishes, and time itself seems to bend. This grand spiritual event holds immense religious significance, attracting not only devotees from across India but also pilgrims from around the world. Maha Kumbh is considered the ultimate confluence of all major Hindu rituals and traditions.

At first glance, the Kumbh Mela may appear to be a ritualistic pilgrimage, a momentary pause where millions immerse themselves in the holy rivers to wash away sins and attain spiritual liberation. However, beyond this sacred act lies a deep-seated cultural narrative. The event is an ancient ritual encapsulating centuries of collective memory, myths, and legends—a continuous reminder of India's quest for meaning in a chaotic world. Sociologists observe that the act of congregating at the confluence of sacred rivers transforms personal spirituality into a communal experience—a shared ritual of rebirth and renewal that transcends individual belief systems.

The suspension of social stratification

The Maha Kumbh Mela functions as a dynamic arena where India's social fabric is both displayed and redefined. In the temporary cities that spring up along the riverbanks, traditional hierarchies are simultaneously challenged and reaffirmed. The festival becomes a melting pot where age-old caste distinctions, regional identities, and modern socio-economic divides are momentarily blurred. Here, the paths of the pious ascetic, the devout seeker, and the curious traveler intersect.

Anthropologist Victor Turner's concept of "liminality"—a transitional phase where societal norms are suspended—finds vivid expression at the Kumbh. For weeks, the mela transforms into a liminal space where caste, class, and creed merge. A CEO and a farmer bathe in the same waters, a Dalit and a Brahmin share meals in community kitchens (langars). Turner termed this egalitarian bonding *communitas*, a temporary but transformative unity. In this sacred space, the rigid hierarchies of everyday India dissolve, revealing a latent potential for radical equality.

The Kumbh Mela also offers a unique opportunity to meet various saint groups, such as the Naga Babas, Moni Babas, Kabootar Babas, and Manchan Wale Babas. Observing their daily routines, including their methods of prayer, deep meditation, and spiritual discourses, provides insight into the diverse spiritual practices within Hinduism. The mela is a place where every-

one is immersed in a sense of collective unity. The Gift Economy: Altruism as Social Currency

Marcel Mauss's theory of the gift economy—where exchanges foster social bonds—comes to life at the Kumbh. Volunteers serve millions of free meals, ascetics offer blessings without expectation, and strangers share resources. This is not mere charity but a ritualised reaffirmation of interdependence. The mela's economy operates on trust rather than transactions, challenging modern capitalism's transactional ethos. In a world fractured by inequality, the Kumbh models a society where giving is sacred.

At the Kumbh Mela, people enthusiastically extend help-offering water, food, or prasad from saints. Receiving prasad through the Ganga is considered a divine blessing. This culture of generosity fosters an environment devoid of bias, where individuals unite in a shared spirit of giving.

A living tapestry of India's soul

Emile Durkheim's notion of "collective effervescence"—the electric energy of communal rituals—pulsates through the Kumbh. The syncretised bathing rites, devotional chants, and grand processions generate a transcendent solidarity. Pilgrims shed individual identities to become part of a cosmic whole, mirroring Durkheim's idea that religion is society worshipping itself. This collective energy is not just spiritual, it acts as a social glue, bridging the divides of a diverse nation.

To reach the Kumbh, pilgrims walk for miles, yet their faith and devotion energise them, making fatigue an afterthought. Wrapped in saffron, a color symbolising peace and devotion, they forget their individual identities and merge into a harmonious collective.

Cyclical Time and Social Renewal

The Kumbh's 12-year cycle mirrors India's ancient rhythms of renewal. Unlike linear time, which progresses toward an uncertain future, the Kumbh's cyclicity offers a ritualised "reset." Communities fragmented by modernity reunite, and generational stories are retold. This periodicity is not nostalgia but a sociological balm, healing temporal fractures and reaffirming continuity in a rapidly changing world.

Beyond its religious significance, the Kumbh Mela is a space where societal renewal unfolds daily. As millions journey to the sacred waters, they seek not just personal salvation but also a



BABITA CHAUDHARY

symbolic cleansing of societal ills. The sheer scale of the event demands meticulous coordination and cooperation—elements that mirror the broader workings of democracy in action. In a country characterised by its diversity and complexity, the Kumbh Mela serves as a microcosm of India's pluralistic society, where order emerges from chaos through an intricate balance of tradition and modern administrative ingenuity.

Gender and Quiet Subversions

Historically, both men and women have held esteemed positions in Hindu traditions. In the Vedic period, religious ceremonies were considered incomplete without the participation of women. Even in Hindu worship, the names of goddesses are inseparably linked with deities, such as Lakshmi-Ganesh, Sita-Ram, and Radha-Krishna. Just as men uphold Hindu traditions, women play an equally vital role in preserving and practicing them at the grassroots level.

This devotion is clearly visible in the Maha Kumbh of 2025, where women have participated with great enthusiasm alongside men. Female religious leaders have taken part in rituals such as the Shahi Snan and Akhara processions with the same fervor as their male counterparts. Pilgrims have sought blessings not only from male saints but also from female Mahatmas, demonstrating a shift from traditional social barriers. The high number of participants in the Kumbh can also be attributed to the active involvement of women, symbolising their empowerment and societal progress.

Conclusion

The event culminates on the auspicious occasion of Mahashivratri, dedicated to Lord Shiva, who shares equal reverence with Goddess Parvati. The Maha Kumbh Mela is not just a religious festival—it is a celebration of faith, equality, and the timeless spiritual essence of India.

The true miracle of the Kumbh Mela is not its sheer scale but its social vision—a blueprint for harmony in a divided world. It serves as a reminder that societies can momentarily choose cooperation over competition, shared purpose over self-interest. As climate crises and polarization threaten global stability, the Kumbh's ephemeral utopia whispers: "Another world is possible, even if only for 42 days."

The Kumbh Mela is more than a pilgrimage; it is India's subconscious dreaming aloud. In its chaos, we find order, in its transience, permanence. To study it is to glimpse the soul of a civilisation—not in its temples, but in its people's capacity to imagine, however briefly, a society built on sacred togetherness.

(The author is an assistant professor Maitreji college University of Delhi. She works on gender issues. Views expressed are personal)

The five causes of action in the Bhagavad Gita

We all wish to be in control. Yet, we fail miserably because control is never truly in our hands. Lord Krishna explains in the Bhagavad Gita:

"The place of action, the doer, various instruments, different efforts, and the fifth—providence—are the five factors of action." (Bhagavad Gita 18.14)

The Lord further states: "Whatever action a person initiates through body, speech, and mind, these five are its causes." (18.15)

Are we not constantly engaged in actions through our bodies, speech, and minds? Speech and mind are mentioned separately because our words have a profound impact on our lives. Speech is not just another sense—it can shape outcomes significantly. For example, consider an accident where both parties are at fault. If they apologise, the matter is resolved amicably. However, if they resort to harsh words, a fight ensues. Similarly, our thoughts operate on a subtler level than our physical senses, yet they wield immense influence over our lives.

The five causes of action

What are these five causes? 1. The Place of Action (Circumstances):

Our circumstances significantly impact our actions, yet we have no control over them. Are we in a scorching summer in Delhi or a freezing winter in Toronto? Are we raising a newborn in a nuclear family or a joint family? Such external factors shape our experiences, but they remain beyond our control.

2. The Doer (The Individual): While we assume we are in control, the truth is that our nature governs us. Are we truly in command of our emotions and reactions? Hardly. In the same accident scenario, an aggressive person will likely escalate the situation, while a calm individual will seek resolution. Our inherent nature dictates our responses, often beyond our conscious control.

3. The Instruments (Resources Used): The tools we have at our disposal also play a role. A person with a modern smartphone can communicate and function more efficiently than someone with an outdated or non-existent device. The availability and quality of resources impact our actions.

4. The Effort (Personal Endeavor): Even our efforts are influenced by factors beyond our control. Our health, energy levels, and circumstances determine how much effort we can put in. While we may wish to exert ourselves fully, our limitations often dictate otherwise.

5. Providence (Divine Will):

This is the most decisive factor, and it is entirely beyond human control. Our past karmas (actions) shape our present outcomes. Success and failure are not solely determined by our present efforts but are deeply intertwined with the results of past actions (karmaphalas).

Are we in control?

Not at all. Control ultimately rests with God. Let's examine God's role in the five causes: "Circumstances are under God's control, as He is the Creator of all situations."

"The Doer (soul), though possessing free will, is bound by past karmas and thus remains under divine governance."

"Instruments and resources originate from God, as He is the ultimate source of everything. "Efforts are permitted by God, as He determines what we are able to do."

"Providence is part of God's justice, ensuring the consequences of past actions unfold accordingly."

The path forward

Understanding that God is the ultimate controller should inspire us to seek His guidance and refuge. As Lord Krishna advises:

"In all respects, take shelter in Me alone. By My mercy, you will attain supreme peace and the eternal abode." (Bhagavad Gita 18.62)

By surrendering to God's will, we can find true peace and liberation, rather than struggling to control the uncontrollable.

Conclusion

In our quest for control, we often overlook the deeper truth—true control lies with God. The Bhagavad Gita teaches that our actions are shaped by five factors: circumstances, the doer, instruments, effort, and providence. While we may influence some aspects, ultimate control remains beyond us.

Recognizing this should not lead to helplessness but to surrender and faith. Instead of resisting the inevitable, we can align ourselves with divine wisdom. By cultivating awareness of our nature, utilising our resources wisely, and making sincere efforts, we can act with greater clarity. However, accepting divine providence helps us navigate life with peace, rather than frustration.

As Lord Krishna assures, taking refuge in Him leads to supreme peace (Bhagavad Gita 18.62). True liberation lies not in control but in surrender—trusting that God's will is perfect and that every experience serves a higher purpose.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher. Views expressed are personal)

The Pioneer Hyderabad

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Monday
 March 17, 2025

DYNAMIC, DARING & PURVASTIC POISE

TEJAL SINHA
 tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Purva Mantri is more than just a singer—she's a force of nature. With her dynamic stage presence, viral independent music, and now a breakthrough in Bollywood playback, she has carved a unique identity in the music industry. From performing at grand Navratri events to lending her voice to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's lyrics, Purva's journey is as inspiring as it is exhilarating.

For Purva, music is not just a career; it's in her DNA. "My mother is a classical Dusani singer, and my grandfather was also a classical singer. I grew up in a family where music was a way of life," she shares. Her childhood was filled with devotional music, attending bhajans at temples that lasted till dawn. "We would sing all night and end with the morning aarti. That was my foundation. My mother has been my guru since childhood, and I owe everything to her."

Looking back at her journey, Purva recalls two defining moments that changed everything. "The first was my solo performance in Gujarat in front of 10,000-12,000 people. My father was in the audience, and after the show, he told me, 'You were meditating on stage. Keep doing music like this—with complete passion and focus.' That became my mantra."

The second milestone came in the studio when she recorded "Aavati Kalay," a Garba song penned by PM Narendra Modi. "It's one of my biggest achievements. Out of so many talented artists in the industry, I was chosen to bring his lyrics to life. It's beyond anything I ever dreamed of."

Purva's Navratri concerts are legendary, with fans going wild over her electrifying presence. "The audience is my biggest source of energy. When I perform, I don't just sing—I meditate. I feel the power, the aura, and the love from the crowd, and that reflects in my performance."

Making the transition from independent music to Bollywood playback was a significant milestone for Purva. Her debut track, Ishqa, featured in Bobby Aur Rishi Ki Love Story, allowed her to explore a different creative space. "In independent music, the artist is the hero, but in playback singing, my voice becomes the soul of a character. For Ishqa, I had to bring in fresh yet melancholic emotions to match the young on-screen couple."

The film boasts an impressive musical lineup, including A.R. Rahman, Shaan, and Sneha Khanwalkar. While she hasn't collaborated with Rahman yet, she hopes to work with him soon. "I met him once during IPML

From setting Navratri stages on fire to making her Bollywood playback debut, Purva Mantri is redefining versatility in the music industry. As she gears up for her PURVASTIC World Tour and the success of her new single Mascara, she takes The Pioneer through her humble beginnings, lending her voice to PM's lyrics, her latest song and more



but haven't recorded with him yet. It would be a dream come true."

Purva's latest single, Mascara, is all set to drop on February 20. "Mascara is all about confidence and aura. It's a song for every girl—no matter her background, skin tone, or style. It has a Punjabi hint to it, blending indie pop with Indian elements, which is my signature style." When asked what kind of makeup style Mascara would be, she doesn't hesitate. "Bold and edgy—just like me!" The song celebrates femininity in a way that is playful yet powerful. "It's not just a song—it's an attitude!"

Music was always part of Purva's life, but the moment she chose it as a career came in 11th grade. "I was pursuing commerce, but I failed my exams. My father asked me what I really wanted, and I told him, 'I want to be like my mother. I don't want a 9-to-9 job—I want to sing, perform, and create.' The next day, we sat in the principal's office and changed my stream to music. That was the moment my passion became my profession."

Purva's fans have coined a term for her performances—"PURVASTIC." "One fan backstage told me, 'Fantastic is old. Your performance was PURVASTIC!' Since then, the word has stuck, and I love it! It reflects the connection I have with my audience."

2025 is shaping up to be a massive year for Purva. "I'm doing my PURVASTIC World Tour, covering the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand with my Bollywood and Navratri performances. Mascara is just the beginning—I'm also planning my first-ever album with 5-6 songs dropping together. This year is all about indie pop, folk vibes, and high-energy concerts!"

From independent hits to Bollywood playback, Purva Mantri continues to break boundaries with her music. With her raw passion, fearless energy, and deep-rooted love for her craft, she is an unstoppable force in the music industry.



FALLING IN LOVE WITH YOURSELF

The foundation of true wellness

Did you know that every person has already met their one true love—yet most remain unaware of it?

In a world that constantly demands more—more perfection, more productivity, more validation—there's one thing we often forget: ourselves. True wellness doesn't begin with a diet plan, a workout routine, or a self-care Sunday. It begins with a relationship—the one you build with yourself. Falling in love with yourself isn't arrogance; it's acceptance. It's looking in the mirror and seeing wholeness instead of flaws, growth instead of gaps. It's the moment you stop searching for love outside and realize you've been your own home all along. But how do you fall in love with yourself.

Listen—to your emotions, your needs, your inner whispers.
Forgive—your past mistakes, your imperfections, your humanness.
Celebrate—your wins, your efforts, your existence.

When you love yourself, your energy shifts. You stop chasing people who don't value you. You

stop settling for relationships that drain or mistreat you. You stop seeking permission to be who you truly are. Because when you love yourself deeply, you start holding space for yourself, embodying confidence, peace, and emotional strength—the true pillars of wellness. As a result, your self-worth flourishes. So, pause. Breathe. Place a hand on your heart and remind yourself: "I am enough. I am whole. I am loved."

Not by the world. Not by someone else. But by the most important person of all, your one true love—you. By falling in love with yourself, you also develop healthier relationships with others, because you approach the world from a place of self-assurance and balance. It becomes easier to connect with others authentically, without relying on them to validate your worth.

Ultimately, self-love creates a foundation for holistic wellness, helping you achieve harmony in mind, body, and spirit. It's the most important relationship you'll ever have—the one with yourself.

(The author, Esha Bhardwaj, is an Emotional Wellness Expert.)

When motherhood sparks a movement!

PNS| HYDERABAD

What started as a simple quest for safer, natural skincare soon became a full-fledged brand with a mission. A Dash of Me was born from the personal experiences of two mothers, Pinal Patel and Priyanka Patel, who were determined to create chemical-free skincare solutions for their families. Frustrated with the lack of truly natural products in the market, they spent months researching, experimenting, and perfecting formulations that were not only safe but also effective.

Their journey wasn't about launching a business—it was about finding a solution, first for their children and then for countless others facing similar concerns. Today, A Dash of Me stands as a testament to their commitment to purity, sustainability, and mindful self-care. In this conversation, Pinal and Priyanka share how their brand came to life, the challenges of ensuring 100% natural formulations, and their vision for empowering women entrepreneurs in the beauty and skincare industry.

Reflecting on how it all began, Pinal Patel shares, "It started with my own struggles. I've always had dry skin and rough hair, and I was trying to stick to traditional remedies like ubtan, shikakai, and coconut milk. But as a mom, finding the time for all that was really tough. Things got more concerning when my son started having skin issues too—itching and dryness that really needed attention. I didn't feel comfortable using chemical-based products on him, and honestly, I wasn't okay using them on myself either. I've always believed in keeping things natural, but I was stuck because I couldn't find anything that worked for us."

Seeing that Priyanka was facing similar struggles, the two friends began their journey into natural skin-

care. "We were curious about natural soaps, so we began experimenting. It took a lot of trial and error, but eventually, after almost a year, we made something that actually worked," Pinal recalls. "When we saw how well these soaps worked not just for us but also for our friends and family, it hit us—there must be so many people out there who are looking for the same thing. That's when we decided to turn it into a brand."

Developing products that met their high standards was no easy feat. Pinal explains, "It all started because I was struggling with dry skin and rough hair, and my son was dealing with eczema—itching, dryness, and just so much discomfort. I didn't feel comfortable using chemical-based products on either of us. Priyanka was going through the same thing, both for her child and herself. We were tired of not finding natural solutions that actually worked, so we decided to figure it out ourselves. We spent about a year researching and experimenting."

One of the biggest hurdles was sourcing the right ingredients. "We didn't want to compromise on safety or purity, so we were really particular about where we got our materials. We made sure to get them from trusted sources who were just as committed to quality as we were. It took time to find the right suppliers, but it was worth it," Pinal adds.

Priyanka echoes this sentiment, emphasizing how they maintained strict quality control. "We started making these products for our own kids, so being 100% natural was a necessity. We spent about a year researching and testing. We were really careful about every ingredient we used. Before letting our kids try anything, we tested it on ourselves to be absolutely sure it was safe and effective."

Beyond formulating safe and effective skincare, sustainability was a core focus for A Dash of Me. Priyanka

In an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, co-founders Pinal Patel and Priyanka Patel reveal how personal struggles with dry skin, rough hair, and family skin issues inspired them to create their women-led brand



maintain freshness and quality. It's not given out for mass production—we're personally in charge of the entire process."

The brand also ensures its packaging aligns with its values. "We've also put a lot of thought into our packaging. We use eco-friendly materials and reusable tins, making sure they can be repurposed or recycled. It was important for us to create products that don't just take care of our skin but also respect the environment," Priyanka adds.

For Pinal and Priyanka, A Dash of Me isn't just about skin care—it's about empowerment. "Honestly, I feel there's so much power when women come together and support each other. We want to encourage women with ideas and innovative solutions to step up and share them with the world. Age doesn't matter—you can start at any point in your life. It's really about taking that first step. Once you do, the rest starts to fall into place," Pinal shares.

In a market flooded with natural skincare brands, staying transparent and customer-focused is key. "Our focus is on staying genuine and transparent. We want people to see real experiences from those who actually use our products because that builds trust. Nothing speaks louder than honest feedback from real users," Priyanka explains.

One of the most touching success stories came from a young customer. "I remember a 14-year-old girl called me once to thank me because our products helped with her acne breakouts and body odour issues, especially during puberty. That meant so much to me," Pinal recalls.

As they continue their journey, Pinal and Priyanka remain committed to their original mission—creating skincare that is not only effective but also ethical, sustainable, and deeply personal.

what's brewing?



The annual Holi celebrations at Raunaq's H.I.G.H. Bhoot Bangla, Ghuttala Estate, Jubilee Hills was held by the 9th Nizam of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty of Hyderabad. This grand event was organized in memory of his great-grandfather, renowned as one of the most secular rulers of the Nizam era



The Police Hockey Stadium in Begumpet came alive on Saturday with Asia's biggest Holi bash, Rang Barse 2025, powered by Begumpet Country Club. This five-hour extravaganza featured eco-friendly organic colors, Bollywood music, dhol, Tamatino, and a vibrant color splash, creating an electrifying atmosphere. Country Club Hospitality & Holidays Ltd Chairman Y. Rajeev Reddy was also present, making the celebration even more special.



PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



The 539th appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the incarnation of Lord Krishna in Kaliyuga, was celebrated with grandeur at the ISKCON temple in Attapur, Hyderabad. The temple echoed with the chanting of the "Hare Krishna" Mahamantra, as nearly 10,000 devotees participated in the festivities. Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who spread the Hare Krishna Mahamantra through Sankirtan, emphasized it as a path to peace, joy, and spiritual liberation, making it renowned as the Mahamantra.



The vibrant festival of Holi reached astonishing new heights this year as SAS Crown, located in Kokapet and renowned as the tallest tower in South India, hosted the "Sky Blast on the Skyscraper" event. This event transformed a routine celebration into a landmark experience, redefined Holi Festivities, and showcased SAS Crown as a magnificent architectural marvel at the forefront of the city's skyline.



Kancheepuram Vakula Silks, owned by Divvala Madhuri and Duvvada Srinivas, proudly inaugurated its first store in Telangana. The launch event marked the presence of renowned film actress Nidhi Agarwal, along with Actress Divi, Pushpa 2 movie fame Keshava, astrologer Venu Swami and several influencers including Bebakka, Deepthi, and Jabardast Naresh.



SS Innovations, the maker of India's first and only home-grown Surgical Robotic System - SSI Mantra, hosted the Second Global SSI Multi-Specialty Robotic Surgery Conference (SMRSC) 2025 at the Leela, Gurgaon. The two-day event saw enthusiastic participation from over 1200+ world-renowned medical professionals, who gathered on a single platform to explore the transformative potential of robotic surgery.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



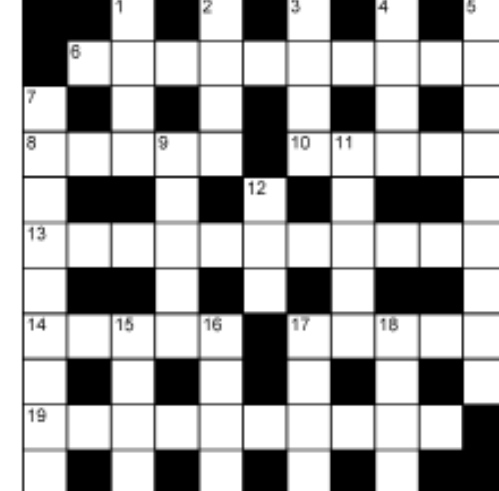
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



NANCY



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Yesterday's solution

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

Rules

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

ACROSS

- Speed up
- Elephant tusk material
- Leather belt
- Performer
- Keep your money in this
- Large group of singers
- Avalanches

DOWN

- Sound bouncing back
- Extremely
- Fewer
- Head covering
- Not permanent
- A tropical fruit
- These tall grass-like plants grow in or near water
- The upper part of your leg
- Pig pen
- Ladder step
- Compass direction
- Small bed for a baby
- Finished

SOLUTION

R	O	B	B	E	R	C	O	M	
A	A	S	S	V	R				
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GINGER MEGGS





AR Rahman fit and fine after dehydration-related hospital visit

Legendary composer and Oscar-winning music director AR Rahman was hospitalized in Chennai on Sunday morning, sparking concerns among his fans. Reports initially suggested that Rahman was admitted to a private hospital due to chest pain, but later, doctors confirmed that he was suffering from dehydration.

According to hospital sources, Rahman arrived at Apollo Hospitals, Grems Road, around 7:30 AM, where doctors immediately attended to him and shifted him to the ICU for observation.

However, after routine check-ups, his condition was found to be stable, and he was discharged later in the afternoon.

A statement from the hospital clarified the situation: "AR Rahman visited Apollo Hospitals with dehydration symptoms and was discharged after a routine check-up." The news initially caused panic among Rahman's fans, especially since the composer has been busy with several events in recent weeks. Additionally, he has been in the headlines due to his separation from his wife, who recently underwent surgery.



Saptagiri reveals struggling to find female lead in Pellikani Prasad

Actor Saptagiri, who started his career as a comedian before transitioning to lead roles, is set to return as the main actor in the upcoming film *Pellikani Prasad*, scheduled for release on March 21. However, the actor recently revealed that finding a female lead for the film was a major challenge.

Speaking at a promotional event, Saptagiri admitted that many actresses declined to act opposite him, as they did not want to be paired with a comedian.

"We faced a lot of difficulties in casting a female lead. Many actresses refused to act opposite me," he shared. Eventually, Priyanka Sharma accepted the role, and the film was successfully completed.

Saptagiri also revealed that Dil Raju is distributing the film after his brother Sirish saw a preview and decided to back it. "After watching just half an hour of the film, Sirish said he wanted to distribute it and asked me to start promotions," he stated.

Despite his previous lead roles in *Saptagiri Express* and *Saptagiri LLB* not performing well at the box office, Saptagiri remains confident about this project. "I gave myself 100 marks for this film, and I am sure the audience will do the same," he said.



NTR's bollywood debut *War 2* set for Aug 14, 2025 release

NTR is set to make his Bollywood debut with the much-anticipated film *War 2*, where he stars alongside Hrithik Roshan. Directed by Ayan Mukerji and produced by Aditya Chopra, the action-packed thriller features NTR in a negative-shaded role.

Recently, speculations arose about a possible delay in the film's release after Hrithik Roshan sustained a leg injury while filming a dance sequence. However, Yash Raj Films (YRF) put the rumors to rest by officially confirming the film's worldwide release on August 14, 2025.

"Must say... you have set it up brilliantly even before we have started our marketing of *War 2*... There will

be mayhem in cinemas on 14 August 2025, worldwide," YRF announced on social media.

Kiara Advani plays the female lead in the film, and her portions are reportedly complete. The announcement of her pregnancy alongside husband Sidharth Malhotra suggests that she wrapped up her shoot before taking a break.

With the massive success of *RRR*, NTR gained global recognition, and *War 2* is expected to further expand his Bollywood presence.

'IF YOU HAVE GUTS, COME ON STAGE,' ANASUYA'S BOLD RESPONSE TO HECKLER

Popular actress and anchor Anasuya Bharadwaj made headlines again after an incident at a Holi celebration in Hyderabad. As she entered the event, someone from the crowd called her 'aunty,' which angered the actress, leading her to give a strong response.

Known for her bold personality and fearless opinions on social media, Anasuya has previously

addressed being called 'aunty' in a similar controversy.

When the incident happened this time, she immediately reacted and challenged the person to come onto the stage if they had the courage.

However, the individual chose to leave the venue instead. "If you have guts, come onto the stage. If you are trying to provoke me, I will show you what happens."

Anasuya reportedly said, also making a gesture with her little finger to indicate the person's lack of courage.

A video of this confrontation is now circulating widely on social media, sparking discussions among netizens.

Pushpa 3 confirmed for 2028 release, producer reveals update



The *Pushpa* franchise, starring Allu Arjun and directed by Sukumar, has been a massive success, with *Pushpa: The Rise and Pushpa: The Rule* achieving nationwide recognition. Now, fans have received an official update on the highly anticipated third installment.

During the promotional event for their upcoming film *Robinhood* in Vijayawada, Mythri Movie Makers producer Ravi Yelamanchili confirmed that *Pushpa 3* is definitely happening and is planned for a 2028 release. "Yes, *Pushpa 3* will happen, and we aim to release it in

2028," he stated. Meanwhile, director Sukumar and Allu Arjun are currently focused on other projects. Sukumar is set to direct Ram Charan, while Allu Arjun is in talks with multiple directors, including Atlee and Trivikram Srinivas.

With no official confirmation on Allu Arjun's next film, it remains to be seen if he will complete two other films before returning to the *Pushpa* franchise. Fans are eagerly awaiting further updates on these major projects.

Samantha ventures into production, introduces fresh talent with *Shubam*

After establishing herself as a successful actress in films and web series, Samantha Ruth Prabhu has now stepped into film production. She recently launched her production house, Tralala Moving Pictures, which has completed its first project and is gearing up for a theatrical release.

Titled *Shubam*, the film blends humor, thrills, and quirky comedy while offering a fresh take on everyday issues. Written by Vasanth Mariganti and directed by Praveen Kandregula, the duo previously collaborated on the critically acclaimed film *Cinema Bandi*.

Samantha is also introducing several new talents to the industry, including Harshith Malgireddy, Shriya Kontham, Charan Peri, Shalini Kondepudi, Gavireddy Srinivas, and Shravani. Speaking about the project, Samantha said, "This film embodies Tralala's vision of unique, thought-provoking cinema."

The movie boasts an impressive technical team, featuring cinematographer Mridul Sujit Sen, production designer Ram Charan Tej, and editor Dharmendra Kakarla. Further details, including the release date, will be announced soon.

