

QUOTE OF THE DAY
 The pioneer
KCR looted the state like a hunting dog instead of behaving like a watchdog. The government will order a forensic audit of the Dharani Portal. KCR knows the Dharani Portal is full of mistakes. Everyone thought that KCR had designed Dharani Portal perfectly as he had read 80,000 books
 - Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy, Minister

'Complete inspection of wetlands in 3 months'
 5

PRIORITY
 SHOULD BE RESTORING INFLATION-GROWTH BALANCE: DAS
 8

Aishwarya clarifies 'no similarities' b/w Arjun Reddy & DRINKER SAI
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DON'T MISS...
Stress on self-reliance in defence production
 President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said the time is now ripe for launching a new phase of self-reliance in defence production by manufacturing technologically advanced equipment within the country. Speaking after awarding the President's Colours to the College of Defence Management (CDM) here, she said the Union government has taken several measures to enhance indigenous capabilities ...
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NIA conducts raids in 5 states
 The National Investigation Agency on Friday searched multiple locations in five states in connection with a case relating to attempts at revival of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit, according to an official statement. Extensive searches were conducted at the premises of suspects at two locations in Patiala and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts of Punjab, four locations in Manesar and Gurgaon districts of ...
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Bihar gets record Rs 1.81 L cr investment
 Adani Group, Sun Petrochemicals and a host of other companies - big and small - on Friday committed to investing a record Rs 1.81 lakh crore in Bihar, across sectors ranging from renewable energy to cement, food processing and manufacturing. Hitherto considered laggard, the state signed investment commitments with 423 companies at its only second investor meet, Bihar Business Connect 2024. Bihar's ...
 -PAGE: 8

India storm into U19 Women's T20
 A rampaging India extended their unbeaten run at the U19 Women's T20 Asia Cup as they reached the final with a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their last Super Four contest here Friday. Aayushi Shukla emerged the wrecker-in-chief with a four-wicket haul as the left-arm spinner conceded only 10 runs in her four overs to help India restrict Sri Lanka to 98 for nine after skipper Niki Prasad opted to bowl. Parunika Sisodia, who also bowls left-arm spin, chipped ...
 -SPORTS

Papers thrown, shoes shown
Ruckus in Assembly over case against KTR
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The corruption case booked against senior BRS MLA KT Rama Rao in connection with the Formula-E car race event rocked the Telangana Assembly on Friday with the BRS insisting on a debate on the issue. The House witnessed uproarious scenes as BRS Members stalled proceedings demanding a debate. As soon as the House met, the BRS raised the issue of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) booking a case against the BRS Working President and demanded a debate. Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar rejected the demand for a debate and tried to proceed with the agenda listed for the day. The BRS tried to disrupt proceedings by raising slogans against the government. Congress MLA R. Prakash Reddy said that when the Governor gave permission to register a case against KTR and as the ACB has launched an investigation, Continued on Page 2

PARLIAMENT SCUFFLE
Crime Branch to probe case against Rahul
 PNS ■ NEW DELHI
 Delhi Police's Crime Branch will investigate the case against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in connection with a scuffle on the Parliament premises, which left two BJP MPs injured a day earlier. On Thursday, an FIR was registered against Gandhi at Parliament Street Police following a BJP's complaint, accusing him of physical assault and incitement after MPs Pratap Chandra Sarangi and Mukesh Rajput were injured. Continued on Page 2

Is Govt accusing BRS leaders of land grabs to force settlements: Maheshwar
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The BJP asked the Congress Government to reveal whether it is levelling allegations against BRS leaders to force them into settlements or whether the government is constituting a SIT to probe the allegations against them. Amidst slogans and protests by BRS MLAs, Bharatiya Janata Legislature Party (BJLP) leader Alleti Maheshwar revealing the names of BRS leaders who made Reddy asked the Congress which has been alleging that KCR forcibly grabbed lands from the poor, to reveal who got these lands through the Dharani Portal. He was speaking during the debate on 'The Telangana Bhu Bharati (Records of Rights in Land) Bill-2024' in the Assembly on Friday. He said the Congress Government is not protesting against the extension of the annual grant of Rs 450 crore for five more years. He emphasized the importance of allocating Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) funds based on population ratios, with flexibility for state-specific needs. Focusing on MSME revival, the Telangana Government proposed a Technology Upgradation Fund and GST exemption for critical machinery. Bhatti also advocated extending the PLI scheme to sectors like power electronics and plastics recycling to enhance industrial competitiveness. On climate resilience, Telangana requested access to green financing and dedicated Union funds to support sustainable infrastructure projects. Bhatti also highlighted the need for gig worker protection, including a national framework for social security, minimum wage protection and a grievance-addressing mechanism. On behalf of the Telangana Government the Deputy Chief Minister underscored the urgency for infrastructure investments in backward districts, modernisation of ITIs and higher allocations for employment programmes.

Enter Formula ED

Registers ECIR case against KTR, senior IAS Arvind and former HMDA chief engineer BLN Reddy
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The Enforcement Directorate (ED) registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) against KT Rama Rao (KTR), the Working President of the BRS, senior IAS officer Arvind Kumar and former HMDA Chief Engineer BLN Reddy. The case stems from allegations of financial irregularities during the Formula E race held in Hyderabad in February 2023. The ED's Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) alleges the unauthorized transfer of Rs 55 crore from the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) to Formula E Operations (FEO) did not have required approvals. This action follows a FIR filed by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), which named KTR as Accused No. 1, Arvind Kumar as Accused No. 2, and BLN Reddy as Accused No. 3. The FIR invoked Sections 13 (1)(A) and 13 (2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, along with Sections 409 (criminal breach of trust) and 120(B) (criminal conspiracy) of IPC. The ED is now investigating the money trail to ascertain whether any proceeds of crime were generated or laundered in the process. This marks a significant escalation in the case, which has already attracted political attention. Both KTR and the other accused have denied any wrongdoing, maintaining that the funds were utilized transparently for the event. The case is expected to intensify as the ED delves deeper into the financial transactions surrounding the Formula E race.

KTR questions credibility of cases
 In an informal chat at the Assembly, KTR expressed confidence in the transparency of the processes behind the cases filed against him, particularly concerning the Formula E event and the Outer Ring Road (ORR) lease. He stressed that the allegations lacked evidence proving corruption and that the accusations were due to political factors. On the Formula E case, KTR said that Congress Minister Ponnab Prabhakar's remarks itself proved that there was no corruption involved. "Even the court will declare that this is a clear case. If the government still wants to pursue it, they can, but we will address it legally," KTR said, dismissing the allegations as baseless. KTR defended the financial model adopted for ORR, citing it as one aligned with the Toll-Operate-Transfer (TOT) practices Continued on Page 2

HC bars ACB from arresting KTR till Dec 30
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 The Telangana High Court has barred the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) from arresting BRS Working President KT Rama Rao till December 30 in the Formula-E race case. The court passed the interim order on Friday in response to a quash petition filed by KTR. While granting relief to KTR, the court allowed the investigation to continue and directed the state government to file its counter by December 23. The court adjourned the hearing to December 27. The ACB had registered a case against KTR on Thursday for alleged misuse of government funds while conducting the Formula E race in Hyderabad last year when the BRS was in power. During the arguments on KTR's lunch motion petition, Advocate General Sudershan Reddy requested the court not to pass an interim order as the investigation into Continued on Page 2

'A grave betrayal of TG'

KCR, KTR handed over Dharani to private firms, says CM
Asserts Bho Bharathi will protect rights of land owners
 PNS ■ HYDERABAD
 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that KCR and BRS MLA KT Rama Rao committed financial offences by handing over the Dharani Portal to companies and foreigners who are neither in TG nor in this country. The CM said that it is a serious offence that KCR and KTR entrusted this information to people abroad. Participating in the debate on 'The Telangana Bhu Bharati (Records of Rights in Land) Bill-2024' held on Friday in the Assembly, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that details about 'Telangana farmers' land holdings were placed in the hands of foreigners. The land data should have been protected by the Revenue Department. However, the data was placed in the hands of private individuals running a portal. Data about farmlands were given to companies involved in financial offences abroad, he said. "One should think how serious a crime this is. The KCR government betrayed people by handing over information to foreign companies. The people of Telangana should think seriously about the kind of investigation that should be done into the episode," the CM said. He said that in the case of Dharani Continued on Page 2

TG demands fair share of funds, bifurcation dues

At the pre-budget meeting convened by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi, Telangana's Deputy CM Bhatti Vikramarka stressed fiscal support and the state's key demands to ensure equitable growth. The TG government urged the Centre to address pending dues under the AP Reorganization Act, including the Rs 1,800 crore for backward district development and the extension of the annual grant of Rs 450 crore for five more years. He emphasized the importance of allocating Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) funds based on population ratios, with flexibility for state-specific needs. Focusing on MSME revival, the Telangana Government proposed a Technology Upgradation Fund and GST exemption for critical machinery. Bhatti also advocated extending the PLI scheme to sectors like power electronics and plastics recycling to enhance industrial competitiveness. On climate resilience, Telangana requested access to green financing and dedicated Union funds to support sustainable infrastructure projects. Bhatti also highlighted the need for gig worker protection, including a national framework for social security, minimum wage protection and a grievance-addressing mechanism. On behalf of the Telangana Government the Deputy Chief Minister underscored the urgency for infrastructure investments in backward districts, modernisation of ITIs and higher allocations for employment programmes.

ST MLAs & MLCs meet Murmu, seek Central aid for tribals

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy and Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma attended the 'At Home' programme organised by President Droupadi Murmu. Murmu, who had come to Hyderabad on winter vacation, organised the programme at the Rashtrapati Nilayam in Bollaram. HC Chief Justice Alok Aradhe, several ministers, public representatives and high officials attended the function. Meanwhile, ST MLAs and MLCs from Telangana met President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Nilayam in Bollaram to discuss the development of tribal communities in the state. The meeting, which lasted 15 minutes, was organised by Minister Seetakka and legislators from all parties attended it. The representatives presented an overview of the challenges faced by Scheduled Tribes in Telangana and outlined the schemes launched by the state for their welfare. They appealed to the President to ensure the allocation of special funds from the Centre to support the development of tribal communities. "Tribal communities need a guardian at the national level to address their issues. We request the Centre to provide additional financial support for tribal welfare in Telangana," the MLAs urged the President



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President Murmu responded positively to the delegation's plea, emphasising the importance of monitoring fund use. She directed Minister Seetakka to regularly review Central funds allocated for tribal welfare, assess their impact and submit detailed reports to the Centre. "I will take steps to ensure additional funding is provided based on the needs of the tribal communities in Telangana," the President assured the delegation. President Murmu also commended Minister Seetakka for arranging the meeting and prioritising the welfare of tribal communities. The MLAs expressed their gratitude for the President's assurance and proactive response to their requests. This meeting marks a crucial step towards strengthening the dialogue between the state and the Centre for the betterment of Telangana's tribal communities.

Mahbubnagar, Mancheril now corporations, 12 new municipalities

The Telangana Government has upgraded Mahbubnagar and Mancheril municipalities into municipal corporations. The decision is aimed at meeting the growing administrative and development needs of these rapidly expanding urban centres. Many villages have been merged into existing municipalities and corporations to streamline administration. This includes six villages merged with the Parigi municipality, seven villages merged with the Narsampet municipality, one village each with the Narsingi and Shamshabad municipalities and six villages with the Karimnagar Municipal Corporation.

- The state also announced the creation of 12 new municipalities in various districts**
- ♦ They are Sangareddy district: Kohir, Gaddapotharam, Gummadidala, Isnapur
 - ♦ Mahbubabad district: Kesamudram
 - ♦ Jangaon district: Station Ghanpur
 - ♦ Narayanpet district: Maddur
 - ♦ Khammam dist: Edulapuram
 - ♦ Bhadradi Kothagudem district: Aswarapeta
 - ♦ Mahbubnagar district: Devarakadra
 - ♦ Rangareddy district: Chevella, Moinabad

The die is cast: Congress dynasty's end is near

Is a new era in the Congress party's history just around the corner? Will the party be forced to unshackle itself soon from the ownership of the Nehru dynasty...

end of the Nehru dynasty's control over the Congress party is surprisingly much closer than anticipated.

The trajectory of the Congress party over the past few decades and the recent political happenings in the country confirm that the end of the Nehru dynasty's control over the Congress party is surprisingly much closer than anticipated



KISHORE POREDDY

get people's mandate to rule without a Nehru dynasty member at the helm. Of course, the ability - real or perceived - to lead their party to power is essential to the next rung leaders in any party...

not guarantee it. On the contrary, as the party's de facto owner since 2014, Rahul proved that a dynasty member could help the party into its decimation.

At the same time, as the fortunes of the Congress under the Nehru dynasty leadership were dwindling, Arvind Kejriwal (AAP) and Chandrasekhar Rao (BRS) formed their parties...

year's General Election seemed to give the dynasty a much-needed breather, the party's rout in Maharashtra and Haryana, where it performed decently in the Lok Sabha elections, made the respite short-lived.

Constitution, Babasaheb Ambedkar, and reservations a liability to the Congress and the entire INDI alliance.

ing pride in their Indic roots. Soon, the Congress will either discard the dynasty and reinvent itself to remain relevant, or its state-level leaders will realise they are better off without the suzerainty of the Nehru dynasty...

(The author is BJP TS spokesperson.)

Govt will order forensic audit of Dharani Portal: Ponguleti

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Declaring that the government will order a forensic audit of the Dharani Portal, Revenue Minister Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy said that former Chief Minister KCR looted the state like a mad dog instead of conducting himself like a watchdog.

debate on the Formula E-Car Racing issue, Ponguleti said that BRS MLAs are trying to block the Bhu Bharati Bill from getting passed in the Assembly so that their irregularities do not come out.



MLAs are behaving offensively in the House instead of setting right their mistakes. KCR knows the Dharani Portal is filled with errors.

Everyone thought that KCR had prepared the Dharani Portal perfectly as he 'read' 80,000 books. The ROR Act-1971 introduced in 'Indiramma Rajyam' was in force for 49 years.

We are ready for debate on Formula E Race anywhere including their party office: Revanth

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Making it clear that he gave an appointment to a representative of the E Car racing company, Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that he came to know about the issue from officials after meeting the representatives of the racing company.

have a discussion on Bhu Bharati with their conspiracy mindset. We are ready for a debate on Formula E Race anywhere including their party office," he said.

opposition is questioning celebrating parties after they were caught with drugs. What tradition are we following? The government will not tolerate the BRS behaviour in the house.

FIR against Rahul Gandhi's BJP's diversion tactic: CM

Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy on Friday termed the First Information Report (FIR) registered against the Leader of Opposition, in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, as an attempt to divert the attention of the BJP.

The CM alleged that BJP registered an FIR against the Congress leader for defending the legacy of Babasaheb B. Rambedkar. "This FIR is a diversion tactic in response to Rahulji protesting against the Union Home Minister, for his highly objectionable words about our beloved and revered icon, Dr Ambedkar," the Chief Minister said in a post on 'X'.

AIMM demands audit of all land holdings

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Demanding that the state government should order an audit of all lands, the All India Majlis Ittehadul Muslimmen (AIMM) floor leader, Akbaruddin Owaisi, said that the BRS Government had introduced the Dharani Portal for the sake of a family and its political party, that is, the BRS.

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

BRS MLA Harish Rao expressed strong disapproval of the "baseless" case filed against KTR and hailed the High Court's directive preventing his arrest as a moral victory.

A moral victory to KTR

him for his unwavering commitment to transparency. The court's intervention has unmasked this frivolous case," he said. "This vision-less Chief Minister ruined the Hyderabad brand and Telangana State Image," he said.

a report by the Nielsen Group. Highlighting procedural transparency, Harish stated, "Even the company involved clarified that the agreement was cancelled due to unpaid dues, not corruption. Revanth's baseless claims in the Assembly are nothing but Goebbels' propaganda."

KCR did not invent Dharani Portal on his own: Revanth

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy said that former KCR made a statement in the Assembly that he puts all his energies into bringing a new law. However, KCR did not invent the Dharani portal on his own.

IL&FS in Odisha in the name of e-Dharani in 2010. The CAG found fault with giving the e-Dharani portal to a company that lacked experience and expertise in 2014.

on Telangana people. Gade Sridhar's e-centric and Wissen Infotech jointly won the contract along with IL&FS in 2018. There is a policy to ban companies with criminal backgrounds from attending the tendering process.

HC bars ACB ...

The Advocate General contended that registering the FIR was only the first step. He said POCA Sections will be invoked based on facts which come to light during investigations. The court was told that the decision to register a case was taken two months ago and the case was registered after receiving permission from the Governor.

KTR questions ...

Continued from page 1 used by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). He said that funds generated through this are used for schemes like waiving farm loans.

Continued from page 1

the case has just started. Senior lawyers Sundaram, Prabhakar Rao and Gandra Mohan Rao argued on behalf of KTR. They contended that sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act invoked by the ACB do not apply to this case and sought orders to quash the FIR.

Continued from page 1

there is no scope for discussion in the House. He said the BRS is trying to create confusion among the public. The Speaker asked BRS Members to participate in the debate on the Telangana Bhu Bharati (Record of Rights in Land) Bill, 2024.

Continued from page 1

The FIR has been registered under sections 115 (voluntary causing hurt), 117 (voluntary causing grievous hurt), 125 (act of endangering life or personal safety of others), 131 (use of criminal force), 351 (criminal intimidation) and 3(5) (common intention) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Table with 2 columns: Time and Event. Includes Shashthi, Saptami, Nakshatram, Rahukalam, Yamagandam, Varjyam, Gulika, Amritakalam, and Abhijit Muhurtham.

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy. Temp: 30°. Humidity: 52%. Sunrise: 6:42 AM. Sunset: 5:48 PM. Updated: December 20, 2024 5:00 PM.

'A grave betrayal ...

Continued from page 1 the work was done not in Telangana, Vijayawada or Bengaluru but in northeastern states. He said that laws clearly said that information on land holdings should be kept confidential and must not be given to anyone else without the knowledge of its legitimate owner.

private lands have changed in Dharani. According to clause 9.20 of the agreement, government permission should be taken to change the name of the owner. As mentioned in clause 9.20.4, work should be done in a government office.

Government's misdeeds will come out later. Even though Union Minister Kishan Reddy complained, the Timmapur Bhoodan lands were transferred in the names of private individuals without any consideration.

Is Govt accusing ...

Continued from page 1 gains through the Dharani Portal. He also asked the government to explain why it is not seeking a CBI probe into the land scam.

Papers thrown ...

Continued from page 1 there is no scope for discussion in the House. He said the BRS is trying to create confusion among the public. The Speaker asked BRS Members to participate in the debate on the Telangana Bhu Bharati (Record of Rights in Land) Bill, 2024.

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Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work.

City Pioneer

the pioneer

HYDERABAD | SATURDAY | DECEMBER 21, 2024

03



CITY EVENTS

Christmas Bazaar

Exhibition-cum-Sale

Venue

Lulu mall
Till December 31,
daily at 10:00 am

NYU CARNIVAL

With singer KARTHIK

Venue

Boulder Hills, Hyderabad
December 31

Weekend kids cooking camp

Master cooking and baking in 09 fun weekends

Venue

Culinary Guru Institute,
Hyderabad.
Till January 11, 2025.

No water supply in some areas tomorrow

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A shutdown is planned on 800mm dia Borabanda line from Lingampally reservoir premises from 6 am on December 22 to 6 am on December 23 to attend the leakage on above 800 dia MS line at Safdarnagar.

The areas to be affected by shutdown are: SPR hills section, Jaiwanthnagar and Sunilnagar.

Borabanda section: Mahatmanagar, Vinayaknagar, Habeeb fatima nagar phase-1 & phase-2, IndraNagar, T Anjaiahnagar, Baba Sailaninagar and Bharatnagar, Gayatrinagar section:

Old and new Allapur, Central Allapur, Shiva basthi, Aziz Nagar, Miraj Nagar, padmavathi Nagar, Gayatri Nagar, Tulasi Nagar, Vivekanandnagar, Parvathnagar area.

Motinagar section: Ramarao nagar, Harinagar, Shivajinagar, RK Society, Radhakrishnanagar, KSnagar, Rana Pratapnagar, Ganeshnagar.

Traffic restrictions for Christmas Celebrations at LB Stadium

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad City Traffic Police have announced traffic restrictions will be imposed due to Christmas Celebrations at LB Stadium between 5 pm and 9 pm.

The traffic will be either stopped or diverted at the following places or routes on need basis; Traffic from AR Petrol Pump Junction towards BJR Statue will be not be allowed and diverted towards Nampally Railway Station or Ravindra Bharathi.

Traffic coming from Basheerbagh towards A.R Petrol Pump will be diverted at BJR Statue towards SBI, Gunfoundry and Nampally Station road.

Milaap Caregivers Handbook launched to help patients

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad witnesses over 20 lakh patients every year, drawn by its advanced medical infrastructure, renowned healthcare professionals, and innovative treatments, said Milaap crowdfunding platform in its Making Healthcare Accessible in Hyderabad: A Caregiver's Handbook on Friday.

Divya Devarajan, SERP CEO and Prajavani State Nodal Officer, Government of Telangana, launched the comprehensive resource designed to guide patients and caregivers through Hyderabad's healthcare system.

The Caregivers Handbook, an initiative of Milaap, was backed by the Government of Telangana to ensure ease of

DEFENCE PRODUCTION

Time ripe to build on self-reliance

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said the time is now ripe for launching a new phase of self-reliance in defence production by manufacturing technologically advanced equipment within the country.

Speaking after awarding the President's Colours to the College of Defence Management (CDM) here, she said the Union government has taken several measures to enhance indigenous capabilities of the defence industry.

Through initiatives such as Make in India, Ease of Doing Business and development of defence industrial corridors, the government is encouraging Indian and foreign investors to invest in the defence sector, she said.

With emphasis on indigenisation, many defence products have been identified for domestic manufacturing and will not be imported.

"The time is now ripe for launching a new phase of self-reliance by manufacturing technologically advanced equipment within India," she said.

The officers of the defence forces are expected to wholeheartedly contribute towards achieving self-reliance and realizing the vision of Atmanirbhar

(self-reliant) Bharat, she said.

In the field of defence modernisation, India is focusing on a holistic approach that includes upgrading its conventional forces and embracing cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, drones, cyber warfare capabilities, and space defence technologies.

Noting that India is focusing on building strategic defence partnerships at the global level,

she said, through multilateral economic and military frameworks and engagements, India's influence in regional and global defence discussions has grown significantly.

By focusing on self-reliance, technological advancement, and strategic collaborations, India is not only securing its borders but also contributing to global peace and stability, the President said.

As the country moves forward, India's defence sector should continue to evolve and adapt, thereby ensuring that the nation remains a source of strength, resilience, and cooperation in an increasingly interconnected and complex world.

The armed forces personnel need to keep themselves updated with the latest technological developments as well as changing operational dynamics, Murmu added.

"The wars are fought beyond the battlefields. We are today witnessing psychological warfare. I urge you all to constantly evolve with time and strive for excellence in the rapidly changing security landscape," she said.

India's enhanced defence management capability will help strengthen diplomatic and military partnerships and increase defence exports, she said.

It will also help India in maintaining a proactive stance in global security forums. The senior strategic leadership in Indian defence will play an important role in positioning India as a major player in the international arena, responding proactively to global security threats, she said.

She expressed confidence the collective efforts and individual excellence of the officers will help in realizing India's vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

Expressing happiness to see women officers, the President said she has been encouraging and appreciating women officers at various events of defence services.

They are an inspiration for all the other women and young girls who dare to dream, she said.



President Droupadi Murmu at the College of Defence Management in Hyderabad on Friday

Journal on accounting theory released



Chairperson, National Financial Reporting Authority Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey releasing the Journal on Accounting Theory and Practice in Hyderabad on Friday

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Journal on Accounting Theory and Practice was released by Dr Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey, Chairperson, National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), and Professor Madan Pillutla, Dean, ISB, at the 17th ISB Accounting Research Conference 2024 organised at the Hyderabad campus of the Indian School of Business (ISB). The journal includes original research arti-

cles in the areas of accounting, such as financial accounting, management accounting and control, auditing, and taxation.

Sharing his thoughts at the conference, Dr Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey, Chairperson, National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), called on the importance of focusing on research and having solid evidence to deal with issues and undertake changes in the accounting, auditing, and related areas. Some of the research

ideas Dr Ajay Bhushan Prasad Pandey suggested include the efficacy of joint audits, independence of auditors, related party transactions, communication between the auditor, corporate failures, reliance on external experts, and the use of technology in identifying early warning signals for companies. He also underscored the utility of forging collaborations between academic research and policymakers in helping realise the vision of Viksit Bharat.

Govt urged to reconsider proposal to bring FSI, addl FSI under GST

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a letter to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) urged the Central government to reconsider imposing an 18 per cent GST on FSI/Additional FSI charges paid to local authorities for real estate projects. CREDAI emphasised that this would significantly increase project costs, driving housing prices up by about 10 percent nationwide. The move, whether applied retrospectively or prospectively, could affect housing demand and supply, creating economic and viability concerns.

CREDAI warned that retrospective GST application could burden developers with unexpected liabilities, disrupting ongoing and completed projects. This financial strain might stall developments, endangering homebuyers' investments. Even prospective GST application would raise construction costs, harming affordability and pushing prices

up by 7-10 per cent, particularly impacting middle-class homebuyers, who form 70 percent of the market. Developers also cannot claim input tax credit (ITC) on GST, leading to double taxation and further price hikes.

Legally, Notification Nos. 14/2017 and 12/2017 exempt services provided by government authorities for municipal functions under Article 243W of the Constitution. These functions, listed in the 12th Schedule, include urban planning, land use regulation, and slum improvement. CREDAI argues that FSI-related charges fall under these functions, making them exempt from GST.

The President of CREDAI, Boman Irani stated that imposing 18 percent GST on FSI charges would increase project costs, reduce housing affordability, and destabilize project finances. We strongly urge the Government to exempt FSI charges from GST to avoid negative impacts on housing supply, demand, and project timelines.

23,44,490 devotees visited Sabarimala till Dec 15

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

A total of 23,44,490 Ayyappa Devotees visited Sabarimala between November 15 and December 15.

During the same period last year 19,03,321 devotees had darshan. The district police have stated that devotees' not adhering to the scheduled time of the virtual queue is causing difficulties in managing the crowd.

If the devotees follow the

time slots provided in the virtual queue, unnecessary congestion can be avoided, and a smoother darshan can be facilitated. The district police have emphasized that pilgrims should pay attention to adhering to the virtual queue booking time.

The special events connected with the Holy Thanga Anki procession on 22 December which starts from Aranmula Temple, and the special rituals on 25 December when the

procession reaches Sabarimala. Adhering to the timing of the virtual queue will help to reduce crowding on the 25th and 26th of December.

The district police have also assessed that while this can definitely be followed by pilgrims from within the state, pilgrims from other states may face some challenges in adhering to the booking times.

It is mandatory for devotees to book through the virtual

queue for darshan. In connection with the Sabarimala pilgrimage, the district police have prepared an online portal named Sabarimala Police Guide in the form of a QR code.

The QR code has been made available at key locations connected with the pilgrimage. Detailed information about the parking grounds in Nilakkal has also been made available via QR codes at various locations.

Students prefer work-linked degrees

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Less than 2 per cent of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) currently offer work linked degrees. A recent survey by TeamLease EdTech highlights a significant shift in how Indian students view higher education, with 85 per cent endorsing Work-Linked Degrees as the future.

Conducted with over 10,000 plus students across India, the survey reveals how students are prioritising practical expo-

sure and employability. A remarkable 80 per cent of students believe that work experience on their CV improves their chances of securing high-paying jobs, while 40 per cent identify financial independence as a key driver behind their preference for Work-Linked Degrees. Moreover, 66 per cent of students value flexibility in learning schedules, and 56 per cent are drawn to on-the-job mentorship.

These findings reveal a need for HEIs to adopt more flexi-

ble, skill-oriented programs that align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and emerging student aspirations. Awareness of work-linked degrees is exceptionally high, with 93 per cent of students familiar with the concept. IT and Marketing roles dominate internship preferences, with 25 per cent of students gravitating toward tech positions and 24 per cent toward marketing, followed by opportunities in Banking and Finance (19 per cent).

Minority women seek 2BHK houses

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Many minority women visiting Prajavani expressed the hope that their grievances related to 2BHK housing would be resolved at least from January next year. On Friday, a total of 383 grievance applications were submitted at the Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Praja Bhavan

When asked, Afreen from Balanagar expressed frustration over the new administration's lack of action. She stated that she submitted her grievance regarding the 2BHK housing issue two months ago and has been visiting Prajavani regularly for updates. However, officials keep saying her application is still pending due to the large number of submissions. She criticised the government for

accessibility to patients looking for treatment in Hyderabad. Developed with support from the Telangana State Health Commissioner's Office, the initiative aims to ensure widespread impact and improve accessibility for individuals facing medical challenges while seeking treatment in the city.

Divya Devarajan, said, "There is a problem faced by two kinds of people - one is people who come from outside the state, and people within the state who come from other districts but are not aware of all the health care infrastructure available in the city. Hyderabad is known for its hospitals, yet when they come here, they don't have access to this information."

People submitting memoranda at Prajavani programme in Hyderabad on Friday



People submitting memoranda at Prajavani programme in Hyderabad on Friday

celebrating one year in office without addressing the needs of the poor. Afreen pointed out that promised schemes, such as the gas subsidy of Rs 500 and free electricity for 200 units, remain unimplemented. She said that the only scheme operational since the beginning is the free bus service. Afreen added that as she

had voted with a hope that the government would fulfill its promises. She shared her struggles with health issues and emphasised that owning a house would save on rent and help her afford treatment.

Meanwhile, Ramya also expressed dissatisfaction with the unresolved 2BHK housing

grievances at Prajavani. She criticised the government's celebrations, calling them undeserved. Ramya mentioned that she submitted her grievance three months ago but, like others, has received no positive updates. She expressed disappointment, stating that the administration is failing the poor. Ramya added that they still hold hope for the Congress government to deliver on its promises in the coming year. She noted that failure to address their issues would lead to voters losing trust.

According to the officials, 126 applications were received for the panchayati raj and Rural development department, 48 for revenue department, 76 for electricity department, 2 for Pravas and 131 for other departments.

SBI mega property show kicks off

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

State Bank of India, Hyderabad Circle is organising the Biggest Mega Property Expo, a 3-day event on December 20, 21 and 22 at Hitex Exhibition Hall-4 in Hyderabad. For the last four years, SBI has been conducting this mega event, bringing together a host of prominent builders from the city on one platform. The programme was inaugurated by Rajesh Kumar, CGM, Hyderabad Circle, joined by Manju Sharma, Chief General Manager REHBU, Corporate Centre, Mumbai, General Managers Prakash Chandra Baror and Ravi Kumar Verma of Hyderabad Circle, along with other senior dignitaries from the bank.

From the Builders' fraternity, V Rajasekhara Reddy,



President CREDAI Hyderabad, and Shekar Reddy, Vice President IGBC also graced the occasion.

R Balanand, DGM, REHBU Hyderabad Circle, in his welcome address, mentioned that the confidence and trust reposed by the Builders' fraternity and customers in SBI is immense.

More than 50 top builders from the city are participating in the event. Rajesh Kumar, CGM Hyderabad Circle, in his inaugural address, welcomed all the dignitaries. He said that SBI has been awarded as the 4th most trustworthy bank globally.

Hygiene violations flagged at Gachibowli restaurants

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Task Force Team of Telangana's Commissioner of Food Safety inspected restaurants in Gachibowli and found multiple violations.

The Task Force Team inspected Berlin Restaurant and Club at Atrium Mall and found expired products, including apple cider vinegar, peanut butter, mushrooms, Chinese spice powder, sesame oil, Madras curry powder, Cajun spice, ginger powder, sweet corn, and blueberry bamboo shoots, were found in the kitchen and store and discarded.

Officials also noted the absence of water analysis reports, pest control records, medical certificates, and FoSTaC training certificates for food handlers. Unlabeled food items were stored in the refrigerator, and open dustbins were found in unhygienic conditions. Additionally, vegetarian and non-vegetarian food items were stored together, and cleaning solutions were kept near raw food materials.

Later on, The Task Force Team also inspected La Vie En Rose Cafe in Indira Nagar and found used oil possibly exceeding the permissible limit and windows/doors without insect-proof screens. The kitchen floor was slippery, and the cake preparation area had flaking paint. Some raw materials were unlabeled.

The Task Force team stated that a notice will be issued, and further action will be taken accordingly.



Task Force team inspecting a restaurant in Gachibowli on Friday



Hyderabad's Sancta Maria International School students receiving the Best Delegation Award in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Sancta Maria Students win Best Delegation Award at UNISP

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad's Sancta Maria International School won the prestigious Best Delegation Award at the first in-person International Schools Partnership Model United Nations (ISP MUN) held at Tenby International School, Setia Eco Park, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The event featured over 250 students from 70+ ISP schools worldwide. Across five days of debates, cultural exchanges, and collaboration, participants tackled global challenges and developed critical skills like leadership, diplomacy, and critical thinking.

Sancta Maria's team includes, Harnidh, Ariptra, and Sujaya mentored by Dr. Rositta Joseph and Neeraj Shankar, excelled in all aspects to secure the top honor. Individual awards included Sujaya (Excellence, COP), Harnidh (Excellence, UNHRC), and Ariptra (High Commendation, UNESCO).

The ISP MUN Malaysia 2024 also offered cultural excursions and networking opportunities, driving holistic growth.

Sancta Maria International School, Principal Hemalatha Sanjay appreciated the achievement, calling it a testament to the school's mission to nurture global leaders ready to inspire and excel.

ACROSS THE STATES



Will plant fruit saplings to tackle money menace: Sukhu

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu told the state assembly on Friday that of the total plantation done by the government in forest areas, 60 per cent will be saplings of fruit to attract monkeys to their natural habitat as a means to tackle the monkey menace. The problem of monkeys entering houses and destroying crops is not new, and farmers have reduced agricultural practices in villages due to this issue, Sukhu said. So far, 1.87 lakh monkeys, including 1,188 in the Nahan assembly constituency, have been sterilized, he said in response to a question by Congress legislator Ajay Solanki. The CM added that despite the Union government declaring monkeys as vermin and allowing their killing, religious sentiments prevailed, and the monkeys were not killed. He also expressed concern over the wildlife menace in the state. Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Anirudh Singh told the assembly that 81,928 eligible persons have been sanctioned houses under the Prime Minister Gramin Awas Yojana for 2023-24 and 2024-25.



Maha Cong to have a new chief soon: Patole

Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Friday said the party's state unit will soon have a new chief as he has asked their central leadership to relieve him of the post. Patole was speaking to reporters on the premises of the Vidhan Bhavan in Nagpur, where the Winter Session of the state legislature is underway. He said a decision on the new Maharashtra Congress chief will be taken soon. "We have authorised the party's central leadership to name the new leader," he said. Patole said he has asked the party high command to relieve him as the state Congress chief since he has been holding the post for four years. He said their legislature party leader would also be named soon. Following the Congress' worst-ever defeat in the assembly elections in Maharashtra, party sources had earlier claimed that Patole had requested the central leadership to relieve him of the responsibility of the organisational post.



'Poverty should not pose hindrance to education'

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said the state government has been implementing numerous initiatives to ensure that poverty does not hinder access to education. "We are committed to providing every student the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their financial background," Sarma said during the distribution of awards as part of the '12 Days of Development' initiative in Nagaon. The CM highlighted that government schemes for students are aimed at empowering them to become responsible citizens through education. "These initiatives are not just about providing education but about shaping the future of our youth," Sarma said. He further pointed out that nearly 150,000 youth had been provided government jobs over the past three years based on merit, ensuring that even children from underprivileged families had opportunities to succeed. "Assam is now embarking on a journey of development," Sarma declared, adding, "We are focusing on key industries such as semiconductors and making significant strides in infrastructure development, including the construction of bridges over the Brahmaputra and the establishment of medical colleges and universities in every district."

FAKE AB-PMJAY CARDS

'ED searches at hospitals led to seizure of Rs 88 lakh'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Searches conducted at some hospitals in August in connection with alleged generation of fake Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards have led to seizure of cash amounting to around Rs 88 lakh and various incriminating documents and digital devices, Lok Sabha was informed Friday. The ED conducted searches at 20 locations in a case



related to alleged generation of fake Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) cards in August, Minister of State for Health Prataprao

Jadhav said in a written reply. The locations searched included seven hospitals and their key management persons, he said.

SOCIAL MEDIA POST

India lodges strong protest with Bangla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has lodged a strong protest with Dhaka over a now-deleted social media post by a key aide of Bangladesh's interim government that claimed certain areas of Indian territory should be part of that country.

Mahfuz Alam, known for his provocative comments, had also posted on Facebook four days ago a map purportedly showing parts of West Bengal, Tripura and Assam as parts of Bangladesh. He deleted the post after it triggered backlash.

Alam is a de facto minister in the Muhammad Yunus-led interim government of Bangladesh. In strongly reacting to the post, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal on Friday reminded all concerned to be "mindful" of



their public comments.

"We have taken this up with the Bangladeshi government. We have strongly registered a protest on this issue. We understand that the post being referred to has reportedly been taken down."

"We would like to remind all concerned to be mindful of their public comments. While India has repeatedly signalled interest in fostering relations with the people and the interim government of Bangladesh, such comments underline the

need for responsibility in public articulation," he said.

The relations between India and Bangladesh are reeling under severe strain after the interim government headed by Yunus came to power in August.

Injured BJP MPs better, under observation in ICU: RML

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The health condition of two BJP MPs, who suffered head injuries in a face-off between opposition and NDA members in Parliament premises, is much better now and they remain under observation in the ICU of the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital here, authorities said on Friday.

Pratap Sarangi (69) from Odisha and Mukesh Rajput (56) from Uttar Pradesh were brought to the hospital from Parliament with head injuries on Thursday.

"Their health condition is much better now and their blood pressure levels are also under control," RML Hospital's Medical Superintendent Dr



Ajay Shukla said on Friday. "Mukesh Rajput still has little dizziness and heaviness in head. Also Sarangi has an old heart problem. He already had a stent in his heart. They are being kept under observation in the ICU and their condition

is being monitored. Treating doctors will decide further course of treatment and on when to shift them to a ward," Dr Shukla said.

Nothing significant regarding the injury has come up in the MRI and CT scans, he said.

BJP MP gifts '1984' bag to Priyanka Gandhi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Aparajita Sarangi on Friday gifted a bag with "1984" written on it in red to Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

This comes days after the Congress MP carried bags with messages on Palestine and Bangladesh written on it to Parliament.

Sarangi, the BJP MP from Bhubaneswar, gave the bag to Vadra in the corridor of Parliament. She handed the bag to the

Congress while she was walking in Parliament corridor. Vadra took the bag from Sarangi and walked on.

The bag had "1984 riots" written on it, said the BJP leader, adding this is also an issue that the Congress leader should raise as she makes statements with her tote bags.

In a show of support for the people of Palestine, the Wayanad MP had on Monday carried a bag to Parliament that had "Palestine" emblazoned on it.



Former Haryana CM Chautala dies

PNS ■ GURUGRAM

Indian National Lok Dal president and five-time Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala died here on Friday at the age of 89.

Chautala, who was former deputy prime minister Devi Lal's son, suffered a cardiac arrest at his house here and was immediately rushed to a hospital but could not be saved, a party spokesperson told PTI.

He breathed his last at around 12 noon in Medanta hospital, a senior police officer said.

Chautala, who came from a prominent political family in Haryana and was face of a prominent regional outfit, had been facing age-related health issues in the recent past.

He is survived by two sons and three daughters. His wife Sneha Lata had passed away over five years ago.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini were among a host of leaders who condoled the demise of Chautala.

REVIVAL ATTEMPTS BY NAXAL OUTFIT

NIA conducts raids in 5 states

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency on Friday searched multiple locations in five states in connection with a case relating to attempts at revival of the banned CPI (Maoist) outfit, according to an official statement.

Extensive searches were conducted at the premises of suspects at two locations in Patiala and Sri Muktsar Sahib districts of Punjab, four locations in Manesar and Gurgaon districts of Haryana, two locations in New Delhi, and one location



each in Patna district of Bihar and Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh, it said.

The suspects whose premises were searched were believed to be involved in propagating the ideology of CPI (Maoist) and the revival of its northern regional bureau wing through various frontal organisations. The searches led to the

seizure of digital devices, including mobile phones, pen drives/hard discs, laptops and memory cards, SIM cards and other incriminating documents related to Naxalism, said the statement issued by the NIA.

The searches were conducted in a case that relates to attempts by CPI (Maoist) leaders, cadres, sympathisers and over-ground workers (OGWs) to reenergise the outfit's decrepit influence in the NRB region, comprising Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh.

1984 ANTI-SIKH RIOTS

SC directs Centre to file fresh status report on trials

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed the Centre to file a fresh status report within two weeks on the status of trials in the 1984 anti-Sikh riots.

A bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Augustine George Masih asked additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati to file an affidavit and permitted the petitioners in the case to file detailed objections.

During the hearing, Bhati said recommendations of the

special investigation team, set up by the top court, were carried out.

A counsel appearing for one



of the petitioners submitted there were some glaring

instances in the SIT report and said 500 cases were clubbed in one FIR and the investigating officer could not probe them.

"There were many instances where 498 cases were clubbed in one FIR and IO had to investigate all of them. Initially when the hearing began, the court felt that it should be confined to Delhi only. But we have done nothing about other states. We have given examples of Kanpur, Bokaro, etc., nothing has happened," he said.

Indian, Vietnam Coast Guards conduct joint sea exercise

PNS ■ KOCHI

The Vietnam Coast Guard Ship CSB 8005 departed Kochi on Friday, after a successful visit strengthening the partnership between the Vietnam Coast Guard (VCG) and Indian Coast Guard (ICG), according to ICG officials.

The four-day visit was aimed to enhance maritime cooperation and interoperability between the two maritime forces, they added.

The centerpiece of the visit was a comprehensive sea exercise code named "Sahayog - Hop Tac" off Kochi, a press release issued by Coast Guard said.

Will oppose jamili elections 'tooth and nail': Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday said 'one nation, one election' was against the basic structure of the Constitution and asserted that it would oppose the idea "tooth and nail".

The opposition party also said the idea of 'one nation, one election' was anti-democratic and anti-federal.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh wondered how the government would muster the two-third majority required for a constitutional amendment when it could not even assemble 272 MPs at the time of introduction of the bills that lay down the mechanism to hold

simultaneous elections.

"It has been referred to a joint committee of Parliament. Our view is very clear, this is anti-democratic and anti-federal. It goes against the basic structure of the Constitution," Ramesh told PTI.

This government could not even muster 272 MPs at the time of introduction of the bills. How are they going to get two-third majority for amending the Constitution, he asked.

Ramesh said, "It (one nation, one election) is anti-democratic completely. It is anti-accountability, anti-democratic and anti-federal and we will oppose 'one nation, one election' tooth and nail -- lock stock and barrel."

'Worried parents on ferry planned to throw children in sea water'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The panic-stricken parents onboard an ill-fated tourist ferry were thinking of tossing their children into the sea water as a desperate measure after their boat started sinking off Mumbai, but a team of CISF marine commandos stopped them with an assurance that everyone will be saved.

CISF constable Amol Savant (36) and his two colleagues became the "first responders" after the December 18 accident. Their patrol boat reached the accident site off the Mumbai coast around 4 pm, and they decided to utilise the "golden hour" for first saving the most vulnerable, including the children.

Fourteen people were killed after a Navy boat rammed into the tourist ferry -- 'Neel Kamal' -- on way to the Elephanta Island from the Gateway of India in Mumbai late Wednesday afternoon.

"We were on routine patrol at some distance off the shore when our walkie talkie crackled to inform us that a passenger ferry was sinking. I asked the pilot (speed boat driver) to go full throttle and we reached the accident site about 3-4 kms away in no time," Savant told PTI here.

He said he was "astonished to see the accident site. But being a trained soldier, I understood what was to be done and how." "We saw people were ready to throw their children in



the ocean water thinking that they would be saved from the sinking ship. I asked them not to panic and not attempt this. We took charge of the situation

soon," said the jawan, who is posted with the CISF unit that guards the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), Navi Mumbai.

Savant said he too was "shaken initially when he reached the site but then when I saw the children hanging dangerously from whatever was left of the sinking ferry and their helpless parents, I and my colleagues just caught hold of the children and brought them in our boat."

The jawan says they rescued about 6-7 children in the first go followed by women and men. "There were many hands raised towards us, some screaming, some just requesting to save them. We don't know how many exactly but we were able to help and rescue as many as 50-60 people who were onboard that ill-fated ferry," Savant, who joined the CISF in 2010, said.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

An abhorrible practice

The SC's observation on witchcraft practices is a timely reminder that women still face humiliation under various pretexts

In a landmark observation, the Supreme Court of India recently described the victimisation of women under accusations of witchcraft as a 'blot on the constitutional spirit.' The case before the apex court, involving egregious acts of abuse and violence against women in Bihar's Champaran district, has brought the spotlight on the persistent issue of witch-hunting in the country. The court's remarks emphasise the urgent need to eradicate such practices that undermine the dignity, equality and human rights enshrined in the Constitution of India. The bench, comprising Justices CT Ravikumar and Sanjay Karol, was dealing with a petition concerning a disturbing incident that occurred in early 2020. Women were publicly assaulted, disrobed, and accused of witchcraft. One of the accused individuals, Lakhpati Devi, along with others, faced charges for these heinous acts. Reportedly there was police apathy towards the victim. The apex court expressed its shock and dismay at the brutality of the acts and the apparent indifference of the legal machinery.



Such incidents, the court observed, are a direct affront to the dignity and rights of women, particularly in rural areas where equality remains a distant goal. The court highlighted the role of superstition, patriarchy, and social control in perpetuating witch-hunting practices. It called for the eradication of these regressive beliefs, which often target vulnerable women such as widows and the elderly. Indeed, such practices stand in stark opposition to the scientific temper mandated by the Constitution. Unfortunately these are not isolated cases but are rampant in rural India. The Constitution of India guarantees justice, liberty, equality and dignity for all citizens. Practices like witch-hunting undermine these principles and perpetuate a culture of discrimination and violence against women. What is more shocking is the apathy of the government in such cases who are equal partners in crime. The court reiterated that the responsibility of investigating and adjudicating authorities is heightened in cases involving violations of human dignity. The Supreme Court also criticised the state for not challenging the High Court's non-speaking order, which granted a stay on the proceedings. The bench's observations underscore the need for a multi-pronged approach to address witch-hunting. This includes strengthening laws to explicitly criminalise witch-hunting and ensuring stringent punishment for perpetrators. Besides, promoting scientific temper and educating communities about the illegality and immorality of witch-hunting. But most important is establishing support mechanisms for survivors, including legal aid, rehabilitation, and psychological counseling. The government machinery also need to be sensitised in dealing with such cases. The Supreme Court's remarks serve as a clarion call to address the deep-seated issues of superstition and patriarchy that enable witch-hunting. The victimisation of women under such baseless allegations is not merely a social evil but a constitutional failure.

citizens. Practices like witch-hunting undermine these principles and perpetuate a culture of discrimination and violence against women. What is more shocking is the apathy of the government in such cases who are equal partners in crime. The court reiterated that the responsibility of investigating and adjudicating authorities is heightened in cases involving violations of human dignity. The Supreme Court also criticised the state for not challenging the High Court's non-speaking order, which granted a stay on the proceedings. The bench's observations underscore the need for a multi-pronged approach to address witch-hunting. This includes strengthening laws to explicitly criminalise witch-hunting and ensuring stringent punishment for perpetrators. Besides, promoting scientific temper and educating communities about the illegality and immorality of witch-hunting. But most important is establishing support mechanisms for survivors, including legal aid, rehabilitation, and psychological counseling. The government machinery also need to be sensitised in dealing with such cases. The Supreme Court's remarks serve as a clarion call to address the deep-seated issues of superstition and patriarchy that enable witch-hunting. The victimisation of women under such baseless allegations is not merely a social evil but a constitutional failure.

PICTALK



Elephants inside an enclosure at Alipore Zoological Garden in Kolkata

Revisiting the Places of Worship Act

The Places of Worship Act, 1991, was enacted to maintain the religious status of sites as of August 15, 1947 but there is misunderstandings about its purpose



PRAFULL GORADIA

How the Places of Worship Act (1991) is being dealt with at present is due to many not being aware of how and why the Act came about. Evidently, the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao (1991-96) in his heart of hearts was a staunch Hindu. He was anxious to contribute to help solving the then existing—or festering—problem at Ayodhya. Most developments that took place at the Janmasthan on December 6, 1992, spoke of Rao's silent participation in the cause of Ram Lalla.

The most clinching evidence of the Prime Minister's contribution was indicated by the facts when I left Ayodhya on that momentous day. It was 5:45 pm; all the three domes of the Babri edifice had been brought down. All the ten walls were still standing and so was the rest of the structure. Soon after we sat in our car to proceed to Lucknow, my companions and I heard on the transistor radio that the Uttar Pradesh government of then chief minister Kalyan Singh had been dismissed by the Centre, and Governor's rule imposed. That meant whatever was done thereafter was the handiwork directed by someone at the Centre. At the Centre, even the then-home secretary Madhav Godbole is on record saying that he did not know a thing about what was happening and had learnt about it only through the radio and television.

This author has not met not knows anyone who has claimed that he has seven even a photograph of the edifice walls without their domes. At 10 pm that very night, PM Narasimha Rao addressed the nation on television, wherein he assured the people of India that he would rebuild the Babri Masjid as soon as possible. This gave the impression that the entire edifice had been destroyed. The walls were tall and thick as was the style of the architecture of the 16th century. The chabutara around the walls was also solid and tall, apart from being large. Even the domes, which had been the most vulnerable part of the structure,



took selected men of the Uttar Pradesh Public Works Department (PWD) to bring them down, an endeavour that began in the morning and lasted till 4:30 pm when the last dome fell. I came to know that they were men of the PWD, from two of the five photographers whose cameras had been smashed and they beaten up and left with bleeding faces. The photographers thought they were obliging the karsevaks, whereas for government servants, being photographed would have cost them their jobs.

A lady IPS officer who was second-in-command at Ayodhya on that day, in answer to my query told me later that the police had instructions not to intervene unless lives were in danger; presumably, not property. She assured me that there were 15,000 paramilitary personnel in readiness at Faizabad, just 4 km away. Incidentally, she added there were consummate numbers of bulldozers in the nearby vicinity, along with their operators. Evidently, all these preparations were deployed to see the end of the Babri edifice over the next 60 hours. Indeed, an enormous thing to accomplish, in such a short time. All this happened under Central rule. To restate, the Kalyan Singh government was nowhere in power after 5:45



EVIDENTLY, THESE AFGHANS HAD BROUGHT SOME ARCHITECTS WITH THEM, WHO BUILT A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF BUILDINGS, INCLUDING MOSQUES

pm on December 6. It is only after being aware of these facts can one appreciate the need for the Places of Worship Act. PM Rao, being a Congressman, had to preserve his 'secular' image.

The abovementioned legislation implies how much the Rao government cared to protect the character of every place of worship as it existed on August 15, 1947. Ayodhya had to be the exception as it was then an object of litigation in the Supreme Court of India. Normally, while legislating, it is taken for granted that anything sub judice has its own rules. But Ayodhya was clearly brought under a provision of being excluded from the ambit of the Act, presumably because it was sub judice. Nevertheless, it was specifically kept out; in fact, it was a separate clause if the Act. Consequently, when being dealt with in the courts, never was Ayodhya, particularly the Janmasthan, mentioned even once in the context of the Places of Act.

The thrust of this submission is that this act need not be taken seriously. What this statement means is that a legitimate difference must be made between genuine places of worship and those edifices or structures that are the outcome of dacoity. There are edifices that were either directly con-

verted from temples to mosques like the Adhai Din Ka Jhopda, about a furlong away from Ajmer Sharif. Three temples were confined into one within 60 hours, or two-and-a-half days, so that the invader Mohammad Ghori would be able to pray there on his return from the decisive Second Battle of Tarain in 1192 AD.

There was no time to erase the Hindu structure. The pristine design has survived till this day. There are many such examples until the Lodi Dynasty conquered north India. Evidently, these Afghans had brought some architects with them, who built a significant number of buildings, including mosques.

How can the courts refuse to hear and try a case when someone petitions against daylight dacoity of a temple, which is either converted immediately like the one described above in Ajmer, or brought down and rebuilt like the Jama Masjid in Ahmedabad? Surely, dacoities can't be condoned out of hand? On the other hand, genuine cases of mosques having become victims of Hindu mischief can be kept out of the courts under the Places of Worship Act.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OPPOSITION TARGETS AMIT SHAH

Madam — The Opposition claimed Home Minister Amit Shah had insulted B.R. Ambedkar. Accusing the Congress Party of opportunism, Shah charged then-Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru with belittling Ambedkar, asserting that his resignation from the Cabinet would have no effect on the government. Shah also pointed out that when Ambedkar contested a Lok Sabha by-election in Bombay, the Congress not only fielded a candidate against him but Nehru personally campaigned to ensure Ambedkar's defeat.

Amit Shah hammered home the point about Congress singing paeans to Ambedkar only after it suffered multiple drubbings in elections, remarking the party now opportunistically chanting, "Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar... itna naam Bhagwan ka lete to janmo tak swarg mil jata." The Opposition seized upon this admittedly poorly framed sentence to accuse Shah of insulting Ambedkar. Of course, this interpretation was far from the truth. Nevertheless, Shah's clumsy construction provided the Opposition with an opportunity to embarrass him. Shah's response during Tuesday's debate was a trenchant critique of the Congress Party. This frontal assault left Congress members squirming, with only feeble attempts to counter Shah's barbs. The Congress's lip service to Ambedkar continues to find few takers.

N Sadhasiva Reddy | Bengaluru

DEBATE ON SIMULTANEOUS ELECTIONS

Madam — The proposal of holding simultaneous elections is fraught with a lack of clarity in its implementation and practicality for a country as vast and diverse as its expanse. The proposal has several loopholes, like midterm polls and the President's rule, and there is a lack of consideration for regional parties as well. Primarily, the proposal fails to address how precisely the central government plans to hold simultaneous elec-

Revamp education system



The article 'From Kothari to NEP' presents a good analysis. No doubt, there is a conscious attempt made to undermine Indian education with long-term planning to subjugate the youth to be religiously oriented instead of scientifically and technologically excellent sections. The NEP has no provision to improve the standard of education and make it globally competitive. Still, the cream churned out migrants to countries abroad in search of fabulous pack-

ages and incentivised talent recognition. Medical colleges are growing in number, but the standard suffers due to insufficient expert teaching professionals, and focus has shifted to pecuniary aspects rather than imparting knowledge. Privatisation of education has its toll in terms of knowledge and employability, besides denying the aspiring poor its accessibility. The government coming up with programmes to part with skills to graduated youth is a clear example of this fact. The avaricious private players are producing marks without knowledge and degrees without employable skills. Astrology is a subject that could be learnt by anyone at any time and anywhere but need not be a part of the curriculum in university. Therefore, there is a dire need to study the whole system and make education an objective one rather than a tool to hasten the process of communalisation.

A G Rajmohan | Rampur

tions for the nation's 96.88 crore voters at the same time, as such a gargantuan exercise will be practically challenging to execute considering India's demography. Also, conducting all the elections in the same year becomes a major federal issue because it would force current state legislatures to shorten or lengthen their terms to make the election dates coincide with the national deadline. The attempt to impose an artificial cycle of elections and restrict electoral choice compromises the spirit of democracy, which is a direct threat to the constitutional recognition of India as a democratic republic. A rushed and ill-conceived policy can produce unprecedented challenges to the polity of the nation.

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

IMPOSE BAN ON FIRECRACKERS

Madam — In the recent verdict, the Supreme Court of India, instructed the Uttar Pradesh as well as the Haryana government to impose the blanket ban on the firecrackers in order to tackle the

menace of air pollution. Today, depleting air quality is among the biggest troubles for the majority of Indian cities. But the million-dollar question is, does such a blanket ban really work to control the air pollution problem in the Indian cities? Often the things that are banned officially were black-marketed unofficially.

This is the actual reality of almost everything banned so far, be it crackers, liquor, or anything else. The extent of air pollution is so huge that even anti-pollution measures like Stage IV of GRAP failed to meet the very commitment. The behavioural changing approach is the need of the hour; more and more awareness has to be established in this regard along with more and more ecological improvement initiatives for tackling this very menace of depleting air quality. Let's us all walk the talk with respect to the circular economy and sustainable practices to improve nature in a real sense.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

The key to tackling food security and climate change

Climate-Smart Agriculture emerges as a transformative solution, combining sustainable practices with strategies to mitigate emissions and secure food systems

The demand for food is steadily increasing due to dietary changes and the growing global population. Currently, approximately 690 million people—or 8.9 per cent of the world's population—suffer from hunger. By 2050, the world will need to produce nearly 70 per cent more food to sustain an estimated 9 billion people, which makes food security an increasingly critical challenge. Climate change further exacerbates this problem, intensifying the environmental impacts of food production. Agriculture, while essential, is also a major contributor to the climate crisis, generating between 19 per cent and 29 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic losses from natural disasters are also rising globally, and the agriculture sector is particularly vulnerable. According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), disaster-affected nations experienced direct economic losses of \$2,908 billion between 1998 and 2017, with climate-related calamities accounting for 77 per cent of these losses. In recent years, the impacts



of climate change on agriculture have become more pronounced. For example, India is projected to experience up to a 9 per cent reduction in key crop yields nationwide between 2010 and 2039 due to climate change. Regional impacts could be even more severe, with potential losses of up to 35 per cent for rice, 20 per cent for wheat, 50 per cent for sorghum, 13 per cent for barley, and 60 per cent for maize.

Climate change adversely affects food production and supply chains while accelerating the degradation of already fragile ecosystems. To counter these challenges, it is imperative to adopt Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices, which aim to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture while sustainably enhancing productivity and income. CSA integrates sustainable agri-

cultural practices and rural development goals, contributing to broader objectives like better environmental management and hunger reduction, as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Climate-Smart Agriculture Practices in India:

India is actively adopting Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) practices to combat climate change's impact on agriculture. These include conservation agriculture techniques like zero-tillage to boost yields and reduce emissions, agroforestry to enhance biodiversity and resilience, and precision farming technologies such as GPS and GIS to optimise resources. Water management strategies like drip irrigation improve efficiency, while efficient livestock management boosts revenue and product quality. Solar power is increasingly used for irrigation, reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Practices such as crop diversification, rotation with legumes, and the cultivation of climate-resilient varieties enhance sustainability, while integrated pest management and crop residue management minimise chemical use and pollution, ensuring

long-term agricultural and environmental health.

Challenges to Climate-Smart Agriculture in India:

Despite its numerous benefits, the adoption of CSA practices in India faces several challenges. Climate Variability: Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and diminishing water resources threaten to lower crop productivity by 10-40 per cent by the end of the century. Rising sea levels, cyclones, and storm surges endanger agricultural lands, especially in regions like the Sundarbans, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. High Costs: Implementing CSA methods often involves significant financial investment, which can deter farmers. Policy and Regulatory Barriers: Inadequate policies and restrictive regulations hinder widespread CSA adoption. The adoption of climate-smart agriculture is no longer optional but an urgent necessity.

(The writer is Assistant Professor Agronomy, College of Agriculture & Environmental Technology, Surajmal University, Kichha, Uttarakhand; views are personal)



HIMANSHU VERMA



FIRST COLUMN

UNLOCKING LIFE'S TRUE POTENTIAL

Embracing faith, cultivating humility and awakening spiritual awareness can elevate life



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I am well and truly surprised that good people don't turn to God more actively than doing some rituals, going to a religious place participating in some festivals, etc. They probably are not realising what they are missing. God is ever so keen to take us in His team. He needs lots of us either to act as His 'nimitta' (instrument) as Arjuna was for a specific purpose or just be active mediums. Good people are best placed to be mediums for God's bounties to be given to other good people. They form the bulk of people, who support the working of the Creation. And they are amply rewarded for their 'karmas' (acts). For example, farmers are crucial for keeping humanity well-fed. Teachers are crucial for educating the masses.

Parents keep the Creation going by giving birth to children and then rearing them till they can be useful citizens. Doctors look after the health of people. Workers take the load of manual requirements of humanity. Good officers fulfil the administrative requirements of our societies. Priests enable us to be in contact with God. I can go on with policemen, shopkeepers, bankers, etc. They all benefit by doing so. Why aren't these actively pursuing a good connection with God? They can gain much more.

The first reason has to be a lack of faith due to widespread ignorance. The common man, even the educated class, is hopelessly unaware of all the benefits one can gain by taking shelter from God,



who owns everything. We get attracted to the richest, the most powerful, the very famous, etc., but ignore the real owner of all, omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent God. To top it all, God controls everything. The richest normally try to accumulate more, and many have some money to give to charity, but God has everything to give; you just have to become deserving.

The second reason has to be the overinflated ego of practically everyone. It is hard to accept that God is too big to comprehend and we are too small to accept. But that is reality. By closing our eyes like a duck we don't do ourselves any favour. And we remain sitting ducks against 'karmaphalas', which surely manifest and cause havoc in the lives of all, barring a few, who have taken shelter in God. The third reason is keeping poor company.

Who do we like to spend time with? Those who criticise one and all and who can tell jokes of the kind you know. Public image is another handicap. Only the losers turn to God. We don't have to; we will manage. Surely, this management ends in painful death only. Devotees of God and their lives on a high and are assured of better birth also. Then spiritual activities do not enthuse; they appear so childish. We would rather be grown-ups and be subservient to fellow beings, who are likely to exploit us as much as possible. So we don't get started and lose out.

This article is an open invitation to fence sitters if they chance to read it. I will cite a few amazing benefits if one does that. There will be great cleaning of the self both internally and externally. Such are the powers of spiritual activities. One will become dutiful and most likely begin to live by dharma. One will not limit oneself just to knowing spiritual truths but will also implement them in life. If a painter knows how to paint and does not paint, what is he or she likely to gain? The Creation has been designed to smoothen the lives of devotees.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Philippines: The broken promise of democracy



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

The resurgence of the Marcoses, the entrenchment of the Aquinos, and the dominance of families like the Dutertes show the enduring grip of oligarchy



The 1987 Philippine Constitution, crafted in the aftermath of the 1986 People Power Revolution, was supposed to mark the dawn of a new democratic era. The ousting of Ferdinand Marcos Sr., after decades of corruption, repression, and dynastic rule, was a victory for the Filipino people, or so they were told. Yet, the Constitution, supposedly a tool for dismantling the oppressive old order, contains a glaring, unimplemented clause: Article II, Section 26, which bans political dynasties. Nearly four decades later, this promise remains a cruel joke, the prohibition nothing more than a symbol of a nation shackled by its feudal past. Political dynasties thrive unabated, and the Philippines remains trapped in a cycle of oligarchy, where power is passed down like a family heirloom, not earned through democratic means. The rise of Corazon Aquino, the "hero" of People Power, has proven to be a double-edged sword.

While she restored democracy in name, she failed to eradicate the dynastic forces that had long plagued the country. Instead of dismantling the Marcos empire and the dynasties that thrived in its wake, Aquino's presidency paved the way for a new set of ruling families to stake their claim on the throne. The irony is staggering: Aquino, the symbol of resistance to Marcos, was unable to disarm the very forces that helped prop up the dictatorship. Her administration's failure to enact meaningful reform paved the way for the Marcos family's return to power, with Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr's rise in 2022 exposing the unyielding grip of dynastic politics, illuminating the eternal truth behind the words of José Rizal, a true revolutionary executed by the Spanish in Manila: "The Filipino is not a slave of the Spanish Government. He is a slave of his own people." The Marcoses, who plundered billions from the nation's coffers, are not the only ones to have manipulated the system to their advantage.

Under Cory Aquino, the promise of land reform was shattered, epitomised by the Mendiola Massacre of 1987, where farmers demanding land reform were gunned down. The Aquino family, despite their image as the champions of democracy, have blood on their hands, betraying the very



THE IRONY IS STAGGERING: AQUINO, THE SYMBOL OF RESISTANCE TO MARCOS, WAS UNABLE TO DISARM THE VERY FORCES THAT HELPED PROP UP THE DICTATORSHIP. HER ADMINISTRATION'S FAILURE TO ENACT MEANINGFUL REFORM PAVED THE WAY FOR THE MARCOS FAMILY'S RETURN TO POWER.

people they claim to defend. The hypocrisy of the political elite is staggering, with families like the Marcoses and the Aquinos using their histories of violence and corruption as stepping stones to further entrench their power. But the Aquino-Marcos rivalry is only the tip of the iceberg. In Mindanao, the Duterte family's hold on power predates Rodrigo Duterte's presidency, with a history of death squad killings and iron-fisted rule. As mayor of Davao City, Duterte ruled with an iron fist, silencing dissent and using extrajudicial executions to rid the streets of perceived enemies.

His presidency, marked by a brutal war on drugs that left thousands dead, further entrenched the dynastic system, where political power is synonymous with violence and impunity. Duterte's rise to the highest office in the land was not a victory for the people, but for a political family that used populist rhetoric to cloak its real agenda: maintaining a stranglehold on power.

The Macapagal-Arroyo family, meanwhile, turned corruption into an art form. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's presidency was marred by scandal after scandal—from the "Hello Garci" election fraud to the NBN-ZTE broadband deal, which saw billions in kickbacks siphoned off to the ruling elite. Despite the overwhelming evidence of corruption, she escaped any lasting accountability, a reflection of the Philippines' toxic political culture where the powerful are above the law.

Like so many others, she found ways to use the machinery of the state to protect her interests. The brutality of the Philippines' political system is not just figurative. The 2009 Maguindanao Massacre, orchestrated by the Ampatuan clan, remains the deadliest attack on journalists in history. Fifty-eight people, including 32 journalists,

were slaughtered in cold blood in a bid to eliminate electoral competition.

And yet, despite the horrific nature of the crime, justice has been slow and incomplete, as political dynasties use their influence to shield themselves from the consequences of their actions. In regions like Cebu and Ilocos Norte, political dynasties such as the Osmeñas, Garcias, and Fariñas manipulate elections and use their wealth to maintain control, treating public office as their domain. This cycle of violence and impunity, where the ruling class prioritises their interests, extends to the economic realm, with families like the villagers growing their wealth through political power. The system persists due to cultural deference to family authority, weak institutions, and pervasive poverty, with voters often coerced into supporting the very dynasties that sustain their suffering.

Foreign powers, particularly the United States, have long been complicit in this system. During the Marcos era, the US provided crucial support to a regime known for its human rights abuses, all in the name of anti-communism. This foreign patronage emboldened the Marcoses and set a dangerous precedent for other dynasties, who continued to seek validation and support from foreign powers. The interplay between domestic power struggles and international interests further deepens the fractures within the Philippines, exacerbating the country's internal divisions.

The Philippines' educational system, which fails to foster critical thinking or civic engagement, ensures that the cycle of dynastic rule will continue. Schools produce citizens ill-equipped to challenge the status quo, while the media, often co-opted by powerful families, serves to protect the interests of the elite. Social media, too, has become a tool for dynasties to spread propaganda, rehabilitate their tarnished images,

and silence critics. The current political spectacle centred around Vice President Sara Duterte's public threats against President Marcos, is a stark reminder of how fragile the Philippines' democracy truly is. The alliance between the Marcoses and the Dutertes, forged during the 2022 election, is now on the brink of collapse. What once seemed like a partnership between the North and south's ruling classes has devolved into a bitter feud, exposing the cracks in a political system built on corruption, nepotism, and violence.

This is not a battle for the people's interests, but a struggle for control between two families, each vying for supremacy in a system that has failed its citizens. This feud is not just political—it has geopolitical ramifications. Marcos' pivot towards the US and his opposition to China's claims in the South China Sea have reignited regional tensions, while Duterte's pro-China stance during his presidency deepened divides within the Filipino elite.

This divergence in foreign policy has intensified the rift between the Marcos and Duterte families, as they seek to align themselves with opposing global powers.

The Philippines, caught between these imperial rivalries, faces not only internal political decay but external pressures that threaten to destabilise the nation further. As the midterm elections approach, this dynastic battle threatens to unravel whatever semblance of governance remains. Marcos seeks to consolidate power, while Sara Duterte faces the looming threat of impeachment. Yet, the Duterte family's influence, particularly in Mindanao, ensures that this battle will not stay within the confines of parliament. The streets could erupt, worsening societal divisions.

(The writer is a journalist and a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Patent risks: Key strategies for businesses amid rising litigation costs

Businesses today must adopt proactive strategies like Freedom-to-Operate searches and patent liability insurance to mitigate risks and protect their innovations

In November 2024, a US jury ruled in favour of Netlist, a company specialising in computer memory and storage solutions, ordering Samsung to pay \$118 million in damages for willfully infringing Netlist's patented technology. This follows an earlier verdict in April 2024, where another jury found Samsung guilty of similar patent infringements, awarding \$303 million to Netlist. Together, these penalties amount to \$421 million—an extraordinary sum that could destabilise even the most established organisations. In India, the Delhi High Court recently delivered a landmark judgment favoring the plaintiff, Antenna Inc., in a patent infringement case against Mubi Antenna Technologies.



AMIT SINGH

The court issued a permanent injunction against the defendant and ordered them to pay damages of USD 26.04 million (INR 216 crores) to compensate for the plaintiff's loss of profits due to the infringement. **Protecting Intellectual Property:** A recent American survey highlights the substantial financial commitment of research-based organisations in the pharmaceutical sector. The annual R&D budget in

this industry often runs into hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars. The cost of developing a new drug ranges from \$314 million to \$4.46 billion, depending on the therapeutic area and assumptions used in data modeling. These figures emphasise the immense investments required in R&D, making intellectual property (IP) protection and preemptive strategies essential. In contrast, R&D expenditures in non-pharmaceutical sectors are generally lower. However, extensive patenting is increasingly common, posing risks for companies introducing new processes or products without adequate precautions. A company might unknowingly infringe on a competitor's patent, leading to unforeseen and costly litigation. Patent disputes can result in significant delays, financial losses, and reputational damage, even when unintentional. **Escalating Costs of Patent Litigation:** The median cost of litigating a patent lawsuit through trial ranges from \$600,000 for cases with less than \$1 million at stake to \$3.625 million for cases involving over \$25 million. Similar trends are observed in India, where litigation and settlement costs are substantial. Sometimes, defendants find themselves embroiled in patent litigation due to unintentional or inadvertent infringement. In such cases, the defendants are essentially victims, underscoring the need for safeguards to prevent unnecessary legal disputes. Tools to Mitigate Patent



Infringement Risks: Patent Liability Insurance One effective safeguard against the financial risks of unintended patent infringement is patent liability insurance. This insurance, provided by specialised firms, helps cover legal expenses and damages arising from unintentional infringement. While popular in several countries, its adoption is

steadily growing in India. **Freedom-to-Operate (FTO)** Another cost-effective tool to minimise patent infringement risks is a Freedom-to-Operate (FTO) search. This process evaluates whether a new product or process infringes on existing patents, enabling informed business decisions and reducing the likelihood of legal disputes. Many companies conduct FTO searches before initiating new R&D projects to mitigate financial and reputational risks. An FTO search involves analysing granted and pending patents to form a techno-legal opinion on whether a product, process, or service infringes existing IP rights. These searches can be conducted using free databases provided by intellectual property offices,

with directories available on the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) website. **When Patents Block Freedom to Operate** If an FTO search reveals conflicting patents, companies have several options: 1. Licensing Agreements: Companies can negotiate licensing or purchase patent rights to gain access to the necessary technology. 2. Patent Pools: Collaborative agreements among companies in the same technological field allow shared access to patents, resolving disputes and controlling costs, especially for essential products like medicines. 3. Designing Around: Companies can modify existing processes or products to avoid infringement.

Steps to Minimise Litigation Risks: Regardless of the strategy chosen, it is crucial for companies to address patent infringement risks early in the research and commercialization process. Proactive measures such as in-licensing, cross-licensing, patent pooling, and designing around can help avoid future disputes. A systematic FTO search before launching a new product is indispensable for minimizing infringement risks. While an FTO search cannot completely eliminate the possibility of litigation due to limitations in patent databases and search expertise, it significantly reduces potential threats. (The writer is deputy controller of patents and designs, Kolkata.; views are personal)

IN BRIEF



Forex reserves drop \$2 bn to \$652.86 bn

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 1.988 billion to \$652.86 billion for the week ended December 13, the RBI said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had dropped by \$3.235 billion to \$654.857 billion. The reserves have been declining for the last few weeks, and the drop has been attributed to revaluation, along with forex market interventions by the RBI to help reduce volatilities in the rupee. The forex reserves had increased to an all-time high of \$704.885 billion in September. For the week ended December 13, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by \$3.047 billion to \$562.576 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in US dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves increased by \$1.121 billion to \$68.056 billion during the week, the RBI said. The Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down by \$35 million to \$17.997 billion, the apex bank said.



Cipla faces over Rs 1 crore penalty by GST authority

Pharma major Cipla Ltd on Friday said a fine of over Rs 1 crore has been imposed on the company by GST authority for alleged inadmissible credit claim. The company has received an order dated December 18, 2024 passed by the GST authority, imposing a penalty of Rs 1,11,94,324 under applicable provisions of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, Cipla said in a regulatory filing. "The order has been passed by GST Authority on the contention that the company has availed inadmissible TRAN-1 credit. The GST Authority has ordered for recovery of the same along with applicable interest and penalty," it added. Cipla said based on assessment of facts and prevailing law, it is "of the view that the penalty levied is arbitrary and unjustified". "The company will file necessary appeals with the appellate authority in this regard."



RBI imposes Rs 27.30 lakh penalty on IndusInd Bank

A penalty of Rs 27.30 lakh has been imposed on IndusInd Bank for non-compliance with certain provisions of norms related to 'interest rate on deposits', the Reserve Bank said on Friday. The RBI had conducted a statutory inspection for supervisory evaluation of the bank with reference to its financial position as on March 31, 2023, and had issued a notice to the private sector lender. After considering the reply of IndusInd Bank to the notice, additional submissions made by it, RBI said, it found, inter alia, that the charge pertaining to opening of certain savings deposit accounts in the name of ineligible entities was sustained, warranting imposition of monetary penalty. The RBI, however, added the penalty is based on deficiencies in regulatory compliance and is not intended to pronounce upon the validity of any transactions or agreement entered into by IndusInd Bank with its customers.

Bihar gets record Rs 1.81 lakh crore investment

Mishra, whose CEO-styled governance was instrumental in pivoting the change in perception about the state as an investment destination, said the first edition of investor meet in 2023 got an investment commitment of Rs 50,300 crore. "We have today signed MoUs for over Rs 1.8 lakh crore. The numbers are still being complied and this may go up," he said. Sun Petrochemicals will invest Rs 36,700 crore in renewable energy projects including pump hydro and solar plants. Adani Group, Sun Petrochemicals and a host of other companies - big and small - on Friday committed to investing a record Rs 1.81 lakh crore in Bihar, across sectors ranging from renewable energy to cement, food processing and manufacturing. Hitherto considered laggard, the state signed investment commitments with 423 companies at its only second investor meet, Bihar Business Connect 2024. Bihar's Industries and Tourism Minister Nitish

Priority should be restoring inflation-growth balance: Das

Policy priority should be on restoring the inflation-growth balance, said Shaktikanta Das, former Reserve Bank governor, while voting for a status quo on the short-term lending rate earlier this month.

Das, and three other members of the rate-setting panel - Monetary Policy Committee -- voted in favour of keeping the repo rate at 6.25 per cent, while the other two members favoured reduction in the rate.

In its December bi-monthly monetary policy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) kept repo rate unchanged but cut the cash reserve ratio that banks are required to park with the central bank, as it did a balancing act between inflation management and supporting economic growth.

With India's GDP seeing a sharper-than-anticipated dip in the July-September period to 5.4 per cent -- its slowest pace in seven quarters -- inflation on the uptick and rupee under pressure, the RBI had few choices to make.

"The policy priority at this critical juncture has to be on restoring the inflation-growth balance. The fundamental requirement now is to bring down inflation and align it with the target," Das said as per the minutes of the December 4-6 MPC meeting released by the RBI on Friday.

It was the last meeting of the



Hopefully, this will boost companies' investment plans and improve the scope of employment-linked incentive schemes helping induce a virtual cycle of wage growth and demand

MPC under Das, who demitted office earlier this month after completing an extended six-year tenure.

Sanjay Malhotra has been appointed the RBI Governor, who will chair his first MPC meeting in February.

According to the minutes, in the overall assessment of the outgoing governor, the gains achieved so far in the broad direction of disinflation needs to be preserved, while closely monitoring the evolving outlook of both inflation and growth.

Along with Das, Saugata Bhattacharya, Rajiv Ranjan (Executive Director, RBI) and Michael Debabrata Patra (Deputy Governor, RBI) voted for status quo on interest rate.

External members Nagesh Kumar and Ram Singh, were both in favour of a 25 basis point reduction in repo rate.

As per the minutes, Nagesh Kumar said he believes that a rate cut would help reviving economic growth without worsening the inflationary situation, which may soften with

seasonal correction in prices.

Ram Singh said a rate cut will reduce costs of doing business and increase the opportunity cost of holding on to cash for firms and companies.

"Hopefully, this will boost companies' investment plans and improve the scope of employment-linked incentive schemes helping induce a virtual cycle of wage growth and demand. By tightening the labour market, it will also improve efficacy of the monetary policy," he added.

RBI Executive Director Ranjan said amidst difficult policy trade-offs, the cautious and calibrated approach has kept the economy in good stead.

"The need of the hour is to be watchful of the forthcoming data to ascertain the projected improvement in the balance between inflation and growth outlook.

"If food price pressures wane on projected lines, this would open up the policy space to normalise rates."

RBI board reviews economic situation

PNS ■ GUWAHATI

The central board of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday reviewed the global and domestic economic situation and outlook at a meeting chaired by new Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

The 612th meeting of the Central Board of Directors of the RBI also placed on record its appreciation of the valuable services rendered by Shaktikanta Das during his tenure as the governor of the central bank.

Das demitted office earlier this month after completing an extended six-year tenure.

"The Board reviewed the global and domestic economic situation and outlook, and discussed the activities of select central office departments as well as the draft report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India, 2023-24," the RBI said in a statement.

Other directors of the central board -- Satish K Marathe, Revathi Iyer, Sachin Chaturvedi, Venu Srinivasan, and Ravindra H Dholakia -- attended the meeting. Deputy governors Michael Debabrata Patra, M Rajeshwar Rao, T Rabi Sankar, and Swaminathan J also participated in the meeting.

Nagaraju Maddirala, Secretary, Department of Financial Services, also attended the meeting.

Will set up data & AI labs; onboards 8 projects for safe AI: Prasada

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government plans to set up data and AI labs in tier 2 and tier 3 cities across the country and has invited proposals from all 36 states as well as Union Territories for the same, Parliament was informed on Friday.

Minister of state for electronics and IT Jitendra Prasada in a written reply to Rajya Sabha said that besides proposals expected from states and UTs, IndiaAI in collaboration with NIELIT also plans to establish 27 data labs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across the country.



"All the 36 states and Union Territories (UTs) have been requested to submit their nominated list of Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)/Polytechnics located in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities for the setting up of data labs. Additionally, IndiaAI in collaboration with NIELIT plans to establish 27 data labs in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities across the country," Prasada said.

The data and AI labs are part of the skilling initiative of the government under IndiaAI mission.

Ranking Framework (NIRF) ranked research institutes have been asked to take new PhD scholars under IndiaAI PhD fellowship," he said.

On steps being taken by the government for creation of safe and trusted AI, the minister said that eight responsible AI projects have been selected to address the need for robust guardrails to ensure the responsible development, deployment, and adoption of AI technologies.

According to the list shared by Prasada, the selected projects include Machine Unlearning from IIT Jodhpur, Synthetic Data Generation from IIT Roorkee, AI Bias Mitigation Strategy from National Institute of Technology Raipur, AI Ethical Certification Framework from IIT Delhi and Telecommunication Engineering Center (TEC), among others

Bears tighten grip on markets; Sensex tanks 1,176 points

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty plunged about 1.5 per cent on Friday, taking their downtrend to the fifth straight session, due to risk aversion in the global markets after the hawkish stance of the US Federal Reserve.

In contrast, JSW Steel, Nestle and Titan were the biggest laggards. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower.

Equity markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory. Wall Street ended on a mixed note on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 4,224.92 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.96 per cent to USD 72.18 a barrel.

Falling for the fourth day running, the 30-share BSE benchmark tanked 964.15 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 79,218.05 on Thursday. The Nifty tumbled 247.15 points or 1.02 per cent to sink below the 24,000 mark at 23,951.70

Bajaj Auto launches new series of Chetak e-scooter

PNS ■ PUNE

Bajaj Auto launched a new series of its Chetak brand of electric scooter and said it may commence e-scooter exports next fiscal.

The company also announced that Chetak e-scooter has become market leader with 27.6 per cent market share.

The new '35 series' comprises three variants -- 3501, 3502 and 3503 -- with the first two variants priced at Rs 1.27 lakh and Rs 1.20 lakh (ex-showroom Bengaluru), respectively. Deliveries of 3501 are expected to begin in late December, and 3502 in January, the company said adding the price of the third variant will be announced later.

"Dozen markets we are targeting in different continents. We will start with the 35 series," Bajaj Auto Executive Director Rakesh Sharma said during an interaction.

UltraTech Cement to acquire majority stake in India Cements

Gets CCI's clearance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Friday cleared billionaire Kumar Mangalam Birla-promoted UltraTech Cement's proposal to acquire a majority stake in India Cements.

The proposed combination envisages UltraTech Cement Ltd's (UltraTech/acquirer) acquisition of 32.72 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of India Cements Ltd (India Cements/target) from the promoters and members of the promoter group of India Cements and Sri Saradha Logistics Pvt Ltd, CCI said in a release.

The fair trade regulator also granted its clearance to UltraTech Cement to acquire up to 26 per cent of the paid-up equity share capital of India Cements by way of an open offer, it added.

UltraTech is engaged in the business of manufacturing and



sales of grey cement, white cement, ready-mix concrete, clinker, and building products in India.

It is a subsidiary of Grasim Industries Ltd, while India Cements operates core and non-core businesses. The core business of India Cements is the manufacturing and sales of grey cement and ready-mix concrete. "Competition Commission of India (CCI) approves UltraTech Cement Ltd's acquisition of The India Cements Ltd," the competition watchdog said.

The deals beyond a certain threshold require approval from the regulator, which keeps a tab on unfair business practices and promotes fair competition in the marketplace. In July this year, UltraTech Cement announced the acquisition of a 32.72 per cent stake in India Cements from promoters and their associates in a Rs 3,954 deal in a move to expand its footprint in the highly competitive and fast-growing southern cement market, particularly Tamil Nadu.

'Green steel taxonomy to push adoption of decarbonisation measures'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government's push towards green steel (metal produced through sustainable process) will encourage the adoption of decarbonisation initiatives by the steel industry and help increase the use of scrap as raw material, experts said.

The government last week rolled out the definition of green steel with an aim to encourage the industry to bring down carbon emissions.

Union Steel Minister H D

Kumaraswamy released a 'taxonomy on green steel' with parameters for giving star ratings on products based on the amount of carbon dioxide (CO2) emitted during the production process.

The industry experts hailed the move, saying the green steel taxonomy will help the sector become more competitive globally and increase exports.

"Not only will this propel the decarbonisation initiatives of the industry but would also clearly picture the competitiveness of Indian



steel," said Amarendu Prakash, Chair, FICCI Steel Committee & Chairman.

The star-rated green steel will help all stakeholders in

identifying the sustainability features and provide opportunities for increasing steel exports, said Prakash, who is also the Chairman of Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL).

Ritabrata Ghosh, Vice President & Sector Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said some of the measures steel mills are adopting to reduce their carbon footprint include transition to green power, reducing fuel cost by partly replacing coke with alternative fuels like hydrogen and coal bed methane, and increasing the use of scrap.

Adani, Sun Petchem big draws



which is the largest private investor in the state, committed to investing about Rs 28,000 crore in setting up a ultra super critical thermal power plant as well as expanding cement production capacity, food processing and logistics businesses.

NTPC Green, the renewable energy arm of the state-owned electricity generating giant, committed to investing Rs 10,000 crore in clean energy projects. SJVN, formerly known as Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam, committed a similar amount for pump storage projects. Construction and engi-

neering major Ashoka Buildcon promised an investment of Rs 9,000 crore in setting up a green hydrogen unit in the state.

NHPC, India's largest hydroelectric producer, committed an investment of Rs 5,500 crore in setting up 1,000 MW solar project while SLMG Beverages (a bottler for Coca-Cola) committed Rs 3,000 crore, Shree Cements Rs 800 crore and Haldipr Snacks Pvt Ltd Rs 300 crore.

Tata group, though not signed up any investment commitment, has pledged to skill workforce in the state.

Gold dips to Rs 78,130 per 10 gm

Silver plunges Rs 1,850

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices extended the slide for the third straight session and fell Rs 170 to Rs 78,130 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid selling by jewellers and stockists, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity ended at Rs 78,300 per 10 grams on Thursday.

Silver prices plunged Rs 1,850 to Rs 88,150 per kg due to reduced offtake by industrial units and coin makers. The white metal closed at Rs 90,000 per kg in the previous session.

The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity went lower by Rs 170 to Rs 77,730 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 77,900 per 10 grams.

Traders attributed the fall in

yellow metal prices to lacklustre demand from local jewellers.

In futures trade on the MCX, gold contracts for February delivery rose Rs 50 or 0.07 per cent to trade at Rs 75,701 per 10 grams on Friday.

"Gold witnessed minor buying as the USD 2,600-level on Comex acted as a temporary support, alongside Rs 75,500 in the domestic MCX market. The momentum remains volatile due to uncertainties surrounding the interest rate cycle. "Although the Fed decided to keep rates lower, its projections indicated fewer rate cuts going forward, which has maintained pressure on gold prices for the past two days," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst of Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

Government of Telangana Roads & Buildings Department Procurement Notice. Details of tender for roofing work at R&B Office roof in Hyderabad. Includes dates and contact information for the Executive Engineer (R&B).

Shilpa Chakraborty: Hyderabad is not just where I live, it's where I thrive

TEJAL SINHA
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Hyderabad is a city that effortlessly blends tradition and modernity, making it a place like no other. Its rich cultural heritage, reflected in the majestic Charminar and sprawling Chowmahalla Palace, coexists with its thriving IT hubs and bustling urban lifestyle. What makes Hyderabad truly special, however, is its people—their warmth, hospitality and resilience create an atmosphere of belonging for anyone who steps into the city. The aroma of iconic biryani wafting through old bazaars, the serene beauty of Hussain Sagar Lake and the vibrant festivals celebrated with unity add to its undeniable charm. Hyderabad isn't just a city; it's an emotion—a harmonious blend of history, culture and progress that invites you to fall in love with it every day.

For the celebrated anchor Shilpa Chakraborty, Hyderabad is not just a city; it is home, a sanctuary of love, warmth and opportunities. In a candid conversation, she delves into her journey of embracing Hyderabad as her own, the transformations she has witnessed over the years and the deep connection she feels with the people, culture and charm of the city.

Shilpa's association with Hyderabad began during her formative years. Her parents, both working in the Indian Railways, were frequently transferred, and Hyderabad became their final destination when Shilpa was in the 6th standard. She recalls the moment vividly. "My father was transferred here first, followed by my mother. At that time, my brother was preparing for his board exams, so settling down here made sense for the family," she shares. Since the early 1990s, Hyderabad has been her permanent home.

Though originally from Kolkata, Shilpa doesn't identify as a Bengali and feels more connected to Hyderabad than her native city. "Whenever I visit Kolkata, I love being with my people and my house there. But the warmth and hospitality I receive in Hyderabad are unmatched," she reflects. For Shilpa, Hyderabad is not just where she lives—it is where she thrives.

The sense of belonging Shilpa has cultivated in Hyderabad stems from her close connections with the city's people. "Being around people who know you and like you makes all the difference. I have built lifelong friendships here, especially since I've been here since my schooling days. My deepest relationships and strongest bonds are from Hyderabad," she says with pride.

When asked about the differences between Hyderabad and Kolkata, Shilpa points to the city's cleanliness and its

evolving cosmopolitan vibe. "Hyderabad is very clean compared to Kolkata. Over the years, it has developed a metropolitan culture with people from different states making it their home. This change has brought a sense of dynamism to the city," she notes. Despite this, her love for Hyderabad has only grown stronger.

She acknowledges the changes Hyderabad has undergone over the years. She fondly remembers the peaceful roads and pleasant weather of the 1990s. "The roads were much less crowded and the climate was consistently pleasant throughout the year. Now, traffic is everywhere, and the city is much busier," she observes. Despite these challenges, she believes Hyderabad still retains its charm.

Professionally, Hyderabad played a pivotal role in Shilpa's career as she transitioned into the Telugu media industry as a Bengali. Learning Telugu was one of the biggest challenges she faced, but the city and its people were incredibly supportive. "Hyderabadis were very helpful. They taught me the language, corrected my mistakes and accepted me with all my flaws," she recounts. Today, she speaks fluent Telugu and attributes her success to the encouragement she received from the community.

Her love for Hyderabad is also deeply personal. It is where she found her life partner, a Telugu and where she embraced the local culture wholeheartedly. "I adore Telugu cuisine. Being married into a Telugu family, I've learned to cook traditional dishes and appreciate the unique flavours of South Indian food. Beyond that, I admire the people here. They may fight or argue, but they move on quickly and maintain their relationships. That's a beautiful attitude," she shares.

However, there are aspects of the city she finds challenging, particularly the traffic congestion. "The traffic demotivates me to step out at times, especially during working hours," she admits. Despite this, her love for Hyderabad remains unwavering.

For Shilpa, Hyderabad is much more than a city—it is the foundation of her life. "I had opportunities to move to the US or settle in Kolkata, but I refused. Hyderabad is my home. I had my children here, built my career here, and created a life I love. This city means everything to me," she says with conviction.

As she reflects on her journey, her deep bond with Hyderabad shines through. It is a city that welcomed her with open arms, nurtured her dreams, and gave her a sense of belonging that no other place could. For her, Hyderabad is not just a place on the map—it is a testament to a life well-lived, full of love, warmth and endless possibilities.

From her early years to her successful career in the Telugu media industry, celebrated anchor Shilpa Chakraborty, in an exclusive chat with *The Pioneer*, opens up about her profound connection to Hyderabad, how Hyderabad has shaped her journey, offering warmth, opportunities and more



Reviving traditional designs in today's interiors

In an era where minimalism has become too mainstream, homeowners and women who are often vested with the responsibility to revamp their homes are not hesitating to be different from the rest and choose designs that celebrate their distinct and beautifully subtle choices. Today, homeowners are looking for opportunities to share their individuality and turning back to the roots of traditional Indian art and craft, could be one of many ways to do that. These intricate and timeless designs, born out of centuries of culture, craftsmanship and heritage, are seeing a remarkable resurgence in contemporary spaces. Today, as the lines blur between tradition and innovation, these heritage-inspired designs which extend as an ode to India's rich art and tradition — are proving their relevance and timeless appeal, creating interiors that feel personal, meaningful, and deeply connected to the past.

Taking design cues from grand maharaja palaces

Indian palaces, with their tales of royalty and splendor, remain one of the most celebrated sources of inspiration for interior design. Their architectural brilliance, filled with intricate arches, detailed motifs and luxurious ornamentation, continues to inspire modern aesthetics. But what sets this influence apart today is the ability to reinterpret such grandeur for contemporary spaces. Designs like Gajamudra, Vasantha and Sanskriti exemplify this balance beautifully. Take Gajamudra, inspired by the royal elephant, a timeless emblem of strength and grace in Indian heritage. Its subtle finish exudes understated sophistication. Vasantha captures the lush beauty of palace gardens, infusing interiors with a serene, nature-inspired elegance. Sanskriti celebrates intricate cultural motifs from historic palaces, reimagined in versatile hues for contemporary spaces. Together, these designs blend regal grandeur with modern refinement.

Imbibing the elegance of chikankari

On the other end of the spectrum lies the subtle elegance of Chikankari embroidery. This delicate craft, native to India, has long been celebrated for its finesse and intricacy. In the context of interiors, Chikankari-inspired patterns add depth, texture, and a sense of quiet sophistication to spaces. Designs like Alankrit, Karnika, and Jharokha bring this artistry to life, transforming walls, cabinets, and furniture into understated masterpieces. Alankrit draws from the intricate charm of hand-embroidered fabrics,

with its linen-like finish adding soft, subtle texture. Karnika, inspired by traditional Indian earrings, brings grace and poise to modern designs. Jharokha reflects the grand arches of Indian havelis, adding timeless architectural elegance. These patterns beautifully balance tradition and modernity, enhancing interiors with understated sophistication. Perfect for those who favor quiet elegance, Chikankari-inspired designs seamlessly blend charm and restraint.

Ikkat stands out from the rest

For the bold and adventurous, few Indian art forms match the vibrancy and dynamism of Ikkat. Known for its striking patterns and lively color palette, Ikkat has long been a symbol of artisanal craftsmanship. Today, this iconic weaving technique has been reimagined in modern materials, making it accessible and adaptable to contemporary interiors.

Jhoomar reflects the timeless charm of traditional Ikkat with a finish that exudes depth and elegance. Sutra celebrates the intricate threadwork of Ikkat, while Taranga evokes the calming flow of ocean waves. Tarang Pushp blends the grace of blooming flowers with the rhythmic beauty of waves, offering a perfect balance of heritage and modernity. Bringing traditional Indian art into modern interiors isn't merely about aesthetics. It's about creating spaces that resonate with emotion, identity, and history. These heritage-inspired designs tell stories. They evoke memories of family homes, festivals and cherished moments while connecting us to the larger cultural possibilities of India.

End Note

Moreover, as sustainability becomes an integral part of interior design, these traditional influences carry an inherent value. They remind us of the importance of craftsmanship, the beauty of handmade work and the need to preserve these art forms for future generations. Through incorporating traditional designs into modern spaces, we're not only honoring our heritage but also supporting the artisans and craftspeople who keep these traditions alive. Ultimately, the revival of traditional Indian designs in today's interiors is about more than just decoration. It's about creating homes that feel authentic, meaningful, and connected to something larger than ourselves. These designs offer a way to celebrate our heritage while welcoming the future. And in doing so, they remind us that while styles may change, the beauty of tradition is truly timeless.

(The author, Manoj Lohia, is the Director, is Merino Industries Ltd.)



Actresses who conquered global stage this year

In 2024, Indian actresses transcended borders, showcasing their talent and charm on international platforms. From cinema to fashion and global collaborations, these women proved their mettle and made India proud.

DEEPIKA PADUKONE

Deepika continued to break barriers as she became the first Indian to present at the BAFTAs, marking a historic moment. She was recognised as the only Indian Disruptor on Deadline Hollywood Disruptor's prestigious list, solidifying her position as a global trailblazer. With her films dominating the global box office, Deepika cemented her position as the reigning queen of cinema!



collaboration with YouTube star MrBeast highlighted her widespread appeal and influence. She is the first Indian actress to collaborate with Van Damme and MrBeast.

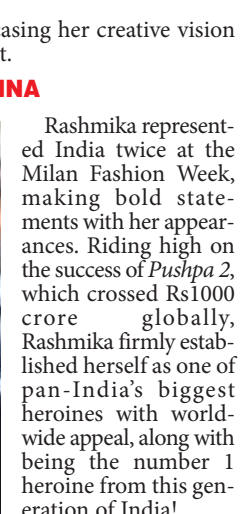
KRITI SANON

Kriti also shone brightly on the global stage. She turned heads at the F1 Silverstone event and dazzled at the London Fashion Week, earning accolades for her impeccable style. As the brand ambassador for Pepe Jeans, Kriti strengthened her presence in the fashion world. Her co-production *Do Patti* became a global trendsetter, showcasing her creative vision and entrepreneurial spirit.



RASHMIKA MANDANNA

Rashmika represented India twice at the Milan Fashion Week, making bold statements with her appearances. Riding high on the success of *Pushpa 2*, which crossed Rs1000 crore globally, Rashmika firmly established herself as one of pan-India's biggest heroines with worldwide appeal, along with being the number 1 heroine from this generation of India!



SHRADDHA KAPOOR

Shraddha Kapoor added to her international achievements by representing India at the prestigious Abu Dhabi Grand Prix, an event known for attracting global icons from entertainment, fashion and sports. She also made a stunning appearance at the Red Sea International Film Festival. Back home, Shraddha celebrated the blockbuster success of *Stree 2*, further cementing her position as one of Bollywood's most beloved stars.



SOBHITA DHULIPALA

Sobhita Dhulipala had a standout year with her Hollywood debut in Dev Patel's directorial venture, *Monkey Man*. Playing the leading lady opposite Sikander Kher in this high-octane action drama, she left a mark with her powerful performance. Adding to the celebrations, Sobhita tied the knot with actor Naga Chaitanya in a beautiful cere-



mony this December, making headlines for her traditional wedding. Also, she attended the 77th Cannes Film Festival in 2024 as a representative of Magnum India, an ice cream brand. She made a dazzling appearance to the red carpet.

ADITI RAO HYDARI

At the 77th Cannes Film Festival, Aditi Rao Hydari served glamorous looks, which turned heads at the French Riviera. After leaving us in awe of her performance as Bibbojan in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's web series *Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*, actor Aditi Rao Hydari returned to France for her third year at the Cannes Film Festival. As expected, she slayed yet again like a total diva.



in her career. Tabu's inclusion in such a high-profile project underscores her global appeal.

ANUSHKA SEN

Anushka emerged as a global youth icon in 2024. She performed live at Times Square, becoming the first Indian to do so. Anushka also rang the bell at South Korea's New Year ceremony and featured on South Korean billboards, earning her widespread recognition. Her collaboration with Korean Olympic shooter Kim Ye-ji added another feather to her cap, showcasing her dynamic global appeal.



BANITA SANDHU

Banita Sandhu, known for her previous work in Bollywood, is now making waves in the international TV scene with her role in *Bridgerton season 3*. The hit Netflix series, known for its witty, contemporary take on romance, features Sandhu as a bold, modern character, earning her international fans and acclaim.



JACQUELINE FERNANDEZ

Jacqueline Fernandez had a remarkable year, starring alongside Jean-Claude Van Damme in *Kill'em 2*, which garnered international acclaim. Her song *Stormrider* became a global sensation, earning her praise for her versatility. Additionally, her much-talked-about



what's brewing?



Vivo announced the launch of its X200 series, in Telugu States. This new series was launched by South Indian Actress Samyuktha Menon at Park Hyatt, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad.



PARTY

Photos by- SV Chary



The first-ever Democratic Sangha Change Maker Awards, presented by the Race2Win Foundation, was held at the Taj Falaknuma Palace in Hyderabad on Thursday. The event marked a significant milestone in recognising individuals and organisations driving meaningful social change across India.



FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) celebrated World Saree Day at Hotel Leela in Banjara Hills. To mark the occasion and celebrate the same, FLO organised a talk "The Saree- Six Yards of Sustainable Heritage", in the presence of dignitaries including Sanjay Garg, founder of Raw Mango and Priya Gazdar, Chairperson of FLO Hyderabad.



BLOCKBUSTER 2K24 OF ENTERTAINMENT!

As 2024 draws to a close, BookMyShow unveiled #BookMyShowThrowback, a look back at a year that has been nothing short of transformative for entertainment in India. From iconic cinematic experiences to electrifying live events and a surge in on-demand streaming, this was the year India truly lived its entertainment dreams - and then some, a testament to the evolving and insatiable appetite of Indian audiences for all things entertainment.

Leading the cinematic charge was *Pushpa 2: The Rule*, a film that redefined Indian storytelling, becoming the most-watched movie of the year and drawing in 10.8 lakh solo viewers. Nostalgia took center stage with re-releases like *Kai Ho Na Ho*, *Rockstar* and *Laila Majnu*, turned theatres into time machines for fans revisiting beloved classics. Meanwhile, international blockbusters like *Deadpool & Wolverine* and *Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire* set screens ablaze



with high-octane excitement. The passion of India's moviegoers was unmatched, with one cinephile setting a jaw-dropping record of watching 221 movies.

The year began with Nick Jonas and the Jonas Brothers captivating India at Lollapalooza India 2024, a debut met with deafening chants of "Jiju, Jiju".

Ed Sheeran and Diljit Dosanjh's collaboration became the talk of the nation, setting new records and raising the bar for global-meets-local performances. Maroon 5 made waves by filling arenas on a Tuesday evening, proving that weekday concerts can be just as electric. The year crescendoed with Avenged Sevenfold and Extreme delivering unforgettable performances at Bandland 2024 that had fans headbanging into 2025. Music tourism surged, becoming one of the defining trends of the year.

Coldplay's Music Of The Spheres World Tour in India saw fans from over 500 cities and 28 States, proved a democratisation of entertainment access across the country. This wasn't just a year of big names and grand stages - it was a year where storytelling triumphed in every form. Small-budget films like *Manjummel Boys*, *Aavesham*, *Lapaata Ladies* and *Merry Christmas* proved that authentic narratives resonate deeply, regardless of scale. Comedy, art and immersive experiences

found steady audiences, with Nykaaland 2024, Van Gogh 360 and family-friendly gems like Peppa Pig's Adventure! Live offering something for everyone. Global hits like *Dune: Part Two* stood shoulder-to-shoulder with regional gems like *Dhoomam* and *Aazam*, showing how diverse storytelling continues to shape viewer preferences. Audiences weren't just attending events or streaming movies - they were living and breathing entertainment.

FUN

ARCHIE



CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



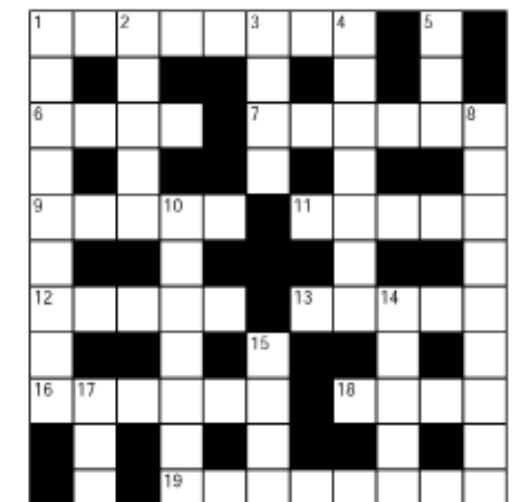
REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



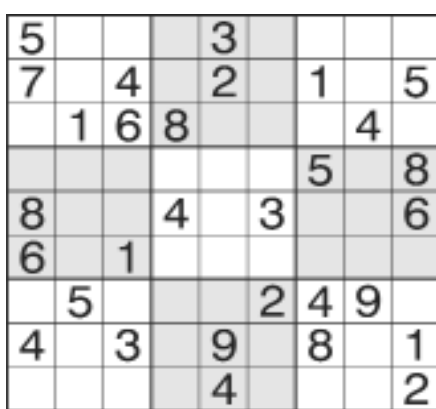
CROSSWORD



NANCY



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution

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

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.

ACROSS

- Errors
- Repulsive to look at
- Baby cows
- Bite with these
- Find this in a swimming pool
- A topping for cakes
- Put water in this for washing your hands and face
- Least dangerous
- Enormous
- Without any bends

DOWN

- Alps
- Work out the answer to
- Strike with the foot

- A dried grape used in baking
- Tell a fib
- Most powerful
- Holes in hills for trains
- Hurt by a wasp
- Very famous actor
- Enquire



GINGER MEGGS



DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Subbu Mangadevi delivered a complete dud with *Bachchala Malli*

SURESH KAVIRAYANI

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Allari Naresh, known for his comedic films, has been experimenting with different genres in recent times. Following the success of *Naandi*, *Itlu Maredumilli*, *Prajaneekam* and *Ugram*, he is now set to star in *Bachchala Malli*. The trailer promises an interesting and action-packed ride, featuring Allari Naresh in a rugged avatar.

According to the producer, just as *Rangasthalam* catapulted Ram Charan's career to new heights, *Bachchala Malli* is expected to do the same for Allari Naresh. Amritha Aiyer plays the female lead, while Subbu Mangadevi directs the film.

Story:

Bachchala Malli (Allari Naresh) is a bright student and loves his father (Kota Jayaram). One of his father's decisions hurts Malli and a good boy becomes a bad boy with several bad habits and alcoholism. Discontinuing his studies, Malli takes his tractor and gets involved in unnecessary fights every day. Kaveri (Amritha Aiyer), enters Malli's life and he slowly changes back to a good person. But an incident makes him angry and he is back to his bad habits. What is that incident? The village president Ganapathi Raju (Achyuth Kumar) is

holding all the gunny bag business in that area, but due to some differences with Malli, he is planning something against malli? What happened between Raju and Malli, Did Kaveri marry Malli? If you want to know the answers, you have to watch the movie *Bachchala Malli* movie.

Analysis:

Director Subbu Mangadevi made his debut with *Solo Brathuke So Better* which was a decent hit. Now, he directed *Bachchala Malli* with Naresh as the lead. He said in his interviews that the story is inspired by a real character of *Bachchala Malli*, but he wrote a complete fiction story. When the promotion videos of this film were released, many compared Naresh's character with Pushpa. But those are completely different except for one similarity.

In *Pushpa*, the protagonist is the son of a father's second wife; the first wife's family didn't recognise him as their family. In this movie, the protagonist Malli's father chooses his second wife, and abandons Malli and his mother. From then onwards, he hated his father and the hatred became overboard that he didn't want to tell his father's name.

On paper, director Subbu wrote a good story, but when it comes to the narration on the big screen, he concentrates only on Malli's characterisation. More than that he showed character over stupidity which makes me think

that a character like Malli lives in this world? On the other side the director is showing the father is very positive and despite his son's hatred towards him, he loves his son. Somewhere, after some-time, the son should realise, but in this film the realization came only in the climax, but till then the narration, story goes normal and nothing interesting.

Director showed Malli as a very bright student and stood school first and also loved his father. There are a few scenes where the boy showed some maturity when someone scolded his father. And then suddenly, the boy didn't think a second about his father's gesture and the next minute he decided to hate his father, which may not be agreeable. There is no story to tell with the narration as scene wise. Malli is involved in some fighting or some other issue and the director completely concentrates only on him.

A college girl falls in love with Malli, who always drinks, fights with others with his stupidity, is another reason to not believe this film. The lead pair romantic thread is not coming up nicely. A girl is very close to Malli and called him

chinnanna (uncle), but their bond wasn't established properly. Rao Ramesh is one of the finest actors we have and his character was reduced to two scenes in the first half. If he is not there in the cli-

max, the film is a total waste. Director should establish other characters like Rao Ramesh, Hari Teja, Rohini along with Naresh. Achyuth Kumar's role is a big waste.

Above all, these kind of stories are not new in Telugu cinema. When the director said that he has taken the story from a real person, many thought something special in this, but no new thing, as the story goes completely flat. In the end, you don't get sympathy or anger for the protagonist or the female lead. There is a lack of emotional scenes in the film.

Performances

When it comes to the performance, Naresh shows his sincerity to play this character. He did his job perfectly, but his looks are not matching his characterization. Amritha Aiyer showcases some good performances and she actually did a neat job. She is charming and beautiful. Though Rao Ramesh's role is small, in the climax scenes, he is the best, especially the emotional scenes. He along with Naresh scenes are the only interesting ones in the film. Hari Teja gets a meaty role and she justifies it. Rohini, Kota Jayaram played as parents and they are very adequate. Praveen, Viva Harsha all supported well. Achyuth Kumar's role is not noticed.

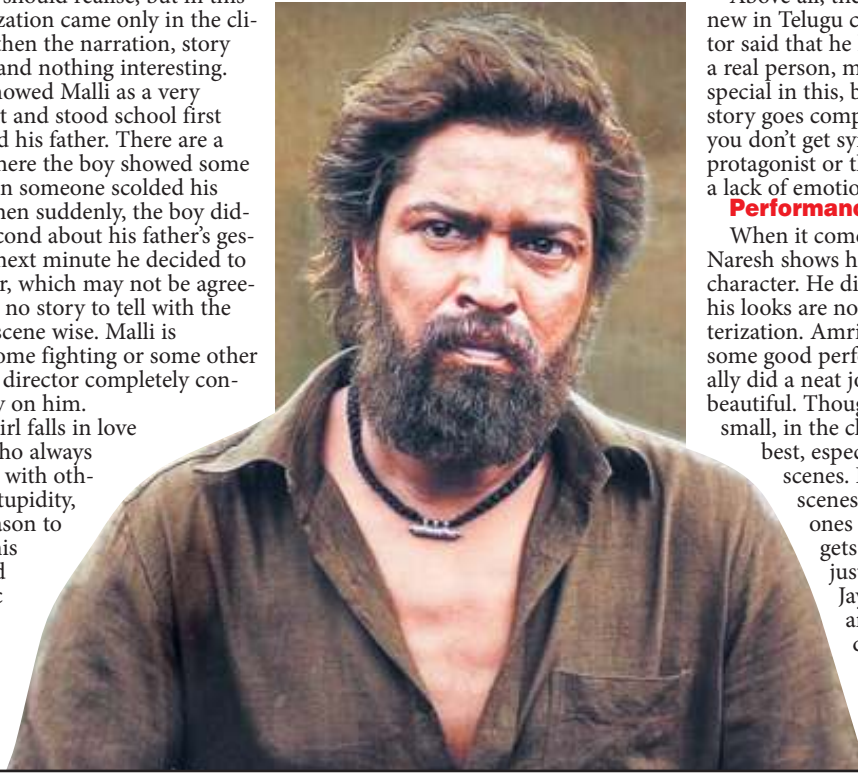
Technical aspect

The cinematography is good and also the music is not up to the mark. Here and there the dialogues are good and connected.

Verdict:

Finally, in *Bachchala Malli* the story is written inspired by a real person, but when you watch it on the screen, you don't feel it as real. Does any person behave with that much stupidity? This question arises when we are watching this film. There are no emotional connections except the climax. Naresh's character didn't get either sympathy or anger or anything, because there is a lack of depth in it. You can make a good emotional family story with the characters in the film, but in the end, *Bachchala Malli* became a complete dud.

Cast: Allari Naresh, Amritha Aiyer, Rohini, Rao Ramesh, Kota Jayaram, Achyuth Kumar, Hari Teja, Praveen, Ankit Koyya and others
Music: Vishal Chandrasekar
Cinematography: Richard M Nathan
Producers: Razes Danda, Balaji Gutta
Director: Subbu Mangadevi
Rating: 2



HAS MOHAN BABU ACTUALLY DISAPPEARED?

There are reports that senior actor Mohan Babu left India and reached Dubai and some reported he is hiding in Tirupathi. The veteran actor is in the news for his family disputes and on the other hand he assaulted an electronic media reporter with a mike. An Attempted murder case was filed against him and the actor is also in a legal plea to get a bail.

Whatever the proceedings, Mohan Babu has not appeared in front of Police in Hyderabad till now. Whether the actor is hiding somewhere, or he is at his home in Tirupathi, no one knows. On the other

hand, the actor is quite busy on his social media. Mohan Babu is talking about his old films and some of them are classics and blockbusters. Almost every day he is talking about each of his films and posting a clip from the film and writing about it. Mohan Babu is known for his dialogues and is called 'Dialogue King' and 'Collection King'.

On Friday, he posted about his film *Patnam Vachina Pativrathalu* which was released in 1982. He played lead actor along with Mega Star Chiranjeevi in this one directed by Moulee. He said that this

film is one of the most unforgettable ones for him. "*Patnam Vachina Pativrathalu* (1982) holds a special place in my journey. Directed by the talented Sri Moulee, I truly cherished portraying my role, especially sharing the screen with my dear friend, Sri. Chiranjeevi, as brothers. This movie remains one of the most unforgettable films for me (sic)," said Mohan Babu.

While his disappearance is reported on one side, on the other side, he is posting about his films continuously on his social media.

Aishwarya clarifies 'no similarities' b/w Arjun Reddy & Drinker Sai

Another actress from North, Aishwarya Sharma is making her debut with *Drinker Sai* film opposite Dharma. Kiran Tirumalasetty is the director and the film is releasing on December 27. Ahead of the film's release, Aishwarya talks about her debut and the film. "I play a medical student Baghi in this film," said Aishwarya. She added that when she heard this story, she felt her character is very strong. "It was quite challenging as an actress, but I was excited to take it on. I auditioned for this film by performing a few scenes and they liked it and then were taken into this project," she said.

Talking about her background, Aishwarya's father is a stage actor. "May be his influence has affected me unconsciously. Since childhood, I wanted to become an artist," she said. Initially, she wanted to be a dancer and a singer. "After completing my 12th grade, I moved to Mumbai from Jammu and enrolled in an acting course. Upon finishing the course, I started giving auditions. I had only appeared in advertisements," she said.

Acting in a Telugu film is difficult because of the language. "Sometimes, I didn't fully understand what I was saying, that was the only challenge I faced during the shooting," she said. Her co-actor Dharma is very supportive especially when it comes to delivering the dialogues in Telugu, she added.

"I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to be a part of this project. The film also conveys some meaningful messages," she said. Talking about her role, she said her character will appear innocent but also tough, strict, and somewhat rebellious. "There are some fun elements in my character," she said.

The actress said that *Drinker Sai* and *Arjun Reddy* are completely different. "Arjun Reddy portrays a classy version of a drinker, whereas our Sai is a more mass-oriented character," she said. The actress said that her family members mostly watch South Indian films, including Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada. "I am very happy to be a part of such an industry," she said and adding that Dhanush is her favourite actor. "I recently watched *Lucky Baskhar*," said Aishwarya.



Aadi Saikumar in action mode

Aadi Sai Kumar is now choosing his scripts carefully. He has now started shooting; one such film, set in a mystical world, is *Shambala*. He is making sure every movie is dissimilar from the other. He is playing a geo-scientist in this film, which he felt is a challenging one. He started shooting for this film in RFC.

Directed by Ugandhar Muni, who gained recognition for his distinctive film *A (Ad Infinitum)*, *Shambala* will follow a unique tone and world, much like his debut film. Archana Iyer is the female lead opposite Aadi Saikumar. Swasika, who is part of

#Suriya45, is also playing a key role.

This supernatural horror thriller will present a storyline that has never been explored on Indian screens before. Ugandhar Muni, who trained in film making at the New York Film Academy, is making *Shambala* with high technical standards and grand visuals. Rajasekhar Annabhimoju and Mahidhar Reddy are the producers. Sriram Madduri is providing the music and he previously worked with Hollywood composers like Hans Zimmer, known for films such as *Dune*, *Inception*, *Batman* and *Dunkirk*.

Attitude star's interesting film title *Barabar Premistha*

Most of the Telugu stars have some prefix to their names like power star, superstar, global star, icon star. But actor Chandra Hass, son of popular TV actor Prabhakar, has a different prefix before his name-Attitude Star. He already made his debut with an interesting title *Ramagar Bunny* and now he is coming up with another interesting one

Barabar Premistha. One of the top directors, VV Vinayak released the teaser of this film. Directed by Sampath Rudra, Geda Chandu and Gayatri Chinni are the producers. A Miss India finalist, Megna Mukherjee, is playing the female lead, while Arjun Mahi (known for *Ishtangaa*) is playing the antagonist.

The teaser shows the *Barabar Premistha* is

going to be a mix of love, action and emotional elements. Set in the village backdrop of Rudraram, Telangana, the teaser hints at a compelling love story amid the conflicts of the town. "The teaser has already created some buzz and with Dhruvan's superb music, I am confident that my film is going to be a good hit," said Chandra Hass.



Teenage sensation Konstas called up for Boxing Day Tests, McSweeney dropped

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Teenage sensation Sam Konstas was handed a maiden call up as Australia on Friday dropped rookie opener Nathan McSweeney for the final two Test matches of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy against India. The 19-year-old is set to become Australia's youngest Test batting debutant in over 70 years. If Konstas, who turned 19 on October 2, is selected in the playing XI in the Boxing Day Test, he would become Australia's youngest Test debutant since captain Pat Cummins, who was 18 years and 193 days old when he made his debut against South Africa in Johannesburg in 2011. The teenager would also become the youngest specialist batter to debut for Australia since Ian Craig when he played against South Africa at the MCG in 1953 aged 17 years 239 days.

Konstas' inclusion follows a series of disappointing performances from the Australian top order in the first three Tests especially McSweeney. The 25-year-old, who made his Test debut in the series-opener in Perth, failed to score a single half century and could only manage scores of 10, 0, 39, 10 not out, 9 and 4 in his six innings and was dismissed by Indian pace Jasprit Bumrah spearhead four times. Konstas had been in the reckoning to partner experienced Usman Khawaja after grabbing the attention of Cricket Australia's selection committee following his twin Sheffield Shield centuries for New South Wales. He had scored an unbeaten 73 at the MCG against India A while notching up a ton (107) in the Prime Ministers XI pink ball game against India in Canberra. "Sam gets a call up to the Test squad for the first time. His style of batting offers a point of difference and we look



forward to watching his game develop further," Australian Chair of Selectors George Bailey said.

"We remain confident Nathan has the ability and temperament to succeed at Test level in the future. It was a



difficult decision to leave him out. "It has clearly been a challenge at the top of the order for

batters throughout the series and we want to provide the option of a different line up for the next two matches," he

added. Konstas' inclusion follows a warning from former pacer Merv Hughes, who cautioned selectors against making any changes to the batting lineup for the Boxing Day Test. The former selector said it would have been a "panic call" move from Australia to add Konstas in the squad. "Now it would almost be a panic call to me... Just stay calm. They drew the last Test. The last two Tests have been a draw and a win, so what is there to panic about," Hughes had told 'The Courier Mail'. Konstas had said earlier this week, "It would be a dream come true (playing the Boxing Day Test)." "Maybe I'd get a little nervous before the game, but I've worked really hard for that. Hopefully, it happens one day, but we'll see." Pacer Jhye Richardson has also been included in the 15-member squad in place of Josh Hazlewood, who has been ruled out due to a calf injury. Richardson, who himself has

overcome a series of injuries, has not featured in a Test match since his three appearances during the 2021-22 Ashes series. "In the absence of Josh Hazlewood, Jhye provides further options in the fast bowling space. It has been pleasing to see his successful return throughout the early part of the domestic summer," Bailey said. Speedster Sean Abbott is also back in the squad for the remaining two games while uncapped Tasmania all-rounder Beau Webster, who was added ahead of the second Test in Adelaide, retains his place in the 15-member group. Australia squad for 4th and 5th Test: Pat Cummins (c), Sean Abbott, Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Travis Head (vc), Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Jhye Richardson, Steve Smith (vc), Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster.



Tough task awaits Chennaiyin FC against Mumbai City

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Seeking to bridge the gap with the top six, visiting Chennaiyin FC will have their task cut out when they take on fancied hosts Mumbai City FC in their Indian Super League match here on Saturday. The Islanders have an impressive record against Chennaiyin FC, being unbeaten in their last nine ISL meetings. Mumbai have won and drawn twice in their last five matches, and are currently occupying the seventh spot with 17 points from 11 games. Chennaiyin FC are ninth in the table, having garnered 15 points from 12 matches but their previous five outings have seen them succumb to a loss thrice. Neither of them are too far off the sixth-placed Jamshedpur FC, who have 18 points from 10 matches. The Petr Kratky-coached team have struggled offensively, scoring the fourth-least goals in the season (14) so far, whereas the Marina Machans better them in this metric with 17 strikes. Mumbai City have fared better at the back, keeping the third-most clean sheets (4) in the league, conceding only 13 goals, as opposed to the 18 of the Chennaiyin FC. Mumbai City FC have not conceded in their last three ISL games. If they manage another clean sheet, it will mark their longest streak since 2018. Interestingly,

Chennaiyin have netted merely once in their previous three games in the competition. Mumbai City have hit the woodwork seven times this season, the second-highest tally behind Odisha FC (9 times). Last season, they set a single-season high of 10. While it does show that they are constantly on the lookout for creating chances in the final third, the frontline will have to come together to convert these opportunities with greater consistency. Chennaiyin FC have lost their last two away games, failing to score in both. The last time the Marina Machans went on a longer losing run away from home was a stretch of four games between December 2023 and February 2024, which included a 0-3 loss to Mumbai City FC (December 28, 2023). To get their season back on track, a positive result here would be important. Chennaiyin FC have conceded just four goals in the first half of their ISL games this season, the lowest in the league. However, they conceded 14 goals in the second half, the joint most with Kerala Blasters FC. The Marina Machans will have to ensure that they do not continue to lose their shape at the back once the game enters its second essay. Jamshedpur FC face East Bengal FC in Kolkata, Jamshedpur FC will eye their first-ever league double over East Bengal FC when they face off at the Salt Lake Stadium.

Ashwin's desire to evolve all the time made him stand out: Shastri

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Ravichandran Ashwin's constant drive to evolve and excel in his craft, coupled with his focus on self-improvement rather than being concerned about the opponents made him stand out, says former India coach Ravi Shastri. The 38-year-old surprised the cricketing world by announcing his retirement in the middle of the Test series against Australia after the end of the third Test in Brisbane on Wednesday. "What stands out for me was his wanting to evolve all the time. He wasn't the kind of guy satisfied as to where he started," Shastri said on 'The ICC Review'. "For me it was his guile, wanting to excel in his craft and (especially) in the last two-three years the way he got the ball to the way, gave it a rip and got it to dip on the batsman with drift made him stand out," Shastri said. Known for his relentless drive to develop his game,



Ashwin consistently worked on new deliveries and refined his action, even in the later stages of his career. "He wanted new tricks to be learned. He pursued it, practiced hard at it and continued to look for new things as his career progressed, to keep up with the times," Shastri said. "His legacy will be of being a terrific match-winner, a fabulous record, 537 sticks. I mean anyone over 500 (in

Test cricket) is special." Ashwin, who made his debut in 2011 against the West Indies, quickly cemented his place in India's Test side. He retired as India's second-highest wicket-taker with 765 scalps, including 537 in Tests. Ashwin and fellow spinner Ravindra Jadeja often bowled in tandem, leading India to numerous victories. Shastri felt the "spin twins" played a role in each other's success.

"And for him to do it in his span and the way he has done it, especially when it came to bowling in the last four or five years, I think in India, along with Jadeja, I think they were a terrific pair, the real spin twins." "They complemented each other well and they spurred each other on, so I would say a lot of Jadeja's wickets in the last five-six years have come because of Ashwin and vice-versa." Shastri highlighted that Ashwin's nearly identical record against left and right handed batters -- 269 wickets against right-handers and 268 against left-handers -- demonstrated just how versatile and effective the spinner was, regardless of the opponent or their playing style. "You look at his record against right-handers, against left-handers, it's pretty much similar, you know, which says it all. It didn't matter to him who he was bowling against. He was up for it," he added.



Tottenham beats Man United 4-3 in the English League Cup

AP ■ LONDON

Son Heung-min scored a spectacular goal directly from a corner to fire Tottenham into the English League Cup semifinals in a thrilling 4-3 win over Manchester United. Spurs will play Premier League leader Liverpool for a place in the final, and Arsenal was drawn against Newcastle in the other last-four matchup. Son's strike in the 88th-minute at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium came as Spurs tried to hold off a dramatic comeback from United, having led 3-0 in the second half. United had pulled it back to 3-2 and was pushing for an equalizer when Son whipped in a curling right-footed shot past goalkeeper Altay Bayindir. "Obviously we made it harder than it should have been, for sure," Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou said and added, "Are you not entertained?" United's players complained Bayindir had been fouled by Tottenham's Lucas Bergvall as Son's shot flew past him. Replays appeared to show contact between the two, but with no VAR at this stage of the competition, there was

no chance of a review. Jonny Evans scored again for United in stoppage time, but Spurs held on for the win that had looked all but certain shortly after halftime. Having gone ahead through Dominic Solanke's goal from close range in the 15th, Tottenham took control after the break. Dejan Kulusevski doubled the lead a minute after the restart and Solanke fired in his second in the 54th. United head coach Ruben Amorim made a triple substitution -- bringing on Joshua Zirkzee, Amad Diallo and Kobbie Mainoo. It quickly had an impact with Zirkzee forcing Fraser Forster into a flying save and then capitalizing on a loose pass by the Tottenham goalkeeper to make it 3-1. Forster was guilty of another mistake in the 70th when his attempted clearance was closed down by Diallo and ricocheted over the line. United increased the pressure, but Son's unlikely goal gave Spurs a cushion again -- and it proved to be the decisive strike after Evans' late header reduced the deficit again. "I know the studio (punditry team) is probably going into meltdown over my lack of tactics," Postecoglou said.

India storm into U19 Women's T20 Asia Cup final

PTI ■ SINGAPORE

Rampaging India extended their unbeaten run at the U19 Women's T20 Asia Cup as they reached the final with a four-wicket win over Sri Lanka in their last Super Four contest here Friday. Aayushi Shukla emerged the wrecker-in-chief with a four-wicket haul as the left-arm spinner conceded only 10 runs in her four overs to help India restrict Sri Lanka to 98 for nine after skipper Niki Prasad opted to bowl. Parunika Sisodia, who also bowls left-arm spin, chipped in with two scalps. Such was India's domination that only two Sri Lankan batters -- Sumudu Nisansala (21) and captain Manudi Nanayakkara (33) -- could manage double-digit scores.



The Lankan top-order fared poorly with Sanjana Kavindi (9) and Hiruni Hansika (2) staying together for a mere 12 balls. A 22-run fifth-wicket stand between Nanayakkara and Nisansala was the best for the Lankans. They raised hopes of

a rival but the latter's run out punctured all their hopes. India did not have the best of starts with opener Ishwari Aswari running herself out in the third ball of the chase without bothering the scorer. Left-arm spinner Chamodi Praboda (3/16) led the Sri

Lankan fightback by dismissing three Indian batters but opener G Kamalini (28) and Gongadi Trisha (32) ensured that the small run-chase was completed. Once they departed, Mithila Vinod, batting at number seven, carried the side home with her unbeaten 17-run cameo. India overhauled the target with 31 balls to spare. India had thrashed Pakistan by nine wickets in their tournament-opener and then got the better of Bangladesh and Sri Lanka while the contest against Nepal did not yield any result. Brief Scores: Sri Lanka: 98 for 9 in 20 overs. (M Nanayakkara 33, S Nisansala 21; A Shukla 4/10) India: 102 for 6 in 14.5 overs. (G Trisha 32, G Kamalini 28; C Praboda 3/16).

India should have a hard approach against West Indies in ODIs: Richa Ghosh

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Wicketkeeper-batter Richa Ghosh has urged the Indian women's team not to take the foot off the pedal after their T20I series victory, but to adopt a more aggressive approach when they face West Indies in the upcoming three ODIs. Ghosh smashed a world record-equaling fastest fifty, reaching the milestone in just 18 balls. The 21-year-old, who scored 54 off 21 balls, including five sixes and three fours, joining an exclusive club, that features New Zealand's Sophie Devine and Australia's Phoebe Litchfield. Her innings helped India pile on 217 runs in the third T20I on Thursday. "We will look to carry the momentum and approach the ODI series and not go easy, our approach should be much harder. It is a new ground and we will try to assess the situations first and plan accordingly," Ghosh told the media here after India won the

series 2-1. Ghosh said she always has had the mindset to play aggressively. "The mindset (to play aggressively) is there in every game which comes from the practice sessions. If we have done something in the practice session, it feels easier to do to it in a match. I had prepared in that manner and that helped me," she said. "I have always loved power hitting. I have also seen my father hit big shots. I have worked hard on my fitness and in the practice sessions," Ghosh added. Ghosh also credited her experiences in the Women's Big Bash League and Women's Premier League for her exploits with the bat. "I spoke with Sophie Devine and Deandra Dottin during the WBBL and WPL. I have also discussed a lot about hitting with Harry di (Harmanpreet Kaur), she is also one of the finest hitters," she said. The wicketkeeper-batter said India wanted to put their

series loss to Australia behind and start afresh. "We wanted to forget the past and start afresh. We had come into this game to give our absolute best and not worry about the result and everyone gave their best," she said. Hayley Matthews rued the West Indies were not good enough in execution but said her side has a lot of positives to carry forward. "It just probably came down to execution again today. Like I said, we had really strong plans, but India also went back and obviously did some homework as well. Kudos to the way their players came out and batted," Matthews said after India recorded their highest-ever total of 217/4 in the format. With stand-in India skipper Smriti Mandhana hitting consecutive fifties to notch scores of 54, 62 and 77 in the series, Matthews picked her innings in the final T20I as her best. "Smriti obviously had a great series, but her knock today to me

was probably the best one," she said. "Having to bowl at Richa at the end was quite difficult as well. You felt almost as if you didn't land it on a penny. It was going to be pretty hard to stop her from scoring," Matthews added. With the official attendance claiming to be in excess of 47,200 for the final T20I -- the official capacity of DY Patil Stadium is 45,000 -- Matthews said it was the reason she loves playing in India. "Yeah, it was great to see. I have experienced massive Mumbai close before playing down here in the WPL. Obviously, when I am down here playing, usually they're on my side in that tournament," she said. "It is pretty crazy going up against it when they're cheering for the opposition, 100 per cent. I love playing in India for that reason. There's so many people that are into the women's game and want to come out and watch and support," she added.

